THE FOUND OBJECT(S) OF RHETORIC

by

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ABSTRACT

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The following dissertation expands the notion of posthumanism beyond the work in transhumanism, new media studies, animal studies, and material feminism by incorporating speculative realist philosophies into and with the Aristotelian concept of "faculty" or *dunamis*. Since Aristotle defines rhetoric as a *dunamis* (or potential to persuade and/or be persuaded), but also uses the term in his *Physics* and *Metaphysics* to describe the contingent potentiality found in material objects, I argue for a posthuman rhetoric that recognizes extra-symbolic forms of persuasion. Drawing from the philosophical work of Levi Bryant, Graham Harman, and Ian Bogost coupled with the rhetorical work of Diane Davis, David Metzger, and Thomas Rickert, my dissertation argues that in order for current rhetorical thought to truly be posthuman, it must broaden the classical assumption that the material side of *dunamis* allows objects to not only move (as per Kenneth Burke's rhetoric), but to possibly act.

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CHAPTER 1

POSTHUMANISM AND OBJECTS

1.1 Introduction

Unlike the wildly popular *X-Files*, the science fiction television show, *Warehouse 13* focuses not on mutated monsters or aliens, but rather the sometimes destructive and often surprising power of artifacts - ordinary objects imbued with extraordinary qualities. In the episode entitled, “Enola Gay,” two of the Warehouse agents were assigned to investigate a series of deaths caused by what appeared to be a localized nuclear blast, which evaporated individuals and destroyed nearby electric devices (i.e., cell phones, car batteries, lamp posts, etc.). After searching for the object that was causing this destruction, the agents happened upon a pair of binoculars on which was carved "Enola Gay...God Help Us All." The premise of the show, as in this episode, is that such artifacts are products not necessarily of people, but their environments, other objects, and certain events.

What is fascinating about this idea is that objects often seem to act. A pen creates reality out of its writing, a pair of bronze baby shoes allows users to walk through their forgotten memories, and an ancient Egyptian scarab beetle burrows through any material. Even when the agents track down the artifacts to a specific human user, this person is often not aware of the powers they are teasing out of these objects. Instead the objects themselves have abilities beyond mere mechanical motion, and because of this, the show takes *things* seriously.

In a similar vein, the following project will deny the view that objects are static fixtures in some rhetorical backdrop, and instead, also take things seriously. Dominating the contemporary theoretical scene are possibilities of what has been described as a posthumanist project. Although posthumanism is difficult to define in itself, much in the same way scholars have struggled to define postmodernism, posthumanism is an attempt to move past the human-

centered notions of world and reality, to a realm where animals, cyborgs, and other nonhuman objects are found enmeshed in a web of agency. Even more daunting of a task is attempting to define how rhetoric will respond to this posthuman project.

Therefore, the following paper will first explore the arguments expressed against humanism by posthumanist theories. Second, it will argue that cyborg posthumanism, or transhumanism, is not a true form of posthumanism since it wishes to exploit the mind/body, human/world binaries of humanism rather than deny them. Third, it will argue that Kenneth Burke's formulation of the motion/action split, is not only an example of rhetoric's attempt to deal with the human/nonhuman split, but also that a door is left open for a posthuman rhetoric to take shape that does not simply fall into the trappings of the transhumanist project. Instead, transhumanism, itself, should be viewed as a type of correlationism, or a philosophy that holds reality as a product of human reason and language, placing the importance on human subjectivity.

Fourth, in an attempt to break away from all forms of correlationism, this paper finds that object-oriented philosophy posits a flat ontology, whereby paper cups and bedsheets are just as real as human subjects. This form of realism will be shown to be uniquely suited to develop two axioms for posthumanism: that posthumanism blurs the boundaries between the human and the nonhuman, and that it works to de-center the human subject as that to which the world is given. Finally, this paper argues that above all a posthuman rhetoric must understand that objects are also agents of sorts. Such a posthuman rhetoric will not only take objects seriously, but more importantly it will, by way of necessity (and as will be shown in later chapters), redefine rhetorical agent/agency, identification, and situation. Therefore, a truly posthuman and object-oriented rhetoric concerns itself not with dividing nonhuman motion and symbolic action, but instead explores the ways in which objects act, and through their actions expand the possible means of persuasion. Object-oriented rhetoric will both add to the growing

forms of material rhetoric, and offer rhetoricians new tools by which they can discuss the world around them.

1.2 Humanism and Posthumanism

Traditionally, an academic paper that discussed a philosophical and theoretical movement that was "post" some other philosophical or theoretical movement (i.e., *post*-structuralism or *post*-modernism) would have to begin by clearly defining the original theory (i.e., structuralism or modernism) in order to show and explain how we have moved "post" said theory. However, it is the position of this paper that in order to understand how posthumanism is counter to humanism one has to take a more nontraditional approach. So part of what follows is an attempt to lay out the characteristics of humanism that developed into posthumanism through defining what it means to be and work in posthumanism.

Posthumanism as a theoretical movement found its acceptance in the mid-1990s, though, as Cary Wolfe points out, "its roots go back, in one genealogy, at least to the 1960s and pronouncements of the sort made famous by [Michel] Foucault in the closing paragraph of *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*…" (xii). For Foucault, posthumanism (though not named specifically) was represented as a possibility that existed after we had uncovered man as an invention. But more recent definitions of posthumanism take this possibility and actualize it – albeit with differing, sometimes conflicting definitions. Some see posthumanism as way to blur the boundaries between humans and machines (N. Katherine Hayles and Donna Haraway), while others argue that posthumanism is worried about blurring the boundaries between humans and animals (Cary Wolfe and Donna Haraway), and still others argue that posthumanism opens a space in which we find humans entangled with all sorts of nonhuman agents (Andrew Pickering). Suffice it to say, an introductory definition of posthumanism can satisfy the purposes of this paper (and itself) by keeping to two main points: 1) posthumanism blurs the boundaries between the human and the nonhuman (whether animals or objects) and 2) posthumanism works against the humanist notion that the human

subject is at the center of the universe (whether one wishes to see this "working against" as a type of entanglement or not).

But even so, the definition just set up is not without its criticisms. One of the most common complaints of posthumanism is that in being anti-*humanist*, it is also anti-*human*. As N. Katherine Hayles points out:

> When the self is envisioned as grounded in presence, identified with originary guarantees and teleological trajectories, associated with solid foundations and logical coherence, the posthuman is likely to be seen as antihuman because it envisions the conscious mind as a small subsystem running its program of self-construction and self-assurance while remaining ignorant of the actual dynamics of complex systems. But the posthuman does not really mean the end of humanity. It signals instead the end of a certain conception of the human, a conception that may have applied, at best, to that fraction of humanity who had the wealth, power, and leisure to conceptualize themselves as autonomous beings exercising their will through individual agency and choice. (*How We Became*… 286)

As Hayles points out, posthumanism is not the end of the human, but is the end of a human-centered account of the world. Posthumanism is not so much an argument against humanity, as it is against human*ism*. In other words, posthumanism does not wish to get rid of the human but merely the humanist notion of the human subject as the only being with agency in the world. Posthumanism, instead, wishes to posit a perception of the world as a mass entanglement of all sorts and types of actors or agents. A world in which cell phones and poppies contain a certain amount of agency not only for human subjects, but for other objects as well. However, such a claim is bound to give rise to certain anxieties.

1.3 Haraway's Cyborg Manifesto and Cyborg Posthumanism

For someone invested in the Humanities, the term "posthuman" carries its own inherent anxiety. What does it mean to be *post*human? What happens to humanity when it goes "post"? Do we, as humans, have a choice in the matter? Or, with the propagation and ubiquity of technology, are we already posthuman? Regardless of the answers, each of these questions points to a specific fear of becoming posthuman. And these fears are not necessarily unfounded, because at its heart posthumanism is concerned with a tension between that which is human and that which can only be described as nonhuman.

One area in which posthumanism emerged was in response to the concrete notion of bodies, and specifically the human body. Liberal humanism, though perhaps unknowingly, favored the erasure of the embodiment of a subject. In other words, the subject was seen as a logical mind not reliant upon a body. As Judith Halberstam and Ira Livingston put it in *Posthuman Bodies*, posthumanism grew out of a "disenchantment that [was] both anti-aesthetic and anti-scientific. It is in this volatile market that the medical/aesthetic disciplinary monopoly on 'the body' [was] being challenged [by posthumanism]" (1). Posthumanism, therefore, sought to directly challenge the notion of any one formation of embodiment. Instead, posthuman bodies, as Halberstam and Livingston argue, "are not slaves to master discourses but emerge at nodes where bodies intersect to foreclose any easy distinction between actor, stage, between sender/receiver, channel, code, message, context" (2). Therefore, it was because scientific and medical understandings shrouded any other understandings of embodiment that posthumanism as a way of taking back the human body became attractive. And as we have seen in recent popular culture and criticism, one of the most common (re)formulations of this posthuman embodiment has been the cyborg.

Posthumanism is often coupled with images of cyborgs – a grafting of human and machine. As N. Katherine Hayles states in "Refiguring the Posthuman," although there are multiple definitions of the posthuman, "most versions include as a prominent feature the joining of humans with intelligent machines" (312). This type of posthumanism, no doubt, was made commonplace once Donna Haraway's "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century" made its way into the *Norton Anthology of Literary Criticism*. For Haraway, the cyborg was a unique model to critique feminism, beginning with the following definition:

> A cyborg is a cybernetic organism, a hybrid of machine and organism, a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction. Social reality is lived social relations, our most important political construction, a world-changing fiction. The international women's movements have constructed 'women's experience', as well as uncovered or discovered this crucial collective object. This experience is a fiction and fact of the most crucial, political kind. Liberation rests on the construction of the consciousness, the

> imaginative apprehension, of oppression, and so of possibility. The cyborg is a matter of fiction and lived experience that changes what counts as women's experience in the late twentieth century. This is a struggle over life and death, but the boundary between science fiction and social reality is an optical illusion. (*Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* 149).

The cyborg in Haraway's account was important precisely because it was both real and fictional, and more importantly, that it often blurred the lines between the two. For Haraway, the cyborg presented a material body by which we could take pleasure "in the confusion of boundaries" but also to take "responsibility in their construction" (150). The cyborg is without an origin story, passing by any myth that might try to Oedipalize or gender it. In this way, "the cyborg skips the step of original unity, of identification with nature in the Western sense" (151). Being posthuman in the cyborg sense, for Haraway, meant being a purely cultural creation, not completely reliant upon nature as the human body is; therefore, confusing the boundaries between what is natural and what is cultural. But the distinction between nature and culture is not the only boundary that gets blurred in the cyborg.

In Haraway's view, the cyborg is possible once we recognize the failure of three very specific boundaries. The first is the boundary between the human and the animal. Here the cyborg, "far from signaling a walling off of people from other living beings…signal[s] disturbingly and pleasurably tight coupling" (152). The cyborg, because of its artificiality, highlights the illusory notion that humans are distinguished from animals because of certain characteristics: language, tool use, social behaviors, etc. And when such a distinction breaks down, then, so do all sorts of (mis)conceptions about the differences between nature and culture. The second boundary is that between the human/animal and the machine. As Haraway remarks, "Pre-cybernetic machines could be haunted; there was always the spectre of the ghost in the machine" (152). Or to put this another way, before the cyborg, machines and humans were clearly distinct from each other. Machines were built to help humanity, but there was always a sense in which the machine could take over for the human. We need only think of the assembly line machines at Ford or Toyota, to understand this fear. However, unlike the haunting that

takes place in pre-cybernetic machines, cybernetic organisms (cyborgs) merge the separation of human and machine by making the line between "natural and artificial, mind and body, self-developing and externally designed" ambiguous at best (152). Instead of being a ghost in the machine, the cyborg *is* a human/machine. In this way, the cyborg is just as real, just as alive, and perhaps, just as human as we are. "Our machines," as Haraway points out, "are disturbingly lively, and we ourselves frighteningly inert" (152).

Finally, what makes the cyborg possible is the breakdown of the boundary between the physical and nonphysical. For Haraway, technology strives to become smaller, clearer, lighter, and less apparent in our lives. Speaking of the cyborg, perhaps more metaphorically than the other two points above, here Haraway means simply that these machines operate by being ubiquitous. And that this "ubiquity and invisibility is precisely why these… machines are so deadly. They are as hard to see politically as materially. They are about consciousness—or its simulation" (153). In this way, we may no longer be aware of how intrusive technology is in our lives, or whom it affects. The cyborg exists as both physical machine and nonphysical software or codes.

These three boundary breakdowns indicate the first inklings of a definition of the posthuman. Posthumanism concerns itself with blurring the boundaries between traditional humanist dichotomies: nature/culture, human/animal, organism/machine, and subject/object. But is this boundary-blurring a violent act? Summarizing Haraway's text, Hayles finds that "Fusing cybernetic device and biological organism, the cyborg violates the human/machine distinction; replacing cognition with neural feedback, it challenges the human-animal difference; [and] explaining the behavior of thermostats and people through theories of feedback, hierarchical structure, and control, it erases the animate/inanimate distinction" (*How We Became…* 84). By blending or breaking down such boundaries, the cyborg carries with it a certain amount of violence, in that it "violates," "replaces," "challenges," and "erases" humanist

accounts of the machine, the animal, and the natural. Through this violence posthumanism is anxiety-provoking.

1.4 Do Humans Dream of Non-Violent Cyborgs?

One quintessential place these anxieties about cyborgs are played out is in the 1982 film, *Blade Runner*. As Haraway recognizes, "The replicant Rachel in the Ridley Scott film *Blade Runner* stands as the image of a cyborg culture's fear, love, and confusion" (178). Set in the year 2019, *Blade Runner* is often viewed as a mixture between science-fiction and film noir. It tells the story of Rick Deckard, a detective/bounty hunter, who is given orders to hunt down four cyborgs, also known as replicants. To be clear, the replicants in *Blade Runner* fit Haraway's notion of cyborg, as they are examples of all three boundary breakdowns. Replicants use language and tools, they are a mixture of organic and mechanical parts, and, as we will see, their near inability to be distinguished from humans makes them somewhat invisible (in the sense that we need some sort of test to uncover them as nonhuman). Because of these obfuscated lines of identity, the audience has a difficult time placing the replicant in the film as friend or foe. Replicants are both adversaries and objects of sympathy. And this fear, love, and confusion are how we are introduced to this futuristic cyborg world of *Blade Runner*. The movie opens with the following introductory scroll:

> Early in the 21st Century, The Tyrell Corporation advanced Robot evolution into the NEXUS phase – a being virtually identical to a human – known as a Replicant.
>
> The NEXUS 6 Replicants were superior in strength and agility, and at least equal in intelligence, to the genetic engineers who created them. Replicants were used Off-world as slave labor, in the hazardous explorations and colonization of other planets. After a bloody mutiny by a NEXUS 6 combat team in an Off-world colony, Replicants were declared illegal on Earth – under penalty of death. Special police squads – Blade Runner Units – had orders to shoot to kill, upon detection, any trespassing Replicant.
>
> This was not called execution.
>
> It was called retirement. (*Blade Runner*)

Most introductions in films, such as the one above, do two things: they inform the audience of recent or historical events that are important in understanding the film, and they set up the basic tension that is then played out. In comparison, the 1976 horror film, *Squirm* uses a similar

introduction to inform its audience as to why a certain town became overrun with killer earthworms. However, unlike *Squirm*, the distinction between protagonist and antagonist is not as clear in the introduction to *Blade Runner*. For at times the saga of the NEXUS 6 replicants in this introduction seems similar to any number of slave narratives – from colonization, to slave labor, to revolt. Even at the end of this introduction, the film wishes to play on its audience's compassion by pointing out that replicants are not to be "executed" but merely "retired."

Juxtaposed with this seemingly sympathetic narrative, the first scene of the film is in jarring opposition to precisely such an emotional response. After being given an aerial shot of a hellish cityscape – complete with jagged skyscrapers, some of which bellow plumes of fire into the air—and coupled with an extreme close-up of an eye in which the same cityscape is reflected—audiences are introduced to the Voight-Kampff test.

Developed as a way to determine the human from the replicant, the Voight-Kampff test measures empathetic reactions of a subject to a series of questions. But the first subject the audience is shown, Leon Kowalski (Brion James), reacts violently to the test by killing his examiner, effectively severing the notion that replicants are completely sympathetic figures, free from judgment. In a series of cuts, audiences are shown the central machine used in the Voight-Kampff test—which consists of an eye-like device attached to a long arm, which is itself attached to an accordion-like apparatus that simulates breathing.

The *mise-en-scène* of one shot, in particular, is of specific interest here, as what the audience sees is a close-up of Leon's eye projected on a TV, while the machine seems to breathe in the near background, and to the left of Leon's eye are two smaller televisions which relay Leon's other vital statistics. By allowing viewers to see Leon in this way, director Ridley Scott gives his audience another version of a cyborg body, a body fragmented by technology. Similarly, as Hayles argues, "Central to the construction of the cyborg are informational pathways connecting the organic body to its prosthetic extensions. This presumes a conception of information as a (disembodied) entity that can flow between carbon-based organic

components and silicon-based electronic components to make protein and silicon operate as a single system" (2). Even before it is revealed that Leon is in fact a replicant, the film has effectively made him one by reducing him to information spread out over several machines rather than a central organic body, exemplifying the "flow between carbon-based organic components" and the "silicon-based electronic components" (2). This opening scene furthers the ambiguous nature of the introduction by questioning the audience's feelings toward replicants. They are at once sympathetic, oppressed people while at the same time nonhuman, ruthless, and fragmented machines. And it is precisely this uncertainty that *Blade Runner* would have its audience not only question, but ultimately fear.

The way *Blade Runner* alleviates this fear and anxiety is by making the replicants the primary antagonists. Instead of the cyborgs, the audience follows Deckard (Harrison Ford), a blade runner assigned to retire four replicants. Deckard is in many ways an antihero, in that his main function in the film is to hunt down and kill replicants. However, as the only supposed human representative in the film, his actions seem all but justified to the film's human audience. In this way, *Blade Runner* seems to walk a fine line between sympathizing with the cyborg and relating to the human, but in the end, all of the replicants are "retired" and the Earth is once again safe. For this reason *Blade Runner* should be read as reassuring its human audience of its hierarchical status, while at the same time propagating the fear of the boundary-blurring cyborg.

Hayles finds this fear to be wrapped up in the prefix "post." As she notes:

> The terror is relatively easy to understand. "Post," with its dual connotation of superseding the human and coming after it, hints that the days of "the human" may be numbered. Some researchers…believe that this is true not only in a general intellectual sense that displaces one definition of "human" with another but also in a more disturbingly literal sense that envisions humans displaced as the dominant form of life on the planet by intelligent machines. Humans can either go gently into that good night, joining the dinosaurs as a species that once ruled the earth but is now obsolete, or hang on for a while longer by becoming machines themselves. (*How We Became…* 283)

This fear or terror is brought on by moving or displacing humanity, but much like the assurance in *Blade Runner* that humans will survive, cyborg posthumanism assuages this fear by exploiting those characteristics that make humans "unique." Cyborg posthumanism, then, relishes in the notion of being “post” human, of transcending the human body and instead, inhabiting a machine. It transforms the human and human processes into information, codes, and patterns. However, as Hayles continues, “these views do not exhaust the meanings of the posthuman” (283).

1.5 From Posthumanism to Transhumanism

We have already seen how we can define posthumanism through its blurring of boundaries between the human and the machine, humans and nonhumans, and the physical and the nonphysical. And we have seen how the cyborg has not only come to fit this definition, but also how its boundary blurring has been propagated in popular culture through the film *Blade Runner*. However, as some critics of cyborg posthumanism point out, the cyborg is still too close to the human to be considered posthuman. In *What is Posthumanism?*, Cary Wolfe argues that true posthumanism blurs still yet another boundary—reality. But first, Wolfe makes an important distinction:

> Arguably the best-known inheritor of the “cyborg” strand of posthumanism is what is now being called “transhumanism” – a movement that is dedicated, as the journalist and writer Joel Garreau puts it, to “the enhancement of human intellectual, physical, and emotional capabilities, the elimination of disease and unnecessary suffering and the dramatic extension of life span.” […] As one of the central figures associated with transhumanism, the Oxford philosopher, Nick Bostrom, makes clear, this sense of posthumanism derives directly from ideals of human perfectibility, rationality, and agency inherited from Renaissance humanism and the Enlightenment. (xii)

Transhumanism, the successor of cyborg posthumanism, wishes to push humanism beyond its limits. It is humanism on steroids, rather than a movement beyond and away from its ideas. If read through the lens of transhumanism, then, with their superior strength, agility, and equal intelligence, the cyborg replicants of *Blade Runner* are perfect examples of the transhuman. Lest we forget, Replicants were used to perform tasks in places humans could not, in a way making them superior to the natural human body.

Transhumanism, like posthumanism, was intended to stand in direct opposition to a Renaissance version of humanism. Transhumanism even appears to move beyond the material problems of humanism. Wolfe finds, however, that if "humanism is, in so many words, its own dogma, replete with its own prejudices and assumptions…" and that if humanism wishes merely to reiterate its own beliefs and to push humanity beyond itself in the transhuman, then we have to ask, is there a difference between the cyborg notion of transhumanism and other forms of posthumanism (xiv)?

In order to clearly differentiate posthumanism from both humanism and transhumanism, Wolfe wishes to argue two points. The first point is that we achieve a notion of humanity "by escaping or repressing not just its animal origins in nature, the biological, the evolutionary, but more generally by transcending the bonds of materiality and embodiment altogether" (xv). Instead of positioning humanism as already set apart from nature and animals, Wolfe finds we often repeatedly define the human by doing one of two things: repressing its natural origin or transcending its corporeality. Traditional humanism, on one hand, sets the human on a pedestal above and apart from all other natural beings. Transhumanism, on the other hand, can be seen as further defining the human precisely because it wishes to transcend the material body, replacing it instead with the cyborg. For this reason Wolfe argues that "posthumanism is the opposite of transhumanism, and in this light, transhumanism should be seen as an intensification of humanism" (xv). Cyborg-humanism, or transhumanism, should not be considered a form of posthumanism as we wish to understand it. Instead, transhumanism is humanism intensified—that is, the tenants of humanism are taken to the extreme. Transhumanism pushes the desire of humanism to replace nature with culture by creating a completely artificial body for the human mind to thrive in. One example would be the invention and propagation of prosthetics. Prosthetics are no longer only restricted to those with missing limbs or those in need of artificial human anatomy. Instead, plastic surgeons, tattoo artists, and

body modifications (piercings, branding, etc.) of all sorts point to the idea that the human body is perhaps already a type of fragmented machine, but one in need of major improvements.

The second point Wolfe makes is that the term posthumanism "isn't posthuman at all—in the sense of being 'after' our embodiment has been transcended—but is only posthuman*ist*, in the sense that it opposes the fantasies of disembodiment and autonomy, inherited from humanism itself…" (xv). In other words, posthumanism is never in favor of a post-corporeal existence. Instead, posthumanism argues for a more complicated notion of embodied entanglement. This is a direct criticism of Hayles' use of the term, because for Wolfe, "Hayles' use of the term [posthumanism]…tends to oppose embodiment and the posthuman, whereas the sense in which I am using the term here insists on exactly the opposite" (xv). To be posthuman is not to be beyond the human body—a move we saw in the transhuman cyborg. But this movement is precisely the point Wolfe criticizes Hayles for favoring, stating that when she uses the term "posthuman" she "tends to oppose embodiment" describing posthumanism as being "after" the body (xv). For Wolfe, the tone of Hayles' work is that of the transhuman —or as he calls it "'bad' posthumanism" (xvii).

Transhumanism, then, should be seen as a furthering of humanist ideals, to carry on the good parts of humanism (reason, minds, individual subjectivity, etc.) without the downfalls of a material existence or body. The transhuman is in some ways the fulfillment of the humanist dream. However, because of this expansion of traditional humanism, transhumanism does not completely jive with a notion of the posthuman we need to develop for a rhetoric of objects. So the question becomes how does rhetoric move past a notion of humanism and not fall into the transhuman trap?

1.6 Rhetoric's Lost Objects

To be fair, rhetoric has also struggled with the boundary between human and nonhuman. Few scholars would argue that Kenneth Burke's view of rhetoric is open to non-symbolic forms of action and persuasion. In fact, Burke himself has stated that what gives the

human its ability to act is precisely its symbolic nature. In *The Rhetoric of Religion* he finds that, "Man's animality is in the realm of sheer matter, sheer motion. But his 'symbolicity' adds a dimension of action not reducible to the non-symbolic—for by its very nature as symbolic it cannot be identical with the non-symbolic" (16). In other words, by virtue of its symbol-using nature, humans act instead of simply moving. Motion, or movement without a purpose, is designated to the animal and nonhuman realm, whereas action is motion with a motive. For Burke, humans transcend mere motion by adding a transcendent symbolism to their movement—i.e., their movements "mean" something.

By noting the transcendent power of words, though, Burke is not arguing for a world made up of symbols and symbol-systems. No, instead his point is that words often conceal the natural realm from which they sprang while offering an apparent access to the very same world, and because humans use symbols to communicate about this natural realm (that is, the world and the things in it), it appears that reality is made of symbols. His lengthy response to this distinction in the forward to *The Philosophy of Literary Form* bears repeating:

> In any event, I take it that the symbolically tinged realms of Power, Act, and Order, singly or all three, are grounded in the realm of Motion, so far as empirical existence is concerned. And this realm is *non-symbolic*, except in the sense that man, as the symbol-using animal, necessarily endows everything with the spirit of his symbol-systems.
>
> I have found it necessary to emphasize this point because, over the years, my constant concern with "symbolicity" has often been *interpreted* in the spirit *exactly* contrary to my notions of "reality." The greater my stress upon the role of symbolism in human behavior (and misbehavior!), the greater has been my realization of the inexorable fact that, as regards the realm of the empirical, one cannot live by the *word* for bread alone. And though the *thing* bread is tinged by the realm of symbolic *action*, its empirical nature is grounded in the realm of non-symbolic or extra-symbolic motion.
>
> There is a basic difference between metaphysical idealism and my concern with "the word." To say that you can't talk about anything except by exemplifying the rules of talk is not identical with saying that our world is "nothing but" the things we say about it. On the contrary, alas! There's many a time when what we call a "food" should have been called a "poison." And if our ancestors had but hit upon too many of such misnomers, we'd not be here now.
>
> No. Over the years I become more and more convinced: Only by knowing wholly about our ways with symbols can we become piously equipped to ask, not only in wonder but in great fear, just what may be the inexorable laws of non-symbolic motion which our symbolizing so often "transcends," sometimes to our "spiritual" gain and sometimes to our great detriment. (emphasis in original; xvi)

The first point worth extracting from this lengthy quotation is that Burke specifically calls attention to the seeming duality of the world. He argues that there are two "realms" of the world, the natural and the verbal. Words, for Burke, have their foundation in the natural realm—in other words, when one speaks about a tree, for Burke, this means that there is a real physical tree, not merely a mental image of a tree. But, the word itself transcends the natural realm and moves into the verbal realm of symbolic action or the realm of rhetoric.

However (and here is the second point worth extracting), Burke does not deny the non-symbolic or natural realm a role in his rhetoric. Motion still has an influence on rhetoric. For, as Burke states "though there can be 'motion' without 'action' (as when a ball rolls down an inclined plane), there cannot be 'action' without 'motion'" (*Rhetoric of Religion* 39). Motion, for Burke, is akin to brute force or movement. A ball rolls, a river flows, or the wind blows; these are all instances of motion. Motion refers, then, to the empirical order of things rather than the transcended, symbolic side. Burke clarifies: "Empirically, that is, though there can be brain without mind, there cannot be mind without brain" (39). Here Burke finds the symbolic side (the side of action and that of the mind) is reliant upon the material side (the side of the brain). But, as Burke noted above, this distinction between motion and action should in no way entail that action and the symbolic realm make up or exhaust the material or non-symbolic realm. "Thus," he continues, "Dramatism assumes that, though 'action' cannot be properly described in terms that reduce this realm solely to the dimensions of 'motion,' there will always be an order of 'motion' implied in the realm of action" (39). So not only does Burke highlight the problem that such philosophies basically reduce the world to the realm of signs and language, but he also attempts to break his thinking outside of it.

By splitting motion from action, Burke is able to focus on one part (action) while not denying but simply ignoring the other (motion). Dramatism, Burke's preferred method of rhetorical inquiry, merely "*assumes*" that there is a distinction between motion and action. In fact, a little later in *The Rhetoric of Religion*, Burke, in reference to cybernetics, concedes that "If

men ever invent a 'machine complex enough' to obliterate the present empirical distinction we make between our dealings with people and our dealings with machines, the Dramatistic position will have to be abandoned, or at least greatly modified" (40). So, although Burke's Dramatism argues that humans act and things only move, he leaves open the possibility that such thinking might indeed be mistaken. Such a possibility—that motion *and* action might exist outside of the human—is precisely the argument that posthumanism wishes to exploit. In other words, if for Burke the boundary between humans and nonhumans was seen in the difference between action and motion, posthumanism attempts to deny such a split ever existed. The important thing to note here, though, is that Burke can foresee a point where even his boundary of the human and nonhuman do become blurred. Though he recognizes that up to the moment of his own writing, there appears to be an "*empirical qualitative difference between mental action and mechanical motion*" he offers a future alternative in which this is not the case (emphasis in original; 40).

1.7 The Motion of Bodies

Elsewhere in *The Rhetoric of Religion*, Burke makes a strong distinction between motion and action, and subsequently things and people. He argues, "'People' are entities capable of 'symbolic action'; to varying degrees they can be addressed, 'reasoned with,' petitioned, persuaded. 'Things' can but move, or be moved" (40). But, although Burke makes it clear that he wishes to focus on the action and people sides, these dichotomies (motion/action, things/people) point to a struggle in Burke's own thinking, a struggle between the influence of the non-symbolic (i.e., motion-centered, material, animal, corporeal, or nonhuman) on the symbolic (i.e., action-centered or human language). In *Moving Bodies: Kenneth Burke at the Edges of Language*, Debra Hawhee argues that this struggle is fundamental to understanding Burke's turn from his aesthetic early work to his later, rhetorical texts—a turn, Hawhee feels, when read through this lens is not as drastic as it might seem. For Hawhee:

> Burke's interest in bodies, manifest early on in his short fiction (which focuses on artists' decidedly arrhythmic bodies) and later in his music criticism (which focuses on

> the polyrhythmic effects of artistic form on bodies in the audience), sets up a strong and distinctive if incipient rhetoric. It is his inclination toward bodies…that first sets up Burke to investigate rhetoric, communication, meaning making, and language. Moreover that inclination toward bodies urges a transdisciplinary view of the body, one that would help Burke—and by extension us—better understand the at times impossibly complicated relations among language, rhetoric and the body. (14)

For Hawhee, Burke's understanding of rhetoric and language had its start in his work that dealt with material bodies. If Hawhee is correct, then, Burke's own work could be read as a performance of the motion/action or things/people split, and especially the influence one realm has on the other.

As such, in The *Philosophy of Literary Form*, Burke proposes a form of clustering that takes synecdoche as its dominant form as one way of understanding the influence of motion on action. In synecdoche the part can sometimes become representative of the whole, "the whole for the part, the container for the thing contained, the cause for the effect, the effect for the cause, etc.," or, put simply, "'twenty noses' for 'twenty men'" (25-26). Clustering (or identifying what goes with what) by way of synecdoche, requires a different approach to things and people. If a person's material property can become representative of that person as a whole, Burke's strict distinction between what "moves" and what "acts" must be reexamined. For, by way of the synecdochic clustering, the environment and the things that make it up, become just as active as the human agents. Burke gives the following example:

> A tree, for instance, is an infinity of events—and among these our senses abstract certain recordings which "represent" the tree. Nor is there any "illusion" here. In so far as we see correctly, and do not mistake something else for a tree, our perceptions do really represent the tree. Stress upon synecdochic representation is thus seen to be a necessary ingredient of a truly realistic philosophy (as against a naturalistic one, that would tend to consider our sensory representations as "illusory"). (*Philosophy of Literary Form* 26)

Here, Burke performs two important tasks. First he recognizes the common function of the synecdoche in the object/person relation, in that a person's perception of a tree often comes to represent that tree, covering over the fact that the tree itself exists. And, second, he reaffirms the reality of perception alongside the reality of the tree itself. In other words, Burke places the object, the tree, on the same ontological realist plane as the *perception* of that tree. Both object

and perception are real, in Burke's view. What this realization does, though, is blurs the earlier distinction between motion/action and things/people, for if a tree is just as real and perhaps just as effective (in terms of existence) as a person's perception of that tree, who is to say only one has access to "action?"

Hawhee also points to Burke's formation of a "synecdochic, cluster approach" in *The Philosophy of Literary Form* as one attempt to work through the motion/action split. But as Hawhee sees it, Burke uses synecdoche in order to bring together terms and things that are not necessarily opposite each other, but are merely different from one another. By clustering via a synecdochic approach, Hawhee argues that, "In terms of bodies a Burkean synecdochic approach would have us suspend the question 'What distinguishes body from mind or language?' in favor of the question 'What (else) do we talk about when we talk about bodies (or mind, or language)?'" (5). For Hawhee, then, Burke's notion of clustering opens up dichotomies by not focusing on the split but instead asking "what else?"

It is the goal, here, to then turn Burke's own approach around on him and more specifically against his distinction between motion and action. So, the question becomes not, "How is motion different from action?"—a distinction that, although held by Burke, has become muddled because of his own (and our) realist views—but rather, posthuman rhetoric should ask, if the non-symbolic influences the symbolic and motion is a part of action, then what else is spoken of when a rhetorical action is placed under examination? What parts of the non-symbolic get covered over, forgotten, or simply withdraw from view? Posthumanism, or so it seems, would offer us answers to these questions.

In a recent review of Graham Harman's *Tool-Being* and *Guerrilla Metaphysics*, rhetorician Scot Barnett recognizes that the field of rhetoric has also taken a "material," or posthuman, turn given its recent focus on embodiment, technology, and nature/eco-studies. For Barnett, this turn points to a desire to process what he calls, following Bruno Latour, rhetoric's "missing masses." As Barnett sees it, "Not separate or merely additional constituents in

rhetorical situations, these materialities and their intertwinings constitute our reality—are part of the very is-ness of that reality—in ways that fundamentally shape our very senses of what writing means and how we practice and teach writing in the world today" (1). For Barnett, the world is emplaced with a multitude of objects, both human and nonhuman. The practice of rhetoric, however, has been focused too intently on the human subjects to the detriment of the nonhuman objects. As Barnett points out, though, the reality of rhetoric is not one made solely of human subjects. Instead, rhetorical reality consists of a variety of "materialities and their intertwinings" giving way to a world in which the available means of persuasion can just as much mean the computers, coffee makers, steel cables, etc., as it does the Aristotelian *topoi*. As was noted earlier, the type of realism posited by Barnett, as well as other object-oriented thinkers, is counter to a realism that holds human thinking or language as its guide. But can a discipline such as rhetoric, which relies heavily on notions of speech, metaphor, and signification, work within such a version of reality? The quick answer is yes, given it works from some of the main tenants of object-oriented ontology and above else attempts to develop a truer form of posthumanism than was seen in transhumanism.

1.8 Transhumanism as Correlationism

What Wolfe's earlier distinction between "true posthumanism" and transhumanism shows is that ultimately what is at stake in determining a posthuman rhetoric is dependent upon how closely we see the human interacting in its world. If we take posthumanism to: 1) blur the boundaries between the human and the nonhuman (whether animals or objects) and 2) work against the humanist notion that the human subject is at the center of the universe (whether one wishes to see this "working against" as a type of entanglement or not), then we must see how to properly be posthuman, we must acknowledge that the hierarchy set up by humanism—that the human is transcendent above nature, making the realm of the natural subservient to human thoughts, will, and being—is ultimately (as Burke pointed out) a work of fiction. The problem of transhumanism is that, because it had not broken with this hierarchy, it mistranslated the need

for posthumanism to blur boundaries. Instead of attempting to show similarities or at least to deny some dividing chasms of difference between the human world and that of the nonhuman, transhumanism blurs boundaries only to transcend the supposed constraints of the human body. As Nick Bostrom points out in his essay, "A History of Transhumanist Thought," "The human desire to acquire new capacities is as ancient as our species itself. We have always sought to expand the boundaries of our existence, be it socially, geographically, or mentally. There is a tendency in at least some individuals always to search for a way around every obstacle and limitation to human life and happiness" (1). Whether he was aware of it or not, however, Bostrom's comments, by pointing to the history of transhumanism to *expand* human boundaries beyond the physical body, speak directly to the problems Wolfe finds in calling transhumanism a proper posthumanism. Transhumanism is not an attempt, then, to discover something new about the world around us, but is instead an attempt at maintaining and expanding a specifically human/thought-centered access to said world. It is an effort to stretch human senses and perception past their normal limits in an attempt to transcend the human body.

In its attempt to grasp the world as given, and specifically, given to the human mind regardless of its material body, transhumanism can also be read as correlationist philosophy. The term "correlationism" was coined by the philosopher Quentin Meillassoux in his book, *After Finitude: An Essay on the Necessity of Contingency*. For Meillassoux:

> Correlationism consists in disqualifying the claim that it is possible to consider the realm of subjectivity and objectivity independent of one another. Not only does it become necessary to insist that we never grasp an object 'in itself,' in isolation from its relation to the subject, but it also becomes necessary to maintain that we can never grasp a subject that would not always-already be related to an object. (13)

Therefore, correlationism is a denial of a reality apart from human subjectivity. The world and the objects of the world are in essence "given" to humanity. What philosophies of correlationism do, then, is place a necessity on the dependence of human thought to ontological being. The world according to correlationism becomes a problem of access: where humans have direct

access and other nonhuman entities do not. For example, a cat does not understand its home as home because it does not have access to it *as* "home," whether such access is found in notions of language, reason, cognition, etc. Or, as Meillassoux sees it "[b]y 'correlation' we mean the idea according to which we only ever have access to the correlation between thinking and being, and never either term considered apart from the other" (5). In correlationism, thought cannot exist apart from being and being cannot exist apart from thought. Instead of being concerned with either term, correlationism is always only concerned with the correlation between the two.

Elsewhere, Meillassoux has boiled down the correlationist argument as such: "No X without the givenness of X, and no theory about X without a positing of X. If you speak about something, you speak about something that is given to you, and posited by you" (*Collapse III* 409). In this way, there could be no speech of a computer existing by itself as an autonomous entity, since in speaking *about the computer* the speaker has linked herself to the computer. What correlationism effectively denies, and as Meillassoux rightly points out, is that there could ever be a reality apart from human subjectivity; and herein lies the danger of transhumanism and such correlationist thought—or, as Graham Harman has called them, Philosophies of Access.

Perhaps the best example of the crossover between transhumanism and correlationism is seen in the film *A.I.: Aritificial Intelligence*, directed by Stephen Spielberg. In this film, the main character is a cyborg child named David is bought and activated by a couple whose real child was locked up in cryo-stasis. Before the movie turns into a cybernetic version of Pinocchio (perhaps another transhuman narrative?) when David is forced out of his human family, as a mechanic surrogate for a human boy David is the epitome of both the problem of transhumanism that Wolfe points out (built as a type of prosthetic child), and also of the correlationist error. Not only is David built to look and mimic human characteristics (for how else could cyborgs look and act), but his only dream is to become human. Much like Geppetto's

puppet, David yearns not to be the artificial being that he is, but yearns to be a "real" human boy. Correlationism becomes the driving force of the narrative—David exists only insofar as he wishes to be human. Once again the human subject takes center stage, as an ideal.

1.9 Tool-Being and Realism

Correlationist thought requires philosophy to posit a reality apart from the things in this world, a reality in which subjects are the master-builders. And, as was shown, transhumanism can be seen as a form of correlationist thought that posits the superiority of human thinking above a reality of material objects. However, science has proven that a world of things existed long before humanity was around to think it. As Meillassoux states, "Empirical science is today capable of producing statements about events anterior to the advent of life as well as consciousness. These statements consist in the dating of 'objects' that are sometimes older than any form of life on earth" (20). These objects or "arche-fossils" pose a challenge to correlationist thought in that they not only point to a pre-human world, but more importantly they present the correlationist with a reality outside of the human subject.

One way to escape correlationist thought that has been proposed is that of object-oriented philosophy. Lamenting the lack of reflection on Twentieth Century philosophy, Graham Harman points out that one achievement of the movement of philosophy does rise to the top—"the linguistic turn." However, even though the linguistic turn moved philosophy away from a theory of consciousness toward a theory of language, Harman argues that this is still not enough, that the linguistic turn has changed the content but not the overall philosophical discourse. Reality is still closed off from such discussions. For Harman:

> The ostensibly revolutionary transition from consciousness to language still leaves humans in the absolute command at the center of philosophy. All that happens is that the lucid, squeaky clean ego of phenomenology is replaced by a more troubled figure: a drifter determined by his context, unable fully to transcend the structures of his environment. In both cases the inanimate world is left by the wayside, treated as little better than dust or rubble. When rocks collide with wood, when fire melts glass, when cosmic rays cause protons to disintegrate, [philosophers] are asked to leave all of this to the physicists alone. (94)

Therefore, Harman finds Twentieth Century philosophy continuing to work within the correlationist mode of analysis—i.e., looking at the world *for* the human. The world, in itself, with all sorts of objects including humans, is a secondary reality to first, the reality accessed by consciousness and then to the reality accessed by language. Harman's point is that we need to re-orient philosophy's focus, to de-center (not destroy or remove altogether) the access of human thought and language by broadening the scope of such theories. Oddly enough, Harman finds his object-oriented muse in the phenomenological work of Martin Heidegger.

In *Tool-Being: Heidegger and the Metaphysics of Objects*, Harman argues that Heidegger's overall philosophy can be boiled down to his tool-analysis found in the first section of *Being and Time*. For Heidegger, a tool typically appears to Dasein as a utility or a readiness-to-hand (*Zuhandenheit*). This readiness-to-hand is what makes the hammer appear as hammer, as a tool that hammers. However, as Heidegger notes, "The peculiarity of what is proximally ready-to-hand is that, in its readiness-to-hand, it must, as it were, withdraw [*zuruckzuziehen*] in order to be ready-to-hand quite authentically" (B&T 99). In other words, in order for the hammer to be truly something we can use, part of its "hammer-ness" must withdraw from our perception of it as useful tool. And what withdraws for Heidegger is precisely the object in itself, or its presence-at-hand (*Zuhandenheit*). His proof lies in the surprise Dasein finds itself in when its hammer breaks. Suddenly, an object that was in use as an object is now a steel head with wooden handle, an object made up of multiple parts. As Harman remarks, "As a rule, tools are not present-at-hand, but *ready-to-hand*. For the most part, they work their magic upon reality without entering our awareness" (T-B 18). But when they do break, when they oscillate from readiness-to-hand to presence-at-hand, what is hinted at (or in Harman's terms, "alluded to") is the subterranean world of objects, the inner substance that makes an object what it is. Why just a hint or allusion? For Harman this is because "presence-at-hand is simply not an adequate description of the being of any entity—person, hammer, chandelier, insect or otherwise" (19). If a tool is seen only as its readiness-to-hand, its presence-at-hand withdraws; while, if the same

tool is seen in its presence-at-hand, its utility or readiness-to-hand is forgotten. Instead, any object (including humans), according to Harman, exists in system of both, a system he calls "tool-being."

But, to clarify, Harman does not keep tool-being solely in the realm of equipment and tools. Instead, he argues that even human Dasein is caught up in this tension between appearing and withdrawing. For, "on the one hand, Dasein executes [*volzhieht*] its own existence no less than [the readiness-to-hand of] drills or bridges do; its essence is nothing more than to exist, to exist as a factical reality. On the other hand, Dasein is just as present-at-hand as anything else, with its face and body and family name and register of good and evil deeds" that all withdraw and appear at relevant times (134). And it is in this inclusion of humans into tool-being that Harman effectively breaks from correlationist thought. By allowing the same structure of ready-to-hand and present-at-hand oscillation to apply to both things and people, Harman denies a separate reality for subjects and objects. Instead, as Harman notes, what this means is that "Dasein is no better than one entity among others, and therefore cannot provide the unique key to understanding those others. But unlike Dasein or birds or paper, presence-at-hand and readiness-to-hand are not specific entities among others, since tool-being is a universal mode of all entities rather than some sort of limited category of patented gadgets" (134). Therefore, object-oriented thought gives reality to objects apart from all else, apart from human thinking, language, and even relations and correlations to other objects. Ontologically, for Harman, "Being *is* tool-being" (135). Such realism holds no object over another as more real. And it is with this new and strange realism, where a Styrofoam cup is just as real as a Chihuahua, which is just as real as an iPad, that we can finally develop a fuller notion of posthumanism.

1.10 Posthuman Objects – On Not Getting Rid of the Human

One of the problems an object-oriented approach faces is precisely the problem that posthumanism ran into earlier—that it is somehow antihuman. The complaint goes as follows:

by focusing on objects, aren't we simply reversing the correlationist model so that now things rather than humans are the center of our discussion? In other words, aren't we simply swapping one for the other rather than dealing with the correlationist error? And on first glance it might seem so. Instead of favoring the subject side of the dichotomy we now appear to favor the object side. We arguably haven't even touched the split between the two, or the reliance upon the object by the subject if the point is merely to substitute one for the other.

However, in favoring the object over the subject, object-oriented thinking does not wish to delete the human from the equation, but instead raises up the forgotten realm of everyday objects in order to deny a subject-only reality. One could easily substitute other words for the term "object" such as machine (as Bryant does in later writings), unit (Ian Bogost's word for objects), and actor (Bruno Latour's word for such things). If there is any validity in the above complaint, it is that we do not have a better word for "object." If object-oriented thinking were to deny any human interaction, perturbations, and observations, then the answer would be "yes," the correlationist circle is simply being flipped. However, this is not the case. Instead of denying the human access to the world, much like correlationism denied nonhuman objects access to each other, object-oriented posthumanism wishes only to level the playing field by arguing that all objects (including humans) have the same amount of access to all other objects. If in our understanding of the posthuman, the human subject continues to exist as a center, whether in consciousness or language, much like transhumanism and other correlationist philosophies believe, the reality of desks, bridges, hurricanes, and circuit boards is denied. But if, the goal of posthumanism is to blur the boundaries (or deny they ever existed) between humans and nonhumans, and to de-center human subjectivity from its role of the only world-building entity, then object-oriented philosophy is surely a step in that direction.

To this end, the definition of posthumanism set up at the beginning of this chapter must be reexamined and expanded. Earlier it was stated that a true posthumanism must perform two actions: 1) it must blur the boundary between the human and the nonhuman, and 2) it must

work against the humanist notion that the human subject is at the center of the universe. Originally, transhumanism was seen as way to blur the boundaries between humans and nonhumans—specifically, machines. Yet, in misconstruing the purpose behind such boundary blurring, transhumanism sought only to expand the humanist view of the world by favoring rational thought and language over the material body. The lesson of transhumanism, then, is that the first tenant of posthumanism—to blur the boundaries of the human and the non-human—must work in tandem with the second tenant—to de-center the human subject. Object-oriented posthumanism, on the other hand, requires that no object (human or non-human) be seen as having complete access to the world. As Halberstam and Livingston put it, "the posthuman does not necessitate the obsolescence of the human; it does not represent an evolution or devolution of the human. Rather it participates in re-distributions of difference and identity. […] The posthuman does not reduce difference-from-others to difference-from-self, but rather emerges in the pattern of resonance and interference between the two" (*Posthuman Bodies* 10). Object-oriented posthumanism puts forward just such a space for the resonances and interferences of objects to be examined and with which to be experimented. By leveling the playing field, in that all things are objects including humans, we can finally arrive at a true posthumanism.

1.11 The Action of Objects

Yet, if rhetoric is to include objects, then it must also develop a notion by which objects do more than simply move. We saw in Burke that the nonhuman world of motion has an influence on symbolic action, but can this posthuman rhetoric now claim that objects act? We have seen how the notion of withdrawal comes from Harman's reading of Heidegger's tool-being. Objects, for Harman, both appear and withdraw from appearance simultaneously so that no object is ever exhausted by its relation to itself or any other object. This notion of tool-being, then, does not favor humans but instead, as Harman notes, "tool-being is a universal mode of all entities rather than some sort of limited category of patented gadgets" (*Tool-Being* 134).

Harman goes on to expand tool-being by applying his object-oriented philosophy to Heidegger's fourfold (earth, sky, divinities, and mortals) in an attempt to explain how objects can be read as more than mere motion.

But first, for Heidegger, this fourfold comes about through questioning the notion of dwelling. To build is to dwell, for Heidegger, and to build as dwelling is to preserve and spare the autonomy of things. Heidegger argues in "Building, Dwelling, and Thinking" that:

> The fundamental character of dwelling…reveals itself to us as soon as we reflect that human being consists in dwelling and, indeed, dwelling in the sense of the stay of mortals on the earth. But "on the earth" already means "under the sky." Both of these also mean "remaining before the divinities" and include a "belonging to men's being with one another." By a primal oneness the four—earth and sky, divinities and mortals—belong together in one. (149)

Another way to put this is to say dwelling requires a specific action that "gathers" the earth, the sky, the mortals, and the divinities. Dwelling results in a oneness of Being that is not necessarily completely developed in the human sphere. Much like Harman did with his tool analysis, one might also expand dwelling beyond the subject to the nonhuman object. But what do these objects-as-dwellings gather? The answer, as Heidegger sees it, is precisely the fourfold of being.

In the same essay, Heidegger uses a bridge as his example of how a thing "gathers" the fourfold. As Heidegger notes, the bridge brings the banks to the forefront by bridging them across the stream. It is through the bridge, designed as bridge, that it sets one bank apart from the other, but in doing so also gathers each bank together with the stream. Or in Heidegger's words, the bridge "brings stream and bank and land into each other's neighborhood" (150). And, in so doing:

> The bridge *gathers* to itself in its own way earth and sky, divinities and mortals. Gathering or assembly, by an ancient word of our language, is called a "thing." The bridge is a thing—and, indeed, it is such as the gathering of the fourfold… But the bridge, if it is a true bridge, is never first of all a mere bridge and then afterward a symbol. And just as little is the bridge in the first place exclusively a symbol, in the sense that it expresses something that strictly speaking does not belong to it. If we take the bridge strictly as such, it never appears as an expression. The bridge is a thing and *only that*. Only? As this thing it gathers the fourfold. (emphasis in original; 151)

These things, then, act by *gathering*. They gather the earth, the sky, the divinities, and mortals. However, as Harman argues, we should not read this fourfold of entities as representative of a larger group of objects. They are, instead, meant to be read metaphorically.

The problem though, as both Heidegger and Harman remind their readers, is that to discuss one part of the fourfold is to also find that the other three parts are mirrored in the same moment. Therefore, for Harman earth does not simply mean dust, soil, clay, or water. Instead, earth should be read as "the concealed, the bearing and supporting system on which all else forever rests but which itself forever recedes from view" (*Tool-Being* 197). Here, earth becomes the underlying system or structure of objects; the soil of the bank (being made up of a certain chemical composition) gives it its color but also the ability to be cut through by a stream and crossed over by a bridge. And, sky should not be read as the heavens or as weather events, but as "the sphere of revealed entities, the stars and comets but also potatoes and lakes that seduce us with their blatant energies" (197). So that when tools break, and are present-at-hand, they can be gathered as sky; a bridge appears as whole entity, but also as wooden planks connected by a metal supports and arches. So too, the divinities are not, for Harman, God or the gods but "the 'concealed sway' that is mirrored in every entity" (198). In other words, as the object's forever receding substance, every object maintains a divine withdrawal that can only be hinted at through allusion. Here, Harman closely approaches a notion of Platonic Forms that always exist above and beyond their respective objects. And finally, mortals are not to be read as human subjects for Harman, but as "the kingdom of the as-structure, [belonging] to the zone of reality as 'revealed'" (198). Or, to put it another way, the term "mortals" refers to the object-as-object: hammer-as-object, bridge-as-object, or computer-as-object, so that each object-as-object has its own autonomous existence apart from its parts and other objects.

If we continue with Harman, objects do not simply gather their environment, but also their inner, withdrawn being. The bridge gathers its structure as malleable and flexible, but also strong and withstanding. The bridge gathers its parts—i.e., its steel beams and cables, its

supports and braces, and its stone arches. The stone also gathers its substance as bridge, forever receding regardless of whether it gets repainted, re-welded, or re-cabled. And finally, the bridge acts in gathering itself as an autonomous, whole object, able to perturb the banks, the wind, and commuters.

The point, here, then is to show how in being (i.e., in existing) an object gathers not only its parts, but also its relations with other objects while at the same time not allowing itself to be reduced to any of those parts or relations. As Heidegger argued above, the bridge is not merely a symbol, nor is it simply one entity among others. Instead, the bridge is a "thing" that has as its being an active process of *gathering*. It gathers its parts, its relations with other objects, its withdrawing substance, and its potential to be other into a single irreducible thing. And in this way, objects act.

What this means for rhetoric, then, is that a potential exists in the posthuman that allows development beyond human symbol-systems to include the non-symbolic, the nonhuman, and the previously "non-rhetorical" missing masses. At the very least, a rhetoric that oriented itself towards objects would add to the already expansive multitudes of materialist rhetoric being developed: those focusing on bodies and corporeality, those focusing on technology and cybernetics, and those focusing on ecology and the environment. At the very least, a true posthuman rhetoric would allow us to recognize the potential for the often overlooked world of motion, and that the rhetorical scene contains a form of agency, an agency that is continuously flexing upon human "actions."

1.12 Recapitulation and Forward Movement

Humanism favored language and human consciousness over the nonhuman, material realm. In response, posthumanism offered a way to blur the boundaries between the human realm and nonhuman realm in an attempt to show that perhaps such a distinction was itself a human construct. Although transhumanism offered the model of the cyborg in an attempt to do just this, it was shown that transhumanism wished only to expand the anthropocentric model of

humanism at the detriment of the material human body. Because of this, transhumanism cannot be seen as a true posthumanism in that it does not adhere to the second of two posthuman axioms: 1) it must blur the boundary between the human and the nonhuman, and 2) it must work against the humanist notion that the human subject is at the center of the universe. Instead, transhumanism can be read as a form of correlationism which purports that the world and all objects are merely mirrors of language or human consciousness. Correlationism holds to a realism in which all things, human and nonhuman, can be reduced to the human realm.

Working against correlationism, object-oriented philosophy argues for a realism in which all objects are on an equal ontological playing field, in which a spoon and a fork are equally as real as a politician and a textbook. In making such an argument, object-oriented philosophy does not wish to get rid of the human subject, but instead allows that all that can be said of the subject can be said of the object. In this way, object-oriented philosophy both de-centers the human subject and blurs the boundaries between the human and the nonhuman—thus becoming a form of posthumanism.

As for rhetoric, Scot Barnett pointed out that there seems to be a material turn in recent scholarship. An object-oriented rhetoric, then, would draw attention to the "missing masses" that have previously only existed on the side of motion in Burke's motion/action dualism. And even though Burke seemingly closes off the importance of motion on action by focusing on human symbolic action, he leaves open an avenue for further exploration by admitting that such an attempt can be made. Deborah Hawhee points out that Burke himself came to understand rhetoric by way of working through the non-symbolic, material human body. Instead of relying upon metaphor as a guiding form of analysis, Burke argues that synecdochic clustering points to the way that language covers up at the same time it reveals—so that every moment of symbolic action is a moment of forgetting material motion. Using synecdochic clustering, object-oriented rhetoric begins by asking "what else is involved in a persuasive act besides human

symbolic action?" In asking such a question, object-oriented rhetoric attempts to blur the line between nonhuman motion and human action by exploring the ways in which objects act.

Heidegger and Harman have laid the groundwork for these active objects, but more work needs to be done. In Heidegger's notion of dwelling, objects were shown to act in gathering their external relations in the metaphorical fourfold of earth, sky, divinities, and mortals. Harman expands this gathering by placing the action internally for each object. Recognizing that objects are not merely their external relations, nor their internal parts, Harman finds that objects (including human subjects) both gather and perturb each other and themselves. In other words, by gathering their parts and relations, along with their internal withdrawn being and structure, objects act and are not simply moved or move.

In the following chapter I will expand on the philosophies of two object-oriented ontologies—those of Graham Harman and Levi Bryant. Using Freud's essay, "The Uncanny," I develop a logic by which both of these philosophies operate. Even though both philosophies are set up in opposition to correlationism, each proposes an object that is both present and withdrawn, expressing external qualities while at the same time holding a myriad of virtual powers in reserve. Because of these uncanny splits, both Harman's and Bryant's objects can be read not as static, unchanging things, but are objects filled with both knowns and unknowns. The uncanny, therefore, allows both Harman and Bryant to develop objects that, at their core, are contingent. And, I argue, it is this contingency along with an uncanny logic that will allow for the existence of an object-oriented rhetoric.

CHAPTER 2

OBJECT-ORIENTED ONTOLOGY AND EVERYDAY OBJECTS

2.1 Introduction

It is not fantastic to claim that humans live in a world inhabited by all sorts of nonhuman entities including junk, trash, trinkets, and toys. It is rather odd, however, to claim that all of these objects matter. For example, the goal of the site, *Significantobjects.com* was to see if given narrative significance, random everyday objects could take on objective significance, as well. As the site explains:

> A talented, creative writer invents a story about an object. Invested with new significance by this fiction, the object should—according to our hypothesis—acquire not merely subjective but objective value. How to test our theory? Via eBay! (*SignificantObjects.com*)

As demonstrated from some of the entries, these objects are not “rare” or “important” objects by any means. In fact a lot of the times these objects are purchased from thrift stores or garage sales for just a couple of bucks (max). A “fictional” account of the object's significance is added and then sold on eBay—usually purchased for way more than the item was originally worth.

Human thinking and narrative are powerful tools. Above all, what the *Significant Objects* project argues is that an object only matters when there is a narrative attached to it. Existence for things requires stories from and for human subjects. This type of realism that is “for humans” (a realism labeled correlationism); however, is taken up as a moment of contention for recent posthuman philosophies, especially that of object-oriented ontology. Correlationism, in its most simple form, is an inability to think of a reality outside of the human mind/world correlate.

The following chapter is in part a review of the two dominant object-oriented philosophies, and in part an examination of the rhetorical structure of each. Both philosophies are opposed to correlationism, and both argue for a world apart from human thinking and being as primary sources of reality. But instead of centering their philosophies around narrative or language, I argue that object-oriented thinking, regardless of whether or not it is philosophy or

rhetoric, works by way of an uncanny logic, where things both appear and withdraw, and where objects contain both external qualities actualized from hidden reserves of potential powers and internal substances. In this way, I claim that Graham Harman uses the discourse of Freud's uncanny to propose an object that oscillates between appearance and withdrawal, while Levi Bryant posits his split-objects according to the Lacanian uncanny or *extimate*. The uncanny, therefore, allows both Harman and Bryant to develop objects that, at their core, revolve around contingency. And, I argue, it is this contingency and uncanny logic that will allow for the existence of an object-oriented rhetoric.

2.2 The Uncanny and the Hidden Nature of the Real

In his 1919 essay "*Das Unheimlich*," Sigmund Freud attempts to understand the feeling of the uncanny through his own psychoanalytic terms. And although he provides his own explanation of the psychology behind the uncanny, Freud's examination of the term itself can be broken into two parts even though both arrive at similar conclusions. The first part of Freud's work consists of looking at dictionary definitions of the word, *heimlich*. Ultimately, what Freud finds in this excursion into definitions is that the word *heimlich* "becomes increasingly ambivalent, until it finally merges with its antonym unheimlich" (134). Thus, "the uncanny (*das Unheimliche*, 'the unhomely') is in some way a species of the familiar (*das Heimliche*, 'the homely')" (134). Therefore, the two terms are inexplicably tied to each other, so that the familiar has a tendency to become strange, and the strange might be seen as simply "once familiar." Attributing part of this discovery to Schelling, Freud finds that "the term 'uncanny' (*unheimlich*) applies to everything that was intended to remain secret, hidden away, and has come into the open" (132). In this way, for Freud, the uncanny is not simply all that is strange, but that its strangeness relies upon a sense of overwhelming familiarity in order to achieve such a status.

In part two of his examination, Freud turns his attention to E.T.A. Hoffmann's story, "The Sandman." Attacking it as a formalist literary critic might, Freud reads the text in terms of motifs and character analyses. After performing a close reading of the actual story, Freud

begins to pick out multiple themes he relates to the uncanny. Among them are notions of blindness, the double, return of the dead, unknown self-observation, repetition, and the inability to distinguish animate objects from inanimate ones. Each of these motifs or reoccurring themes, however, points to a single lesson for Freud:

> This is the fact that an uncanny effect often arises when the boundary between fantasy and reality is blurred, when we are faced with the reality of something that we have until now considered imaginary, when a symbol takes on the full function and significance of what it symbolizes, and so forth. (150-51)

In other words, the uncanny, for all of its strange literary effects, can be described as structuring a form of realism that is both strange and familiar—that is, the uncanny is found at times when reality is seen as something more than what appears to the senses. The everyday and its objects, become weird, or strange by way of the uncanny. Or, as Nicholas Royle puts it, "[the uncanny] makes the familiar (the self, desire, memory, sexuality, everyday language and behaviour) uncomfortably, even frighteningly unfamiliar" (Royle 24). In terms of realism, then, the uncanny presents a reality in which everything, every object and every subject, is contingent, surprising, and perhaps horrifying.

More importantly, the uncanny relies on a *familiarity* and *comfort* with things in order to be potentially surprising, if not frightening. Take for example the novel *Cujo* by Stephen King. In King's narrative a normal, mild-mannered Saint Bernard becomes an uncanny murderer—rivaling the likes of other fictional human monsters such as *Nightmare on Elm Street*'s Freddy Krueger and *Friday the 13th*'s Jason Vorhees. Cujo exists as both familiar family dog and horrifyingly strange slasher. Yet what makes Cujo truly uncomfortable is that while he exists as monster, he in some way remains a familiar family pet. What the uncanniness of *Cujo* points out, therefore, is that what is surprising about reality is that it is both reliant upon one's familiar experiences but seemingly separate from them. In order to be surprising, reality must be autonomous from human senses but in order to be horrifying, human experience must take reality as familiar or given. However, there is a tendency for what becomes familiar to also become comfortable and commonplace. Human perception becomes reliant upon the familiar in

order to make sense of it. But it is precisely in this erroneous perception of reality as "given" and familiar that object-oriented thought has its origins.

2.3 Correlationism and Everyday Objects

In *After Finitude*, Quentin Meillassoux argues that the current trend in philosophical realisms is to deny a reality outside of thought (typically described as naïve realism) in favor of a "correlation" between the human and world. For Meillassoux, "By 'correlation' we mean the idea according to which we only ever have access to the correlation between thinking and being, and never to either term considered apart from the other" (13). Correlationism, then, finds the human subject as the center of the world, in essence, making its own reality through the correlation between human thoughts, consciousness, and language and the world it describes. So that, as Meillassoux points out, "it becomes possible to say that every philosophy which disavows naïve realism has become a variant of correlationism" (13). Thinking of a world is synonymous with the reality of that world for correlationism. For the correlationist, the tree across the street is only as real as it exists in thought or language. No tree, no object for that matter, can ever fully exist *on its own* without being thought.

This type of correlationist thinking posits the world as inside the human subject. Or as Meillassoux argues:

> Correlationism consists in disqualifying the claim that it is possible to consider the realms of subjectivity and objectivity independently of one another. Not only does it become necessary to insist that we never grasp an object 'in itself, in isolation from its relation to the subject, but it also becomes necessary to maintain that we can never grasp a subject that would not always already be related to an object. (13)

Therefore, in correlationist philosophies, the human subject carries around with him or her, the entirety of the world. He or she has access to that world through consciousness and language. Objects are what one thinks or says they are; the apple is red because the English language describes it as such.

However, this familiarity with the world through consciousness and language becomes radically unfamiliar once the "arche-fossil" is introduced. For Meillassoux, the arche-fossil is not

simply representative of a time when humans were not part of the Earth's ecosystem. Instead it is real matter, with real qualities. As he sees it:

> I will call 'arche-fossil' or 'fossil-matter' not just materials indicating the traces of past life, according to the familiar sense of the term 'fossil,' but materials indicating the existence of an ancestral reality or event; one that is anterior to terrestrial life. An arche-fossil thus designates the material support on the basis of which the experiments that yield estimates of ancestral phenomena proceed – for example, an isotope whose rate of radioactive decay we know, or the luminous emission of a star that informs us as to the date of its formation. (22)

What the arche-fossil does, then, is make the correlationist view of the world uncanny. The arche-fossil becomes something for the correlationist that was meant to remain hidden, but thanks to modern empirical science has not only come into the open, but has shined a light on a reality prior to any form of correlation.

For Meillassoux, there are two ways in which correlationism deals with the uncanniness of the arche-fossil. On the one hand we have the weak model of correlationism, which argues that there does exist something outside of our thinking about an object, but that that *something* – that thing-in-itself – is itself unthinkable. The reason Meillassoux identifies this model as a "weak" form of correlationism is that "the Critical [or Kantian] philosophy does not prohibit all relation between thought and the absolute. It proscribes any knowledge of the thing-in-itself (any application of the categories to the supersensible), but maintains the thinkability of the in-itself. According to Kant, we know *a priori* that the thing-in-itself is non-contradictory and that it actually exists" (35). The problem for the weak correlationist, then, is not that we do not *know* the thing-in-itself *exists*, but that this existence can never be fully represented in thought or language, for it is always beyond such attempts. The uncanny nature of the arche-fossil, then, is relegated to something thinkable, but ultimately unknowable.

The strong form of correlationism, on the other hand, maintains that even this knowledge (i.e., that the thing-in-itself exists) is itself unattainable. "By way of contrast," as Meillassoux sees it, "the strong model of correlationism maintains not only that it is illegitimate to claim that we can *know* the in-itself, but also that it is illegitimate to claim that we can at least

think it" (35). Or, to put this position another way, even the thought of the in-itself is a thought, and therefore not a form of privileged *knowledge* about the in-itself, so that nothing escapes the circle of thought-world correlation. In this way, Meillassoux finds the strong form of correlationism merely "absolutizing the correlation itself," in that its "basic line of argument may be summarized as follows: it was claimed that the Kantian notion of the thing-in-itself was not only unknowable, but also unthinkable. But if so, then it seems that the wisest course is simply to abolish any such notion of the in-itself" (37). To be a strong correlationist means there is no truth outside of human subjectivity, or that "anything that is totally a-subjective cannot be" (38). And in this way, strong correlationism outright denies the surprising, uncanny nature of the arche-fossil.

Apart from recognizing and theorizing correlationism, Meillassoux offers one of many solutions to breaking through it. However, his solution involves working within correlationism in order to break free from its circle. Another philosopher, Graham Harman, recounts the following in *Towards Speculative Realism* about the desire to offer alternatives to the correlationist view of realism:

> Rather than a unified school, Speculative Realism has always been a loose umbrella term for four markedly different positions: [Harman's] own object-oriented philosophy, Ray Brassier's eliminative nihilism, Iain Hamilton Grant's cyber-vitalism, and Quentin Meillassoux's speculative materialism. In some respects these positions are incompatible, but as their collective name indicates, all combine a realist element with a speculative one. By "realist" I mean that these philosophies all reject the central teaching of Kant's Copernican Revolution, which turns philosophy into a mediation on human finitude and forbids it from discussing reality in itself. By "speculative" I mean that none of them merely defend a dull commonsense realism of genuine trees and billiard balls existing outside the mind, but a darker form of "weird realism" bearing little resemblance to the presuppositions of everyday life. (1-2)

Speculative Realism calls attention to the uncanny nature of things by first allowing the surprising, horrifying, subterranean reality of objects to come forward into existence alongside the human subject with all of its familiar paths of thinking and speaking. And second, Speculative Realism grapples with the reasons why what might seem familiar or homely is in

fact terrifyingly "weird." Although as Harman notes, there are other philosophies that fall under the umbrella of Speculative Realism, this project will focus solely on the *object-oriented* variety.

2.4 Tool-Being and Quadruple Objects

With object-oriented philosophy, Graham Harman builds an ontology that works against the correlationist method of thinking about reality. Object-oriented philosophy (and later, object-oriented ontology) flies in the face of the primary maxim of correlationism—that one can never consider thought and world outside and apart from each other. Rather, Harman proposes the following:

> Instead of beginning with radical doubt, we start from naiveté. What philosophy shares with the lives of scientists and bankers, and animals is that all are concerned with *objects*. […] Along with diamonds, rope, and neutrons, objects may include armies, monsters, square circles, and leagues of real and fictitious nations. All such objects must be accounted for by ontology, not merely denounced or reduced to despicable nullities. […] My point is not that all objects are equally real, but that they are equally objects. (*Quadruple Object* 5)

In other words, for Harman everything is an object. Paper cups, toasters, asphalt, pollution, mobs, and Christmas carolers are all objects, which in turn gives each of them an ontological realness denied by correlationism. Rather than dismissing the thing-in-itself as a nullity (strong correlationism) or saying that it cannot be thought (weak correlationism), Harman argues that every object in this world (including humans) has an ontological reality that is irreducible to any other object, any of the object's parts or characteristics, or to any relation the object might come into—including human language and consciousness. Or to put it another way, anything that is real is also an object.

Keeping in mind that this type of realism is ultimately akin to the Freudian uncanny, Harman's realism allows each thing to be frightening and surprising. Building off of Martin Heidegger's account of tools and equipment in *Being and Time*, Harman argues that it is by way of an initial polarization that objects are uncanny. As Harman understands it, things for Heidegger are split into tools that are ready-to-hand (*zuhandenheit*) and broken tools that are present-at-hand (*vorhandenheit*). Readiness-to-hand is, for Harman, Heidegger's term for the

way humans typically encounter the world: “For the most part, objects are implements taken for granted, a vast environmental backdrop supporting the thin and volatile layer of our explicit activities” (*Tool-Being* 18). Objects that are ready-to-hand, then, are seen as a mere use-function and not as material aggregates made up of parts and molecules. In Heidegger’s famous example, the hammer is seen as ready-to-hand in its utility as hammer, a tool used to “hammer” other objects. For Heidegger, the everyday world is experienced as a readiness-to-hand primordially. It is only when this hammer breaks, that its dual-being comes into view.

Presence-at-hand, or broken tools, requires a different way of seeing the object in question. In Heidegger’s account, an object is present-at-hand when it appears to human Dasein not as a tool for use (a hammer that hammers), but as a thing with its own substance (the hammer’s *hammer-ness*). Presence-at-hand is at best, for Heidegger, a fleeting glimpse of an object that seems to exist in a different realm. For Harman, though, there are not two types of objects—objects that are ready-to-hand and those that are present-at-hand. No, instead as Harman argues, all objects are *both* ready-to-hand and present-at-hand. In this sense, the hammer is *both* a useful, ready-to-hand hammer, and also, always lurking beneath this appearance, a substantial existence of wood, steel, and glue shown in the hammer’s presence-at-hand.

Contra to Heidegger’s insistence on human Dasein being the sole being that encounters objects as present-at-hand and that readiness-to-hand is the common everydayness of experience, Harman argues that all objects, including humans are caught up in the “oscillation” between readiness-to-hand and presence-at-hand. As he states:

> The problem with [Heidegger’s] belief is that Dasein does not really stand outside the opposition between tool and broken tool, but oscillates between these two poles as much as any hammer ever did. […] Only the analysis of tool-being fully pushes us beyond the human sphere, pointing to an ontological fissure in the heart of all entities in the world, which are not mere gravel to be trampled upon by the sensitive ambiguities of Dasein. (*Tool-Being* 134-5)

In this way, all objects move from being tools with specific uses in appearances as specific “some things”—race cars, chairs, pecans, etc—and appearing as something at all—i.e., things

made up of other things, made up of other things. This oscillation between a readiness-to-hand and a presence-at-hand, what Harman calls "tool-being," is therefore primary to any object's existence as a real object—including human beings. Thus, to be an object, for Harman, is to participate in tool-being.

But there is more to tool-being than this oscillation between tool and broken tool. Whereas Heidegger placed the importance of his tool analysis on the object's readiness-to-hand, leaving the more ambiguous presence-at-hand to the realm of human Dasein, Harman reverses this importance, favoring instead to see presence-at-hand as primordial. In other words, tool-being does not refer first to the usefulness of an object for a human subject and then to its subterranean reality. Instead, tool-being (as Harman figures it) points to the constant withdrawal of all objects from any relations said objects might form. As he clarifies in his later, *The Quadruple Object*: "When I stare at a river, wolf, government, machine, or army, I do not grasp the whole of their reality. This reality slips from view into a perpetually veiled underworld, leaving me with only the most frivolous simulacra of these entities" (39). In reversing the importance of readiness-to-hand over presence-at-hand, Harman attempts to explicitly deal with the object's thing-in-itself. An object, for Harman, is never a static thing replete with an unknowable substance, but is instead first and foremost a withdrawn reality that can never be exhausted by its use or readiness-to-hand—a distinction that is fundamental to object-oriented philosophy.

There is yet another polarization found in Harman's objects: that between the object's existence as an autonomous entity and the object's relations with other objects (both in terms of parts and external relations). To this point, Harman again builds off of Heidegger's philosophy, finding his grounding in the fourfold of earth, sky, gods, and mortals. To recap, Harman maintains that any literal reading of this fourfold is essentially a *mis*reading. The fourfold should instead be read metaphorically and in reference to four specific poles of any single object. Originally, in *Tool-Being* and its companion text, *Guerrilla Metaphysics*, Harman argued that we

could rearrange the fourfold by way of two binaries: “tool/broken tool” and “something at all/specific something.” However, in his later *The Quadruple Object*, Harman sees this fourfold split in more practical terms, between an object and its qualities.

Instead of earth, sky, gods, and mortals, Harman substitutes Heidegger’s fourfold with real objects, real qualities, sensual objects, and sensual qualities. But Harman notes, “The relative lack of poetry in this newest model compared with Heidegger’s is due not to some hideous aesthetic preference for desert landscapes: rather, it is because the drama for us lies not in the poles themselves, but in the tensions between them” (97-98). What Harman argues for here is an expansion of the tension he saw between tools and broken tools beyond that of mere appearance. Objects have four sides, four relating or mirroring poles that come together in very specific ways.

But as a reminder, objects are essentially uncanny, which means that these four points of any single object do not have to only be taken as external relations. In other words, although he speaks of real objects and sensual objects as seemingly separate from each other, Harman continually assures his readers that there are not two realms of objects, real (the strange side that withdraws) and sensual (the familiar, phenomenological side) nor are there two subsequent and respective realms of qualities. Instead, any object has both a real side and a sensual side—that is, any object is uncanny in the Freudian sense, or both strange and familiar. To clarify, Harman offers us the following:

> [T]he sensual is what exists only in relation to the perceiver, and […] the real is whatever withdraws from that relation. But if we consider a real hammer, it is not just withdrawn from any relation that other entities might have with it. The hammer is also *composed* of relations between its component objects. And insofar as every object must have pieces (for otherwise it would be an inarticulate lump) this suggests an infinite regress of objects. (110)

And Harman is not uncomfortable with such a regress, for the uncanniness of an object lies in both its external relations and tensions with other objects (both real and sensual), and also with its internal relations with its parts. Yet, it is these tensions, between real objects, sensual objects, real qualities, and sensual qualities that object-oriented philosophy about which object-

oriented ontology worries, because it is these tensions that create space, time, *eidos*, essence, and the human understanding of the world.

2.5 The Tension Between Things

To begin with, Harman distinguishes the real from the sensual by way of appearance. While the objects of everyday, those phenomenological objects that pervade the world, show themselves in experience and are encrusted with all sorts of sensual qualities (such as color, texture, taste, weight, etc.), real objects and real qualities are always withdrawing from any phenomenological encounter. For example, one can experience the tree outside his or her window, but what is actually experienced is the sensual tree with its sensual qualities. And yet, as Harman argues:

> The sensual object is something less than its sensual qualities, since these superfluous additions can be scraped away without affecting something less than its real qualities as well, since it deploys these qualities only in a certain specific way. On the one hand, we have the sensual object and its sensual qualities, half-welded together in experience. But on the other hand, to articulate what makes this particular [tree] what it is requires an analysis of real qualities that can only be hinted at allusively or obliquely by the intellect without ever becoming nakedly present. (29)

Therefore the tree of experience is the relation between a real object (an observer, though not necessarily human) and the sensual object and sensual qualities of the tree. For Harman, the sensual qualities are only possible because of the potential possessed by the tree's real qualities. And, hidden beneath each sensual object is a real object, submerged or withdrawn from any phenomenological explanation. And behind any sensual quality is pool of potential real qualities. In this way, all four poles mirror each other so that focusing on one pole will undoubtedly involve the other three.

However, there are four tensions that bear further examination. For each of these four, Harman delegates a certain function: time, space, *eidos*, and essence. And each of these relations reengages the uncanny in slightly different ways. The first of these, time, is the name Harman gives to the relation between sensual objects and their sensual qualities. His reasoning

is that sensual objects (that is, objects of experience) seem to be both static and changing. So that:

> When we speak of time in the everyday sense, what we are referring to is a remarkable interplay of stability and change. In time, the objects of sense do not seem motionless and fixed, but are displayed as encrusted with shifting features. Nonetheless, experience does not decay in each instant into an untethered kaleidoscope of discontinuous sensations; instead, there seem to be sensual objects of greater or lesser durability. Time is the name for this tension between sensual objects and their sensual qualities. (100)

In this way, objects are temporal precisely because they appear to be changing by way of their evolving and rotating sensual qualities. Therefore, an apple appears to be ripe and ready to eat when it is bought; yet, a few hours or days later, bruises might begin to show up, signaling that the apple might be past its prime. Although it is the same sensual apple, the sensual qualities change, indicating that time has passed. Time becomes uncanny (and perhaps the uncanny becomes temporal) due to the familiarity of a seemingly static object and the strange, often surprising nature of its ever-changing sensual qualities.

The second relation, that between the real object and its sensual qualities is what Harman calls space. When a real object encounters the sensual qualities of another object or those of itself, neither object nor qualities can be exhausted since one relates (sensual qualities) and the other does not (real object). This distance, then, is space. Harman gives us the following example:

> Sitting at the moment in Cairo, I am not entirely without relation to the Japanese city of Osaka, since in principle I could travel there on any given day. But this relation can never be total, since I do not currently touch the city, and even when I travel to stand in the exact center of Osaka I will not exhaust its reality. Whatever sensual profile the city displays to me, even if from close range, this profile will differ from the real Osaka that forever withdraws into the shadows of being. (100)

Space is created precisely because of the presence and relatability of the object's sensual qualities and the submergence of itself as a real object. Therefore, the apple in the above discussion of time is spacial in the sense that there will always be a distance between the apple's sensual quality of redness and the substance of the apple as real object—a substance that is forever withdrawing from relation. What is uncanny about space, then, is the notion of an

object never completely revealing itself through its qualities—the uncanny always has something in reserve.

The third relation is called *eidos* and involves a sensual object's relation to its real qualities. For Harman, an object's real qualities can be seen as an indescribable pool of all possible sensual qualities that an object could manifest. In this way, if an apple has a sensual quality of redness, this is only possible by way of the apple's real quality for the potential to be red in the first place. As Harman sees it:

> [T]hese eidetic features [or real qualities] can in no way be sensual, insofar as no sense experience can possibly grasp them [and since they are forever withdrawing]. Instead they can only be known through categorical intuition: the work of the intellect and not of the senses. Such intuition points at those vital and never-visible traits that differ from the purely sensual character of the object. And this entails an articulation into parts that is foreign to the sensual object's unity. (101)

The sensual apple, therefore, unifies the contingent possibilities of its real qualities in its appearance as a red and delicious apple. These real qualities can never be known in advance of their manifestation in the sensual object, and only then can they be discussed retroactively as possibilities. In this way, an object's potential qualities act uncannily, forever remaining strange and hidden until retroactively making themselves thinkable. The real quality possessed by the apple that gives it the possibility to be red can only be alluded to once the apple has manifested itself as experiential or sensual object.

Finally, the fourth relation, or essence, is a relation Harman admits that can never be "accessible to human experience" (101). Essence is the relation between a real object and its real qualities. Since the real is always that which withdraws, for Harman, essence is the ultimate non-relation. He argues that:

> This tension between the real object and its real qualities has always been called its essence, though traditional realism lacks Heidegger's remorseless sense that the real is entirely withdrawn from all access. And as a reminder, whereas the traditional model of essence treated real qualities as mobile universals able to be exemplified anywhere, qualities according to the present book are shaped by the object to which they belong, just as the moons of Jupiter are molded by their planetary lord. (101)

Aside from pointing out that all real objects and real qualities withdraw from experience, what Harman means is that an object's real qualities are not an unending pool of all possible qualities in the universe, but are instead, limited by the real object itself. The red apple then can only possess real color qualities insofar as it is *essentially* an apple and not an orange or an eggplant. Essence closes off the contingency of the uncanny by limiting its horizon of possible surprising sensual qualities. Such closure can be said to give rise to familiarity, in the sense that if an apple were to randomly take on all sorts of other non-apple qualities, its essence would perhaps be indistinguishable from that other non-apple object.

Although not explicit, there is a sense in which Harman's fourfold can be read as a way to deal with the surprising and uncanny nature of objects. The object is uncannily temporal in the sense that it is both familiar and static but also strange and changing. The object is uncannily spatial in that its real object side is forever receding from relation, becoming hidden or unfamiliar to the sensual qualities it creates. The object is uncannily eidetic in that its seemingly familiar qualities show themselves only by way of an unfamiliar pool of real qualities. And lastly, the object maintains an uncanny essence in not only withdrawing from any relation to another object or its qualities (keeping itself strange or hidden), but also by limiting the potential qualities of said object, giving it a sense of familiarity.

In positing such relations, Harman maintains an uncanny realism counter to the realism proposed by correlationism. Instead of human consciousness and language taking center stage in the creation of the world, Harman gives credence to the surprising nature of everyday objects and their seemingly banal relations to each other by working through a structure of the Freudian uncanny. Objects, under Harman, do not *become* frightening or surprising—*they already are*. This uncanniness can be seen in both the tension between the real and the sensual, and also the between the object and its qualities. But whereas the Freudian uncanny (*unheimlich* or unhomely) was shown to rely on an already established notion of the familiar (heimlich or

homely), Harman's object-oriented ontology argues that this familiarity, a necessity for any philosophical realism, is indeed itself already strange.

2.6 The Exitmate and the Object

Whereas Harman relied on the language of the Freudian uncanny to describe his ontological objects, Levi Bryant, another Object-Oriented philosopher, uses the Lacanian *extimate* in order to describe the uncanny nature akin to all things. Unlike Freud's uncanny, which revolved around a sense of familiarity and strangeness, Lacan's extimate takes up notions of what is interior and exterior, of intimacy and alterity with regards to his subject. The intimate, that which is most personal, is also for Lacan that which is most secret or hidden. In a way, intimacy can never be understood outright, but must always be revealed, shown, or confessed. The extimate, though, is not the opposite of the intimate, but as Jacques-Alain Miller states in his essay "Extimity," "Extimacy says that the intimate is Other-like a foreign body, a parasite" (Miller). What this means, then, is that the extimate is not a thing or a place. Instead, it is a process by which the interior can be seen as exterior and that which is exterior can be found on the interior. In other words, extimacy is a process of actualizing alterity internally.

But before the extimate is actualized, another two-fold process consisting of alienation and separation must first set up the conditions for such an actualization. Both alienation and separation lay the groundwork for the most internal, yet foreign relation in the Lacanian subject, that of das Ding or the object-cause of desire. To begin with, the subject (prior to signification and identification) is forced with a choice. In *Rhetoric and Culture in Lacan*, Gilbert D. Chaitin describes the way this choice of alienation works in terms of subject-hood:

> Adopted from Hegel, Marx and their interpreters, Lacan's alienation designates the birth of the subject of language, an occurrence that is more like a stillbirth. The subject comes into existence through the discourse of the Other, when the Other…imposes a signification upon the individual, calling her to take up a particular function, investing her with a certain position in the human family or society at large…At this point the subject is confronted with the forced choice of the Lacanian *vel* (Latin for 'either,' 'or'), which results from the interplay of subject and meaning (attributes) in the functioning of language as predication: either he chooses being , thus losing out on meaning entirely, or he chooses the meaning imposed on him, and thereby forfeits that meaning-less aspect of signification which constitutes the unconscious. (183)

Therefore, the choice of alienation, and this forced choice of alienation can be boiled to down to the following: either choose meaninglessness and reject language and subject-hood, or you accept the meaning of the Other, and become an instrument of the Other, having subject-hood taken away from you. Either way, you will lose subject-hood. For Lacan, the only way out of this forced choice of alienation, is to recognize a third option, that of the choice itself.

Separation, then, is this way out of the forced choice of alienation. It opens up a space of unknown meaning in signification. If alienation offered the subject an "either/or," then in separation the subject defines his relation to the Other as a "neither/nor." As Chaitin understands it:

> Either the subject refuses language (meaning) entirely, in which case the nonsubject of psychosis results. From this point nothing further can result. Or she accepts meaning, in which case her individual being is crushed by the universalizing function of the signifier. From this "all" [present in the all or nothing choice of alienation] there is a possible way out, provided the totality of meaning can be disrupted. And that is just what separation involves: opening up a space of non-meaning within language; that is, forming an unconscious. (187)

To open this space up, the subject begins to move between signifiers, neither this one nor that one. And for Lacan, the space between signifiers is also the space of non-meaning in the desire of the Other; that is, the object-cause of desire—objet petit a.

In this way, the object and the Other are in opposition to each other, for both seek control over the subject. But, as Miller points out, Lacan transforms this opposition into a relation so that, "The Other…is no longer only the place of the signifier, there the object is included in the Other" (Miller). And by including the object in the Other, as Miller argues, Lacan emphasizes that the Other's existence is at best a moot point. As extimate, the Other functions in place of intimate alterity in order to jumpstart the subject by producing desire in the form of the object-cause of desire. For Miller, "The Lacanian Other, the Other that functions, is not real. That is what allows us to understand that [*objet petit*] *a* is real, to understand how this [*objet petit*] *a* as *plus-de-jouir* founds not only the Other's alterity but also what is real in the Symbolic Other. It is not a matter of a link of integration, of interiorization, but of an articulation of

extimacy" (Miller). In other words, as soon as the subject latches on to the object, the Other (as function, not as actual other) becomes emptied. As Lacan so often puts it, the Other does not exist.

The extimate, therefore, is an uncanny split between interior and exterior, where what was most intimate and personal has become exteriorized and foreign. The oscillation of the uncanny, then is close to that of Freud's, but with a major change in focus. Instead of the way an object is both present and hidden, the extimate points to the uncanny way an object is made up of both interior multiplicities and yet exists as an exterior individual entity.

2.7 Split Objects and Onticology

Much like Harman's divided object, Levi Bryant's onticology (his term for his own object-oriented ontology) proposes an object that is both autonomous and yet multiple in order to move away from a correlationist philosophy of the world. For Bryant, like with Harman, there is more to reality than the correlation between human thinking and being. However, unlike Harman's quadruple object that revolves around notions of present familiarity and hidden strangeness, Bryant's object is bifurcated between an interior virtual substance and exterior qualities. In this way, Bryant's onticology takes up the uncanny in terms of the Lacanian extimate rather than Harman's Freudian understanding. With Bryant the uncanny becomes an oscillation between intimacy and alterity without ever losing its strangeness.

In *The Democracy of Objects*, Bryant argues that the any entity can be understood as an object. This includes not only books, garbage cans, railroad spikes, and gravel, but also humans, baseball teams, and governments. Setting his project apart from epistemological understandings of how philosophy *knows* a "thing" or object, Bryant wishes to get at an ontological view of object-hood. As he states, "[Ontological realism] is the thesis that the world is composed of objects, that these objects are varied and include entities as diverse as mind, language, cultural and social entities, and objects independent of humans such as galaxies, stones, quarks, tardigrades and so on" (Bryant 18). But, "Above all, ontological realisms refuse

to treat objects as constructions of humans" (18). Unlike correlationist realism, where the human is the locus of reality, where mind and language compose reality; ontological realism (the realism of onticology) posits only objects. If something exists, it is an object. Bryant, therefore, pushes for a flat ontological view. Flat ontology is a way of explaining how everything is an object, so that (paraphrasing Ian Bogost) Bryant remarks, "all objects equally exist, but not all objects exist equally" (290). What a flat ontology means, then, is that insofar as objects exist, they are equal to each other; yet, insofar as their existence in the world has an effect on other objects, they are not equal. Objects can exist in hierarchical networks of multiplicities; but this does not mean that one object has more existence than any other. In other words, what can be said of one object, ontologically, must be said of all.

For Bryant, all objects are split-objects, split between an internal virtual proper being and their external local manifestations. What this means is, like Harman's sensual and real objects, Bryant's objects are both part of a number of relations with other objects but also withdrawn from any complete relation. They are both autonomous individual entities, and complex multi-relational multiplicities. And much like the Lacanian extimate, the ontological split present in all objects, for Bryant, is a process of actualization. However, instead of being split by way of signification and subject-hood, an object is split between its powers and qualities. As Bryant remarks:

> The characterization of [substances] as split-objects refers not to a physical split such as the idea that objects can always be broken in half or divided, but rather to the split between the virtual proper being of objects or their powers and their local manifestations or qualities. Here the point to be borne in mind is that objects are always in excess of any of their local manifestations, harboring hidden volcanic powers irreducible to any of their manifestations in the world. (70)

In this way, the object is essentially split between its potential and the actualizations of those potentials experienced through the object's qualities. To be clear, though, these potential powers are never merely *possible* powers, existing for the sake of an object's qualities. Instead, as Bryant argues, potentiality is a creative process, presenting itself only through the actualization of a quality. What is uncanny, or extimate, is precisely this creative process of

differences. Taking his cue from French philosopher, Gilles Deleuze's notions of virtual and actual, and rhetorician, Kenneth Burke's discussions over the paradox of substance, Bryant envisions his objects as generative machines, producing and being produced by *difference* itself. And it is through the object's substance, as a difference engine, that this extimate of potential is produced.

To clarify, an object's virtual proper being has two important characteristics. The first is that it is always withdrawn from any relation, even with itself. For Bryant, "The virtual proper being of an object is what makes an object properly an object. It is that which constitutes an object as a difference engine or generative mechanism. However, no one nor any other thing ever encounters an object qua its virtual proper being, for the substance of an object is perpetually withdrawn or in excess of any of its manifestations" (88). Instead, the virtual proper being of an object exists as a structuring warehouse of powers that "can only ever be *inferred* from its local manifestations in the world" (88). In this way, the substance or virtual proper being of an object is real, but remains virtual in that it cannot be experienced directly. Much like Lacan's Other who disappears once the *objet petit a* is actualized, Bryant's virtual proper being withdraws from any of the local manifestations produced by it.

Local manifestations, on the other hand, are split between two binaries: symmetrical/asymmetrical, and endo-qualities/exo-qualities. And again, the difference generated by these binaries revolves around an extimate. For Bryant the first distinction that should be made is between symmetrical and asymmetrical qualities:

> Symmetrical qualities are qualities that can repeatedly snap in and out of existence. For example, the various shades of color the coffee mug manifests are symmetrical qualities in that, barring a transformation of the endo-structure of the coffee mug, these qualities can come in and out of existence. Turn off the lights and the mug becomes black. Turn on the lights and the mug returns to that particular shade of blue. Asymmetrical qualities, by contrast, are irreversible qualitative transformations that take place within an object. These are qualitative transformations that can be produced by either the object itself, or through exo-relations to other objects. Thus for example, the bent figure of the tree is an asymmetrical quality produced by the tree's exo-relations to the wind and perhaps other plants in its vicinity it competes with for sunlight. The key point not to be missed with asymmetrical qualities is that they are irreversible.

> Asymmetrical transformations cut off other possibilities within the vector field of a substance's attractors. (119-20)

Qualities, therefore, can be either reversible, and therefore exist as symmetrical qualities; or, they can be irreversible, and thus exist as asymmetrical qualities. As Bryant emphasizes, though, the important difference between these two types of qualities is where the affects of these qualities are felt. On the one hand, symmetrical qualities pop in and out of existence, their affect is primarily on relations exterior to the object. The blue mug does not change interiorly when the lights are flipped on and off. On the other, asymmetrical qualities affect the interior of the object so much that they irreversibly change its potential powers. The local manifestation of the bend in a plant is an intimate affect of perhaps a number of relations including wind, soil, and the battle for light with surrounding plants. The bend points to an irreversible transformation internal to the object, consequently affecting the potentiality of future qualities.

And if the binary of symmetry/asymmetry was not enough, Bryant also splits an object's local manifestations between another extimate: between exterior relations and interior relations. Whereas the symmetrical/asymmetrical binary spoke to the extimate of affection from an object's local manifestations, Bryant's exo-/endo- binary speaks to the extimate of relations an object can have. As Bryant states:

> Exo-qualities are qualities that can only exist in and through a set of exo-relations to other objects. […] Endo-qualities, by contrast, are qualities that really are in the object. However, endo-qualities, as local manifestations of a substance, come about in two ways. First, endo-qualities are local manifestations that can come about through the internal dynamisms of an object independent of any other objects. Here the object need not be perturbed by another object for the endo-quality to be produced. Second, endo-qualities can come about through exo-relations to other objects, where these exo-relations irreversibly transform the local manifestation of the object. All asymmetrical qualities are of this sort. These events also harbor the power of transforming the endo-structure of objects, leading to the genesis of new singularities, powers, attractors, or vector fields in the virtual proper being of an object. (120)

In other words, exterior qualities or exo-qualities are formed through relations with other objects. Bryant often gives an object's color as an example of such an exo-quality, since color depends upon a number of other objects such as light, surface, and observer, in order to be actualized. Interior or endo-qualities, however, are formed either purely internally, through the object's

structuring process without relating to any exterior object, or through an irreversible affect of its exo-relations with other objects, such as the bent plant example from earlier. It is again, in this way, that Bryant invokes a form of the uncanny through an extimate of interior/exterior oscillation, so that at times, exterior affects interior affects exterior.

Objects, for Bryant, are just as weird and uncanny as those found in Harman's philosophy. Yet, the objects of onticology require one not to wrestle with questions of familiarity and strangeness, but with notions of what is interior, or substantial, to an object and what is exterior or qualitative. The Lacanian reading of the uncanny is precisely this struggle. But unlike Freud's uncanny, the Lacanian extimate is productive and not just terrifying. And so, the object qua extimate in Bryant's onticology becomes an act, a generative process that, like the *objet petit a*, resists complete signification.

2.8 Uncanny Logic and Rhetoric

Undoubtedly, there appears to be a logic to the uncanny—a logic that both Harman and Bryant follow. Because, aside from using words like appearance, withdrawal, exterior, and interior, each philosophy attempts to both blur the boundaries between subject and object by pointing to a wide network of things, while at the same time allowing all objects to keep their autonomy; this can be seen especially in Bryant's work, where the individuality of an object only comes about (creeps up?) through its relations with other objects.

Although a minor or, some might say, marginal work in his overall catalog of texts, Freud's essay "Das Unheimliche [The Uncanny]" is both an indelible essay for horror authors and critics, but also a unique essay in Freud's own work for a number of reasons. In his essay, "I Shall Be with You on Your Wedding Night: Lacan and the Uncanny," Mladen Dolar remarks that "In dealing with the different instances [of the uncanny], Freud is gradually forced to use the entire panoply of psychoanalytic concepts: castration complex, Oedipus, (primary) narcissism, compulsion to repeat, death drive, repression, anxiety, psychosis, etc. They all seem to converge on 'the uncanny'" (6). In fact, Helene Cixous, in her essay, "Fiction and Its Phantoms:

A Reading of Freud's *Das Unheimliche* (The 'Uncanny')" argues that the essay itself should be read as a work of fiction. Her point is that Freud's essay itself conjures up the uncanny when read outside of its psychoanalytic setting. And to some to degree Cixous is correct. As Nicholas Royle explains, "More than perhaps any other work by Freud, 'The Uncanny' itself seems uncanny in the sense that it keeps doing different things not only to the reader but also, somehow, to *itself*" (8). Regardless, Freud's essay is seemingly odd simply by its attempt at reading not the dreams and behaviors of his patients, but by presenting his very own reaction and reading to a work of fiction—E.T.A. Hoffmann's "The Sandman."

Following Ernst Jentsch's essay on "The Psychology of the Uncanny," Freud too uses Hoffmann's story as his example of the way the uncanny works in literature. Plot wise, "The Sandman" involves a young man, Nathaniel, who is engaged to a young woman named Clara, but who becomes infatuated with the automaton, Olympia. Nathaniel's actions are complicated by his increasingly disturbing visions of a man who Nathaniel believes to be the sandman, a character in a childhood story who tears out the eyes of little children who won't go to bed. The narrative of the story is initially broken up by letters to and from Nathaniel and his friend, Lothar and letters to and from Nathaniel and Clara. However, about midway through, the reader is given a steady narrator who details the events following the last letter. Already, with its movement between intimate correspondences and exterior narrator, "The Sandman" can be read as approaching the uncanny (and the extimate).

Among the many scholars who have studied Hoffmann and Freud's use of his work, Dolar's reading of the story is of particular interest because of his use of both the Freudian uncanny and the Lacanian extimate. For Dolar:

> Freud's account of the story hinges upon two relations: the one between the student Nathaniel, the hero of the story, and Olympia, the young girl of angelic beauty who turns out to be a doll, an automaton; the other between the Sand-Man figure, in his various guises as the lawyer Coppelius, the optician, Coppola, and the Father (later partly substituted by Professor Spalanzani). (Dolar 8)

Dolar proceeds to psychoanalyze each relation in terms of the extimate. What he ultimately finds, though, is that each person should be read as the uncanny double (or Other) for their partner. For example, when Dolar examines the relation between Nathaniel and Olympia, what he finds is that they mirror each other. Where a reader's initial recognition of the uncanny might be in the fact that Olympia is a mechanized doll (and not a human), Dolar argues that it is Nathaniel who acts in a weird manner. For Dolar, "There is a strange reversal in this situation: the problem is not simply that Olympia turns out to be an automaton…and is thus in the uncanny area between the living and the dead; it is that Nathaniel strangely reacts in a mechanical way. His love for an automaton is itself automatic; his fiery feelings are mechanically produced" (9). In this way, Nathaniel mirrors or doubles Olympia—so much so that Dolar calls Olympia, Nathaniel's "sister-image" (9). However, there is another way to read this fourfold set up by Dolar—a way that gets at both the logic of the uncanny and sets up the discourse of the uncanny that both Harman and Bryant use.

By arguing that Nathaniel and Olympia share in automated and mechanical responses to typically human experiences, Dolar blurs the boundary between human and machine. This relation is not unlike the one explored through Dekkard in Chapter One's discussion of transhumanism and *Blade Runner*. However, another way to read Dolar's fourfold is to recognize it as representing two logics of the uncanny. On the one hand, the relation between Nathaniel and Olympia is one of appearance and withdrawal. Even in Dolar's reading, what is uncanny about each of these two characters is the way their true natures either appear or withdraw. On the other hand, the relation between the Father and the Sandman centers on a notion of proximity. If we read the father as external (perhaps as a Lacanian "name-of-the-father," and thus as the symbolic legislative and limiting function over Nathaniel), the Sandman can be read as a frightening bit of the real in this symbolic function. For not only is Nathaniel mentally (or intimately) haunted by the Sandman, but the Sandman is also responsible for the father's death and seemingly defies being signified—he is at times called the Sandman, at

others Coppelius, and still at others Coppola. In this way, these two poles point to the blurring of the exterior/interior.

So, on one line one could place Harman's Freudian discourse of appearance and withdrawal. On the other, one would find Bryant's Lacanian discourse of interior and exterior. In this way, the Lacanian extimate, represented by the binary Interior/Exterior intersects at one point with the Freudian uncanny represented by the binary Appearance/Withdrawal. For object-oriented ontology, the point at which these two intersect is precisely the focus of its philosophy—the object. Seen in this way, the object is both an appearance and a withdrawal, and both an interior and an exterior. Each binary of the fourfold, therefore, represents an uncanny logic (and thus, discourse) in terms of realism.

Unlike the realism put forth by correlationism, which argues for the direct connection between human thinking and being, this uncanny realism divides the world into two overlapping, and often, blurred boundaries, and each according to their own uncanny logic. Uncanny realism argues that any object (including humans) is both partly present and fully withdrawn, so that what is seemingly exterior to an object, might in fact be a product of its own internal generative processes. Uncanny realism opens up the realm of contingency and potentiality for all beings, blurring all boundaries by having any two binary points fade into each other, so that what is and was familiar becomes radically unfamiliar. Uncanny realism makes what is real un-homely (un-human). For after all, as Freud points out, "[A]n uncanny effect is often and easily produced when the distinction between imagination and reality is effaced, as when something that we hitherto regarded as imaginary appears before us in reality, or when a symbol takes over the full functions of the thing it symbolizes, and so on" (150). What this means, then, is that there is a specific logic to the uncanny whereby the boundaries of a binary (imagination/reality, appearance/withdrawal, inside/outside, etc.) are allowed to bleed into one another without erasing one another. The logic of the uncanny is like a black inkblot on a piece of white paper, whereby the boundaries seem rather stark, yet upon closer inspection it becomes more difficult

to determine where the inkblot ends and the paper begins. And it is in this bleeding over that the reality, familiarity, and homeliness become uncanny.

Both Harman and Bryant use the uncanny to structure their respective philosophies. However, as ontology, each philosophy relies on a certain necessity—the object—for existence. The object is what grounds existence, it is a necessary condition for something to be; or to be is to be an object. As Bryant puts it, "[W]ithin the framework of onticology…there is only one type of being: objects" (Bryant 20). It would seem, then, that philosophy can only go so far in its posthuman project, since even before it opens up the world to contingency it puts forth a necessary condition. Therefore, philosophy is in need of a complimentary discourse—but one that is also guided by an uncanny logic.

For all of its arguments against correlationism and attempts to explain the object outside of human representation, object-oriented ontology approaches its philosophical project from the side of what is necessary, that is, what is known. If object-oriented ontology works, as I have argued, through the logic of the uncanny, then it does so beginning with what is present (or exterior) and moves backward to attempt to speculate on what is absent (or interior). By first proposing objects, and then attempting to understand how it is that they come into being, how they relate to each other, and how they ultimately meet their demise, object-oriented ontology proposes what is known and speculates on what is unknown.

Rhetoric, on the other hand (and as I will argue for in my third chapter) begins on the side of the unknown. It begins with moments of contingency, with the present, and with questions as to how an object deals with these contingent relations. Rhetoric, as I see it, is not simply concerned with persuasion, but instead positions itself prior to persuasion—rhetoric is found at the moment when the potential for any type of relation is formed. It is, in other words, found in the moment before persuasion is actualized. As David Metzger points out in *The Lost Cause of Rhetoric*, even one of the earliest definitions of rhetoric defines rhetoric not as "a means of persuasion; rather, it is, for [Aristotle], a way to discover how to persuade in any given

instance" which means that "rhetoric is the presumption, not the assumption, of the possibility of persuasion" (29-30). To put this statement another way, rhetoric follows an uncanny logic, not from the standpoint of what is already known (and working backward to understand that persuasion was indeed possible); but instead, begins with a presumed potential that persuasion is a possibility. So unlike object-oriented ontology, posthuman rhetoric should begin with a potential, or a contingency, and not with a necessity.

2.9 Recapitulation and Forward Movement

Correlationism posits a world whereby reality is dependent upon the human and is a direct correlate between being and thinking. Object-oriented ontology, on the other hand, proposes an uncanny realism, whereby objects oscillate between their apparent qualities and their withdrawing substances. For Graham Harman, Freud's uncanny aided in developing an object that holds both a sensual and real side. For Levi Bryant, Lacan's uncanny extimate helped him develop an object with an exterior filled with local manifestations or actualizations of its potential-rich, interior virtual proper being. Each philosophy, however, operates under the logic of the uncanny, whereby something that was meant to remain hidden has come to light, where familiarity is radically unfamiliar, and where the Other becomes internal to the personal.

Ultimately, though, this logic of the uncanny pointed out that ontology could only go so far in orienting oneself to objects. In order to further this posthuman project, something more is needed. In the next chapter I work through a definition of rhetoric that relies on a strict adherence to contingency. What I find is that if taken as an absolute for rhetoric to exist, contingency is not only found in all aspects of the rhetorical situation, but itself requires the recognition of the material form of "faculty"—or *dunamis*.

CHAPTER 3

THE (FOUND) OBJECT OF RHETORIC

3.1 Introduction

In the 1968 Italian (or Spaghetti) western, *Once Upon a Time in the West*, director Sergio Leone adeptly plays around with traditional cinematic conventions. The opening scene in particular stretches the limits of an audience's patience as they are forced to wait, not only for the opening titles, but in a dingy railroad station with three villainous gunmen. Unlike even contemporary opening scenes and title sequences, which typically run alongside musical scores or voice-overs, the first ten minutes of *Once Upon a Time in the West* are nearly completely free of dialogue and music. Instead, Leone's camera focuses on the three ill-meaning cowboys. As Leone cuts from one gunman to another, nothing significant happens to further the plot. Instead, attention is given to each gunman, merely showing how each passes the boredom of waiting. On top of these cuts, Leone amplifies each natural sound in the setting, so that the audience is treated to loud plops of water that drip onto Woody Strode's hat, a creaky windmill as Al Mulock splashes water on himself, and an intermittent buzzing of a fly around Jack Elam's face. But aside from bringing the scene to life and making one wait, a critical audience might wonder what these over-amplified sounds allow Leone to reveal.

One answer could be that Leone is attempting to merely create an atmosphere ripe with tension, so that the audience knows something important is about to happen. And initially this seems to be the case when later in the same opening scene a train finally arrives. As the three gunmen line up, hands down by the holsters, the anticipation for another figure to step off of the train is almost palatable. But as the train starts leaving without seeming to drop anyone off, this tension begins to deflate as the actuality of the situation appears to be that whoever these

gunmen were waiting for simply did not show. So it comes as a surprise to both onscreen characters and the audience alike when as the gunmen are walking away, the strange, disorienting sound of an amplified harmonica announces that the cowboy did arrive—he just arrived on the other side of the train, out of sight of both the audience and the gunmen. The amplified harmonica, however, is not only the first hint at a musical score in *Once Upon a Time in the West*. It, too, like the drops of water, the creaking windmill, and the buzzing fly becomes a nonhuman actor in this opening scene, for it too exists in the film—it is played by the newly arrived cowboy. But, again, one might question Leone's use of the material over the more traditional symbolic. Why the absence of speech? Why the absence of music?

Film historian Christopher Frayling in his book on Leone entitled, *Something to Do with Death*, argues that what Leone and his musical director EnnioMorricone were doing was creating a space of captivation. Frayling quotes Morricone's explanation regarding the development of this opening sequence:

> I had been, some time before [*Once Upon a Time in the West*], to a concert in Florence where a man came onto the stage and began, in complete silence, to take a stepladder and make it creak and squeak – which went on like this for several minutes, and the audience had no idea what it was supposed to mean. But in the silence, the squeaking of this stepladder became something else. And the philosophical argument behind the experiment was that a sound, any sound from everyday life, isolated from its context and isolated by silence, becomes something different that is no part of its real nature…[Leone] made those extraordinary first ten minutes of *Once Upon a Time* from that idea. (Frayling 283)

It is by exaggerating the natural elements of the scene that Leone and Morricone were able to build a space where anything could potentially happen. The "creak of a wooden door, the sound of chalk on blackboard, a windmill in serious need of oiling, the wind, crunching footsteps, the whimperings of the station agent, the fluttering of a caged bird (as one of the *pistoleri* makes angry cat sounds at it), the crowing of a cock, the windmill again, the slamming of the metal door…" all point to the divide between the natural or material world and the traditional symbol-filled cinematic openings (283). The audience gets the sense that something might be missing, or that something is yet to come.

In a recent review of two of Graham Harman's books (*Tool-Being* and *Guerrilla Metaphysics*) in *Enculturation*, Scot Barnett—following the sociological theory of Bruno Latour—proposes a new turn in rhetorical studies, away from the social or human in order to focus in on the nonhuman masses that make up our world. It is in the spirit of this "material turn" in rhetoric that Barnett argues that "the timing seems right to continue questioning after our missing masses, and in so doing to consider not only what these missing masses are but also what the question of the missing masses means for rhetoric and composition and what implications it has on how we presently think about writing, rhetoric, and communication more generally" (Barnett 2). In questioning theses missing masses, Barnett proposes a type of object-oriented rhetoric that turns its attention to the ways in which the nonhuman, material world is just as persuasive as the human one.

To date, Barnett has yet to propose how (or even what) such a rhetoric would operate (and look like), much less the goals or purposes of creating such a rhetoric. However, Barnett's review itself was fueled by a new faction in philosophy called "object-oriented" philosophy (referred to herein as the synonymous, object-oriented ontology). Barnett writes, "The two volumes comprising [Graham] Harman's discussion of object-oriented philosophy, *Tool-Being* and *Guerilla Metaphysics*, develop an ontology of objects that, among other things, serves to expand philosophy's horizons to allow for investigations of things other than human consciousness and perception" (2). For object-oriented philosophy, then, all objects exist in their own right and, more importantly, humans do not determine this existence. At the same time, objects are always withdrawing from each other and us, exposing a hidden realm of potentiality inherent in each object. And it is this potential found in every object that allows object-oriented ontologists to make the claim that objects act with a certain amount of agency that is unique to each object. In this way, object-oriented ontology attempts to de-center the human being, placing it squarely in the realm of the posthuman. For an object-oriented ontologist, humans and human existence do not make the world; instead, the world exists (and will exist) without the

need of human beings. And it is this archeological and historical (if we can use that word) *fact* that object-oriented ontology feels is being overlooked by contemporary postmodern humanisms.

Yet, there exists a recognized problem for any object-oriented ontology. If objects exist but are always withdrawing from each other (so that no object ever fully defines another), how is one ever to discuss objects, let alone be oriented towards them? For Barnett, rhetoric offers something unique to this rising philosophical movement that philosophy itself cannot provide. He concludes his review by stating:

> If […] rhetoric is distinctive precisely because of its capacity to attune human beings to the veiled backgrounds and subterranean worlds constituting being and relations in everyday life, then it may well be the case that rhetoric is itself already object-oriented in the way Harman understands objects. For rhetoricians, therefore, the challenges and opportunities at stake in developing an object-oriented rhetoric are—and should be—quite significant. At the very least, the idea of an object-oriented rhetoric compels us to re/consider the very nature of rhetoric itself and to think carefully through the implications our missing masses suggest about rhetoric as both a human art and an ontological condition potentially operable alongside human beings in the world's vast and inexhaustible carpentry of things. (5)

An object-oriented rhetoric, therefore, would allow us not only to reexamine the role and art of rhetoric, but more importantly—as I will argue—it would finally allow us to uncover the missing masses of nonhuman agents that inconspicuously persuade human thought, action, and reaction and allow these missing masses a form of agency not unlike the kind humanity has granted itself.

In what follows, I reexamine the agential power of the rhetorical situation and find that the only absolute in any given rhetorical act is the function of contingency. First, I follow the concept of the rhetorical situation as first established by Lloyd Bitzer and then advanced by Richard Vatz and Barbara Biesecker. Like Biesecker, I too find the concept of authorial agency as it relates to a rhetorical situation to be unsettling. However, rather than merely deconstructing the rhetorical act, I argue that both the situation or scene and the speaker-subject are similarly contingent agents, neither of which are sufficient causes of a rhetorical act. If, as Aristotle wrote, rhetoric is to be defined as a "faculty" (or *dunamis*), any number of material objects can be said

to have agency. By examining the material form of faculty (or *dunamis*), first in the work of David Metzger and then in that of Jean de Groot, I find that authorial agency in a rhetorical act is at best an abduction of agency, whereby agency is assigned retroactively to the act. Instead, I argue that the rhetorical situation is an ambient, contingent space where any number of objects (both humans and nonhumans) can, and often do, act. Neither the symbolic situation, nor the symbol-using speaker-subject can be read as master-agents.

Furthermore, by beginning with the necessity of contingency, the split between symbolic action and non-symbolic motion is disrupted. If objects and scene have just as much contingent power as do speaker-subjects, the difference between motion and action becomes inconsequential. Human and nonhuman agents, then, become mixed up in a rhizomatic stew of inter/intra-actions. If this is the case, and I argue that it is, rhetoric is in need of a non-hierarchical language whereby human agents become just one ingredient in a much larger rhetorical situation of all sorts of acting objects.

3.2 Who's Responsible for the Rhetorical Situation?

Although Lloyd Bitzer's 1970 article, "The Rhetorical Situation" was envisioned as an attempt to answer what a rhetorical text consisted of, his influence on the study of rhetoric has lasted much longer than most who attempt to answer this type of question. Most first year composition textbooks continue to use some form of Bitzer's construct of the rhetorical situation. Still, his well-known answer as to what rhetoric is for him bears repeating:

> [A] work of rhetoric is pragmatic; it comes into existence for the sake of something beyond itself; it functions ultimately to produce action or change in the world; it performs some task. In short, rhetoric is a mode of altering reality, not by the direct application of energy to objects, but by the creation of discourse which changes reality through the mediation of thought and action. (Bitzer 3-4)

Rhetoric, for Bitzer, is not only a form of symbolic action as discourse, but is something that has the ability to change reality. Yet, as Bitzer remarks, all rhetorical discourse is brought about into existence by "some specific condition or situation which invites utterance" (4). The situation itself is responsible for the rhetorical act. In other words, the situation is what brings about the

rhetorical utterance, not necessarily the speaker or rhetor. For Bitzer, the situation causes the rhetorical act to happen.

Three years later, Richard Vatz published "The Myth of the Rhetorical Situation" in which he argues specifically against Bitzer's placement of the origin of rhetoric in the situation. Instead, as Vatz sees it, the origin lies primarily with the speaker. So for Vatz, "[rhetorical] statements do not imply 'situational characteristics at all': the statements may ostensibly describe situations, but they actually only inform us as to the phenomenological perspective of the speaker" (Vatz 154). In this way, instead of placing the origin of the rhetorical act in the situation, as Bitzer does, Vatz argues that the speaker herself is the true origin point. Even if her statements have contextual aspects, for Vatz the utterance is still brought about by a symbol-using animal. Human ingenuity and creativity, as Vatz figures, are too important (and contingent) for the rhetorical act to push to the more limiting "situation"—a move he accuses Bitzer of making. Therefore, for Vatz, the cause of the rhetorical act is seated solely in the speaker's lap.

In response to Bitzer and Vatz, Barbara Biesecker's "Rethinking the Rhetorical Situation through the Thematic of D*ífférance*" attempts to deconstruct the notion of an origin of a rhetorical act, arguing instead that because of the generative structure of language, an origin can never be pinned down. Using Derrida's notion of *dífférance*, Biesecker finds that "neither the text's immediate rhetorical situation nor its author can be taken as simple origin or generative agent since both are underwritten by a series of historically produced displacements" (121). In other words, since language and symbol systems operate by a system of difference that is also a deferment—one signifier follows and is followed by another signifier—one cannot be certain that the origin of a rhetorical act is either the situation or the speaker because both are preceded by an unaccounted for history. For Biesecker, then, when viewed through *dífférance*, the rhetorical situation as a concept becomes less about whether or not the speaker or the situation is the origin of the rhetorical act, since neither holds authority over the act.

Instead, the rhetorical situation for Biesecker becomes interplay between the text, speaker, and audience(s), each of which follows the thematic structure of *dífférance*.

What this allows Biesecker to do, then, is to show how the subject (like the text) is herself de-centered:

> Simply put, the deconstruction of the subject opens up possibilities for the field of Rhetoric by enabling us to read the rhetorical situation as an event structured not by a logic of influence but by a logic of articulation. If the subject is shifting and unstable (constituted in and by the play of *dífférance*), then the rhetorical event may be seen as an incident that produces and reproduces the identities of subjects and constructs and reconstructs linkages between them…[I]t marks the articulation of provisional identities and the construction of *contingent* relations that obtain between them. (emphasis mine; 126)

Working through *dífférance*, Biesecker is able to destabilize both the situational text and the subject-speaker in favor of the generative effects both have on each other and more importantly an assumed (i.e., assumed by both Bitzer and Vantz) audience. In other words, Biesecker's revised rhetorical situation points out that there is no origin point or absolute of any rhetorical situation.

However, Biesecker is in no way promoting her own vision of an origin for a rhetorical situation, stating that she uses "deconstruction not as a transcendental signifier that will lead the way to truth, but as a *bricoleur's* or tinker's tool—a positive lever—that produces rather than protects the exorbitant possibilities of rhetoric" (127). In other words, it is only by and through the lens of *dífférance* that Biesecker is able to reconsider the rhetorical situation as anything different from what Bitzer or Vantz set up. And while Biesecker's use of Derridian deconstruction is useful in destabilizing the situation and the subject-speaker in order to further the development of the audience, she stops short of truly removing the notion that there is an author of a rhetorical event.

Following Biesecker's lead, the rest of this chapter will take up an even more extreme starting point and lens for the rhetorical situation. Instead of using *dífférance* as a way to de-center the speaker and the situation/text, I argue that it is only by way of an absolute contingency that the entire rhetorical situation can truly be de-centered from both its situation

and its speaker-subject. What Biesecker gets to, but fails to fully develop, is that the relation between speaker-subject, the situation, the text, and the audience are *all similarly contingent* in that they could all exist in an entirely different way, or even not at all. Because of these contingent relations, rhetorical situations must be viewed as ambient, or immersive worlds with no single authorial agent. Agency, then, becomes dispersed amongst all available actors—both human and nonhuman alike. And it is only by starting from such absolute contingency that the rhetorical situation can be truly freed from its hierarchical discussions of agential origin.

3.3 The Necessity of Contingency

Absolute contingency is a philosophical concept developed by French philosopher, Quentin Meillassoux. For Meillassoux, the notion of correlationism revolves around a basic assumption. The correlationist assumes that the world is *given*, in that it is what we make of it either through our thinking or through our senses. In other words, the world is such because humans experience it as such. The correlation between human being and world is essential for such a standpoint. Yet, correlationism carries with it an assumption that the world is stable enough to be given in the first place. As Meillassoux points out, however, regardless of the form of correlationism one takes (either weak or strong), both rest on a prescribed notion of facticity in opposition to any notion of contingency. To clarify, Meillassoux states that:

> When I maintain that this or that entity or event is contingent, I know something positive about them – I know that this house can be destroyed, I know that it would have been physically possible for this person to act differently, etc. *Contingency* expresses the fact that physical laws remain indifferent as to whether an event occurs or not – they allow an entity to emerge, to subsist, or to perish. But *facticity*, by way of contrast, pertains to those structural invariants that supposedly govern the world – invariants which may differ from one variant of correlationism to another, but whose function in every case is to provide the minimal organization of representation: principle of causality, forms of perception, logical laws, etc. (39)

Facticity, then, is what grounds correlationist thinking in a world that can be given, because one never experiences the world else wise. My daughter's pink hair bow is pink because it always appears that way when I turn on the light in her room. The pinkness of the hair bow is something the hair bow has, it is a given, or an absolute of that object. However, for

Meillassoux, even though these forms of facticity (such as physical forms, natural laws, forms of perception, local laws, etc.) appear to be fixed, one should not make the mistake of absolutizing them. For, "although these forms are fixed, they constitute a fact, rather than an absolute, since I cannot ground their necessity – their facticity reveals itself with the realization that they can only be described, not founded" (39). Therefore, not being able to claim the facticity of the world as an absolute, one is left with a world that is describable but not necessarily given.

Facticity, though, should not be discarded. Instead, it is through facticity that Meillassoux is able to get at what he believes to be the only absolute. For if facticity fails at absolutizing the laws of nature, logical laws of reason, and the physical laws of the universe, it opens up the door for a necessary amount of contingency, where there is no logical reason for something to be one way and not another. In other words, as Meillassoux argues, "instead of construing the absence of reason inherent in everything as a limit that thought encounters in its search for the ultimate reason, we must understand that this absence of reason *is*, and can *only* be the *ultimate* property of an entity. We must convert facticity into the real property whereby everything and every world *is* without reason, and is thereby *capable of actually becoming otherwise without reason*" (emphasis in original; 53). Ingeniously, Meillassoux turns the absence of an absolute shown by facticity into a positive attribute for the objects of the world. For it is through the understanding that the facticity of the world merely describes things and does not provide one with an absolute about a given world, that one is able to also understand that the only positive knowledge about a thing is that it could be otherwise – i.e., it is contingent.

In this way, Meillassoux has taken an assumption made by correlationism – that the world is given to us – and shown how even that assumption points to the necessity of contingency. What this philosophical move allows Meillassoux to do is to demonstrate that the facticity of the correlation itself (the correlation between world and human thought) is only possible if one allows for the absolute necessity of contingency. In other words, by pointing out facticity's reliance upon contingency one forces the correlationist to recognize that the

correlationist circle of mind/world *could be otherwise*, and thereby is not an absolute. Instead, as Meillassoux posits, the only absolute is the necessity of contingency.

Contingency, for Meillassoux, is more than just the eventual possibility to exist otherwise. This paper, or computer file, will eventually cease to exist (by deteriorating, being burned, being infected by a digital virus, etc.). However, absolute contingency is more than this "empirical contingency" (62). As Meillassoux explains:

> Absolute contingency differs from empirical contingency in the following way: empirical contingency – which we will henceforth refer to using the term 'precariousness' – generally designates a perishability that is bound to be realized sooner or later. This book, this fruit, this man, this star, are all bound to perish sooner or later, so long as physical and organic laws remain as they have been up until now. Thus 'precariousness' designates a possibility of not-being which must eventually be realized. By way of contrast, absolute contingency – which we shall henceforth reserve the term 'contingency' – designates a *pure possibility*, one which may never be realized. For we cannot claim to know for sure whether or not our world, although it is contingent, will actually come to an end one day. (62)

In this way, contingency is beyond merely disintegrating or dying out. It is the "pure possibility" to be something else or nothing at all. Contingency does not rely on any other necessity, such that an object necessarily has to follow some laws of nature or physics. For an absolute contingent view of the world, even these laws (although they may never change) are themselves contingent. "Contingency is," as Meillassoux defines it, "such that anything might happen, even nothing at all, so that what is, remains as it is" (63).

The repercussions for a rhetoric that takes its starting point as absolute contingency are two-fold. First, any rhetoric that maintains absolute contingency as its primary principle must recognize that any rhetorical event is itself always-already contingent. This means that although rhetoric is itself timely, it follows a *kairotic* timeliness that is ripe with potential. Second, any rhetoric that starts by way of an absolute contingency recognizes the contingent nature of agency, such that no one thing (human or nonhuman) has complete control over the persuasive act. This means that rhetorical agency is dispersed rather than centered in one agent. But this also means that the human subject-speaker is not the only agent. Instead, such a rhetoric must

allow for the influence of the non-symbolic, nonhuman world, so that if all agency is contingent, then human agency is no more or less effective (to use Bitzer's words) at "altering reality" (4).

3.4 Space, Time, and Discreet Rhetoric

For Bitzer, the situation, setting, or rhetorical scene calls the speaker-subject to act. As Bitzer argues, "If someone says, That is a dangerous situation, his words suggest the presence of events, persons, or objects which threaten him, someone else, or something of value" (1).The situation becomes the authorial agent, dictating its own response. In fact, for Bitzer, "[o]ne might say metaphorically that every situation prescribes its fitting response; the rhetor may or may not read the prescription accurately" (11). The problem with Bitzer's understanding of rhetorical scene, however, is that it assumes the solidity of the situation. Bitzer's faulty assumption is that in order for a speaker-subject to act according to the situation, the situation itself must be fully identifiable—so that every rhetorical situation A calls for response X, every rhetorical situation B calls for response Y and so on. For example, Bitzer argues that "Rhetorical situations exhibit structures which are simple or complex, and more or less organized" (11). Instead, as I argue here, rhetorical situations are almost always cloudy, complicated scenes filled with all sorts of co-generative agencies.

But in order for the rhetorical situation to be thought of in this way, one must understand how rhetorical situations can be both demanding spaces but not authorial agents; and how such situations can be both timely but also open to infinite possibility. In short, one must first understand the necessarily contingent aspects of any rhetorical situation. In his essay "In the House of Doing: Rhetoric and the *Kairos* of Ambience," Thomas Rickert conceptualizes the space of the rhetorical situation as inherently ambient in nature. Ambience, a term used by British musician Brian Eno, refers to music "that is quiet, often moody, with minimal melody or structure. It often has a spatial quality, such that one gets the impression of sound becoming a landscape" (905-06). For Rickert, this notion of ambience is a rich metaphor for how rhetorical situations actually occur. An ambient rhetoric "would begin from a theoretical space that

understand the world as its best representation…In short, ambience seeks to put place, language, and body into co-adaptive, robust interaction" (904). The rhetorical situation is similar to Bitzer with one primary exception. Instead of a rhetorical situation that calls the speaker-subject to act, Rickert proposes a more contingent space wherein subjects, objects, bodies, minds, and all variety of situations and things "take part in" the rhetorical act. In other words, the ambient rhetorical situation doesn't simply will a speaker-subject to act, but implicates him/her in the act by allowing them in the situation. So that, as Rickert argues, "insofar as this 'taking part in' is ultimately the ambient order, it simultaneously includes and exceeds the 'subject' (916). The rhetorical situation, therefore, is immersive, melting agential authorship into strings and webs, favoring no particular strand or agent.

Rickert's notion of "taking part in" a rhetorical situation is strikingly different from the traditional understanding of how the rhetorical situation calls speaker-subjects into action. As Rickert points out, "This traditional notion depends on an autonomous, willing subject who capitalizes on a moment, seizes control of a situation when it is timely, and externalizes something internal in a rhetorical act" (912). What Rickert is referring to here is the temporal aspect of the rhetorical situation—*kairos*. For the traditional view of *kairos*, either the speaker-subject takes advantage of the situation or the situation pushes the speaker-subject to act. However, what's missing from the traditional understanding of *kairos* is precisely the contingency such a stance requires of all of those who participate. In his article, "Towards a Sophistic Definition of Rhetoric," John Poulakos defines rhetoric as "the art which seeks to capture in opportune moments that which is appropriate and attempts to suggest that which is possible" (36). With this definition, Poulakos builds on Aristotle and argues that rhetoric is not simply worried about the "how" and "why" of an act but also with the "when." This "when" of rhetoric denotes a temporality and importance of the rhetorical act that the "how" and "why" leave absent. In other words, the "when" helps develop context for the act, a context that covers the entirety of what Bitzer called "the rhetorical situation."

Yet, the "when" of rhetoric is intrinsically complex. As John E. Smith points out in his article, "Time and Qualitative Time," rhetorical time is uniquely doubled with respect to our need to express ourselves. Smith notes that within rhetorical time we can distinguish between *chronos* and *kairos*. "In *chronos*," for Smith, "we have the fundamental conception of time as measure, the quantity of duration, the length of periodicity, the age of an object or artifact, and the rate of acceleration of bodies, whether on the surface of the earth or in the firmament beyond" (47). Or, in other words, *chronos* measures time as length – the time in which we consistently live – or quantitative time.

So this taking into account the "when" of rhetoric appears not to be concerned with chronological or quantitative time and instead appears to be a decisive break from *chronos*, splitting off into specific opportune moments of *kairos*. James L. Kinneavy even finds that "although the term [*kairos*] does not occur in Aristotle's definitions of rhetoric, the concept of a specific act in a concrete case does. As in Plato, Aristotle's art is to be applied at a particular *kairos*" (67). Rhetoric, then, must be thought of as exhibiting timeliness, or as reliant upon an opportune moment. Poulakos goes on to clarify this figuration of rhetoric by stating that, "Clearly, the notion of *kairos* points out that speech exists in time; but more important, it constitutes a *prompting toward speaking* and a criterion of the value of speech" (emphasis mine; Poulakos 41). When one acts or speaks in any given case, it exists in time but apart from chronological time. But more importantly, for this traditional understanding of *kairos*, it is this break from *chronos* that wills the speaker-subejct to speak. *Kairos* as an opportune moment of time, therefore, is not simply any moment of time, but the right time, specific time, or in Smith's terms, a "qualitative time" that urges speech.

But the ambient way of looking at *kairos* addresses the rhetorical space and time from a more contingent view. Using the network theory of Mark C. Taylor, Rickert points out that neither is the speaker-subject taking advantage of a situation, nor is the *kairotic* moment willing a speaker-subject to action. Instead, the *kairos* acts as a kind of actualization both internal and

external to the rhetorical situation. Take, for example, the way in which Rickert (again using Taylor's ideas as a springboard) describes the act of writing:

> We, as writers, are not "in control" as we write; rather, we are written in the act of writing. And thinking, as the bringing together of different ideas and experiences from different people, places, and times, also conforms to the logic of complexity: all these strands combine and recombine, continuously adapting and re-adapting to each other, moving to points far from equilibrium, perhaps to a tipping point where transformation, and a new (albeit temporary) level of order emerges. It's less that the writer writing is in the middle than he or she is in the muddle—which is to say that the writer is caught up in ambience. (914)

Therefore, an ambient *kairos* and rhetorical situation implicates the speaker-subject rather than either being the passive tool of speech or the willing encounter. The speaker-subject merely finds him or herself entangled within the complexity of the situation and the contingency of powers actualized by the other multiple agents. The potential, or contingency of the situation, then, is not something sought out or simply experienced, but it is an immersive unfolding of powers, both human and nonhuman.

Much like the audience in the opening of *Once Upon a Time in the West*, rhetoricians are called to wait. And in their waiting, a contingent space is opened up, a space full of potential acts and utterances. If rhetoric is something that happens in a situation and according to a *kairotic* moment, then it must begin from an absolute or primal contingency. When done so, the rhetorical situation becomes an ambient space filled with multiple inter/intra-acting agents while *kairos* is seen as the moment of actualization, when something could be otherwise, or not change at all. And in its fullness of contingency, the rhetorical situation and *kairtoic* moment are uniquely distinct from a traditional notion of author-centered, agential rhetoric. Instead, the rhetorical act must be seen as housing all sorts of discreet powers from all sorts of discreet agents. Notebooks and pens have as much contingent potentiality to change reality as do human thought and speech. Computers, social media platforms, roads, and plastic bags suddenly carry with them a rhetorical potential previously unexplored, and because of this, rhetoric is in need of a new, less speaker-subject-centered orientation.

3.5 Rhetoric as Dunamis

If Rickert's formulation of an ambient rhetorical situation explained how important it is for rhetoric to begin with a notion of absolute contingency, when only focusing on rhetorical space and time, then more still needs to be said about the contingent beginnings of the speaker-subject. For Biesecker, the way to de-center the speaker-subject from the act of discourse that Vatz held so dear was to show how both language and the notion of the subject were themselves, constructions which could easily be dismantled according to the lens of *dífferance*. However, one need only turn to Aristotle for a slightly more contingent definition of the rhetor and the rhetorician. For Aristotle, one is to "let rhetoric be defined as the faculty [*δύναμις* or *dunamis*] of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion" (4, 1355B). Focusing on what Aristotle demands of the rhetor (and rhetorician), David Metzger (in his book *The Lost Cause of Rhetoric*) finds the word *dunamis* as insightfully troubling since it is not only used to describe rhetoric, but also appears in Aristotle's *Metaphysics*. For rhetoric, *dunamis* is usually translated as "faculty," while in the *Metaphysics* it is defined as a potentiality or potency lying dormant in an object. But insofar as rhetoric exists or is something of a system for Aristotle (an object, at least for study), Metzger believes the two definitions can help inform each other. As Metzger sees it:

> Aristotle does not argue [that] rhetoric is a means of persuasion; rather, it is, for him, a way to discover how to persuade in any given instance. Rhetoric is the presumption, not the assumption, of the possibility of persuasion. Whereas some philosophers would deny that there might be a possibility for persuasion when persuasion is not taking place, Aristotle—who argues in his *Metaphysics* that for there to be "movement and becoming" in this world there must be potentiality (*dunamis*)—can argue that if there is such a thing as persuasion then there must be such a thing as a potentiality (*dunamis*) for persuasion. (30)

In other words, if rhetoric and the practice of rhetoric by a speaker-subject are to be defined as a *dunamis*, they, too, must have a potential to become otherwise—or they must be contingent in the sense that Meillassoux laid out. If there is such a thing as an act of persuasion, then for Aristotle as Metzger reads him, there must also be the potential to be persuaded or not.

And, like the "given situation" of the rhetorical act, the *dunamis* of rhetoric also points to a temporal dimension of argument, such that a rhetorician must change/act on the "now" of a

moment. As Metzger argues, “Truly, in the Aristotelian sense of the word, rhetoric is a *thing*; it is *now* in the making,” and it is the *kairos* or “now” of the faculty of rhetoric that allows it to be as such (38). But even if rhetoric is an action one performs *now*, and even if one accepts the unfolding or actualization of the rhetorical situation (as Vatz might argue for), what does *dunamis* as a faculty or potentiality mean for how rhetoric is taught? Can rhetoric be taught? Does one simply return to the question in Plato’s *Gorgias* as to whether or not rhetoric is a *techne*, or is rhetoric something more?

To answer this question, Metzger turns to Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* where he finds Aristotle arguing that potentiality (or *dunamis*) could either appear innate or it could come about through practice. For Aristotle, then, *dunamis* is at times a passive potentiality, waiting to take place, and an active potentiality brought about through a relation. Instead of attempting to locate rhetoric on one side or the other, Metzger allows rhetoric as *dunamis* to occupy both actualizations (passive and active), assuming that “the type of potency [*dunamis*] that is ‘innate’ (*suggeneis*)…implies ‘passivity’ [that] roughly corresponds to the ability to argue, which Aristotle says people acquire ‘at random’” (33). And yet, as Metzger continues, “[t]he other kind of potency [found in Aristotle’s work] comes from ‘practice [*matheisei*] or by rational formula [*technon*]’” (33). In other words, rhetoric requires both a passive ability or potential for persuasion, and an active practice of persuading. And since rhetoric requires both forms of *dunamis*, Metzger argues that Aristotle lets rhetoric, as *dunamis*, be both innate (likening it to definitions of rhetoric as an ability either one has or does not have), but also something one can learn (likening it to definitions of rhetoric as a *techne* or art). But this does not mean that rhetoric is purely psychological. Instead, Metzger finds that amongst these two forms of *dunamis* (both of which are actualized in rhetoric) there is a material component.

To better understand the material side of *dunamis*, Metzger gives us the following example:

> If one were to imagine two master builders, each assigned to build a house out of a different material, but one is asked to use reinforced concrete as a building material

> and the other is asked to use a tasty spinach pasta. Surely, it would not then be very kind to make a judgment of the relative abilities of the builders based on the resilience of their creations. There is such a thing, one must remember, as a passive faculty [*dunamis*], that is, the ability of something to have action performed on it. A patient may have to the ability to be treated medically, but…Aristotle would say that the tasty spinach pasta does not have the passive ability to be a building but that it has the passive ability to be eaten. (35)

What Metzger does here is explain how all matter, as Aristotle understood it, contains a passive faculty or potentiality to be formalized, so that the reinforced concrete has the potential to make a better building than one made out of a tasty spinach pasta. Therefore, another way of looking at the split between this innate or passive form of *dunamis* and the active form is a split between the material and the psychological. However, it seems as if Metzger leaves his discussion of the material realm with this tasty spinach pasta.

Instead, Metzger argues that rhetoric is the home of both the material and psychological forms of *dunamis*. So it's not surprising that ultimately Metzger places both forms of *dunamis* into the classical structure of the enthymeme. Because of rhetoric's reliance upon symbol systems, the logic or truth function of the enthymeme as a symbolic structure (or psychological form) goes without question. Yet, when it comes to the *material* form, (aside from the earlier tasty spinach pasta example) Metzger simply recognizes Aristotle's own connection between the enthymeme and the body (*soma*). What's implied, here, though is that *dunamis*, or potential, needs to be formalized by a *rhetor* regardless of its final form.

This is not the case when contingency is taken as a primary axiom of any rhetorical act. Instead of being that which formalizes the potential of the rhetorical situation, the speaker-subject, like the *kairos* of the ambient or discreet rhetorical situation, becomes implicated in the act itself—that is, he or she is just as formalized in the rhetorical act as is everything else (scene, agency, act, and purpose). The speaker-subject or agent does not simply stumble upon the rhetorical situation, nor is he or she willed or urged to speak because of it. No, rather, because rhetoric itself is ultimately a contingent space, or *dunamis*, the speaker-subject is unfolded, actualized, or co-created—since he or she merely "takes part in" the act—along with

all sorts of other (human and nonhuman) agents. However, this last point needs further explanation.

3.6 Material *Dunamis*

What's missing from Metzger's account of *dunamis* in rhetoric, though, is a serious look at its actual material form, and not just in the symbolic form of the enthymeme. Focusing on this material side of potentiality will allow a form of agency that does not derive from the situation (*kairos*) or the speaker-subject (*faculty*). Instead, there exists a certain amount of potentiality in each object, a material *dunamis* that is irreducible to either a part of the object or its whole. What I argue for, then, is that because of the similar contingent nature of material *dunamis* and objects, rhetoric must accept the agency of nonhuman objects, opening a way for an object-oriented rhetoric.

In his essay, entitled "*Dunamis* and the Science of Mechanics: Aristotle on Animal Motion," Jean De Groot argues that by understanding Aristotle's theory on the causation of automata and its connection to biological processes, one can begin to see a much broader dependence on a form of *dunamis* for Aristotle that is perhaps not too different than the one just found in his *Rhetoric*. For De Groot, though, Aristotle begins with a principle he observed in the workings of a simple lever mechanism. The principle follows from a simple experiment, so that if one were to place a cone on a rotating disc, connect the apex of the cone to the center of the disc, and then turn the disc, what one would find would be that the force applied to rotating the disc would be actualized differently on the cone depending on where the measurement was taken. So that the farther out from the center of the disc, the wider and longer the cone has to travel. For Aristotle, this meant "that points on a moving radius are all moving at different speeds, and hence, the same force moves different points on the radius longer and shorter distances *at the same time*" (emphasis added; 43). In other words, different forces are at work simultaneously in the same mechanism.

For De Groot, Aristotle finds a similar principle at work both in the workings of an automaton and in the development of an embryo. In both cases, Aristotle saw this physical principle at work, only this time he could connect a causal component to the physical motion. For both mechanical puppets and developing embryos:

> An external agent is one of the causes, but is not a cause sufficient to bring into being the whole organism. One must think of a first cause moving another, which in turn moves another as with automatic marvels…The feature of puppetry Aristotle draws upon here is indeed the succession of orderly effects sustained apparently without contact with the initial formative agent. Yet the succession of causes is presented as part of the explanation of development, containing in some way a kernel of justification for one part of the embryo being capable of producing what is so much more than the part itself. (59)

In other words, neither the winder of the automaton nor the sperm are sufficient enough agents to bring about the entire object. Both objects, instead, initiate larger movements in objects to which they are not attached. So what sort of agency is at play, then? What drives these material objects beyond the initial agent?

The answer, according to De Groot, is *dunamis*—except this time it is a purely material form of potentiality. Like Metzger found in his tasty spinach pasta, each object, for Aristotle, contains a certain amount of *dunamis* or potentiality to act. By connecting the movements of an automatic puppet to the development of an embryo, Aristotle sought to develop a notion of *dunamis* in each situation. Or in the words of De Groot: "[Aristotle] uses the puppets to make explicit that [*dunamis*] is responsible for the continual developmental changes in the embryo" (61). Therefore, "understanding [*dunamis*] as a physical concept modeled on mechanical advantage makes sense of what Aristotle understands potentiality to contribute to the on-going change in the embryo. [Dunamis] *is power present in the situation, even if that power does not exist as a feature of single object*" (emphasis added; 61). To put this another way, *dunamis* becomes a omnipresent form of contingent agency (of potentiality), seen if not in the object, then in the situation; seen if not in the speaker-subject, then in the rhetorical situation.

Therefore, *dunamis* is a general agential principle at work in both the psychological as well as the material realms. Agency, then, cannot be divided between a willing situation and an

authorial speaker-subject. Instead, the parallel between the way the material form of *dunamis* works and the psychological or rhetorical form is somewhat striking. In both cases, *dunamis* as the power of potentiality or contingency is consistently at work to change and alter reality. However, De Groot is quick to point out that for Aristotle, although *dunamis* itself might be a general principle, some entities are more capable than others of being effected by *dunamis*. De Groot finds that for Aristotle:

> The plasticity of effect…is the difference between living things and automata. The translation of a small effect into different kinds of changes thus seems to be an additional implication of the analogy to the lever in animal motion. The key to this addition is alteration, again a capacity belonging to animal bodies. This capacity, once magnified, is able to incorporate change in other categories besides quality. The parts of animals have the ability to become larger and smaller, and sense perception and imagination can have the power of the things they represent…to the extent of producing alterations to the body. (62)

In other words for Aristotle the nature of *dunamis* does not change in any given situation. Instead, living beings have the ability to translate *dunamis* in more ways than non-living entities. So although there is a difference between human and non-human (or even living and non-living) entities for Aristotle, it is a difference in degree—more specifically, the degree to which they can be effected by or translate contingency. Instead of just being able to change qualities (for example, a blue mug suddenly becoming black in color once the light in the room changes), living entities are able to translate *dunamis* internally, perhaps effecting future encounters with similar situations.

What De Groot finds in Aristotle, then, is twofold: first he finds *dunamis* to be a general principle of any situation and object. Although not necessarily present in the object itself, *dunamis* as potentiality is seemingly always present in the situation. Secondly, De Groot finds that for Aristotle, agency is not something that necessarily begins and ends with a single entity. Because of the principle of the lever and its subsequent examples in both automata and embryological development, and because of the generality of contingency as *dunamis*, all objects act according to their potentiality; however, some objects are able to translate contingency in a more diverse manner.

What this means for rhetoric, then, is that one can no longer claim that there is a definite authorial agent to any given rhetorical act. No longer can Bitzer claim that the situation itself wills the speaker-subject to act, for both the situation and the speaker-subject abide by a contingent form of agency found in *dunamis*, placing the action of the situation on par with that of the speaker-subject. And no longer can Vatz argue that it is the speaker-subject who takes advantage of a given situation in order to act, for the entire rhetorical scene and all that inhabits it (both human and nonhuman) carries a similar potential or contingency to act. In this way, rhetorical action can no longer be clearly separated from non-action or motion. What this means again for rhetoric, though, is that a new language is needed for understanding the entire contingent nature of a *dunamis*-filled rhetorical situation.

But perhaps an example is in store. Consider the initial narrative of the 1980 film, *The Gods Must Be Crazy*, concerning a tribe in the Kalahari Desert who happen upon a discarded Coke bottle. As the vignette progresses, the Coke bottle seemingly causes the once peaceful tribe to erupt in social disorder. Now the traditional way of reading this film would be through metaphor—that is, the Coke bottle (since it was produced by the West) represents Western Culture, and everything that happens to the once peaceful and graceful tribe (i.e., the ensuing moments of jealousy, violence, and social upheaval) are simply shining examples of the West's influence on this and other cultures. In other words, the traditional way of reading such a narrative would be through reducing the rhetorical situation to a moment of language where one either understands the human speaker-subjects in the tribe as either seduced by the situation (understood as the West) or as willing subjects, taking advantage of the situation made peculiar by the bottle's appearance. Either way, these readings reduce the entirety of the situation to a single metaphor of East meets West.

The only question that needs to be answered for such a traditionalist reading is which one (humans of the West or human tribe of the East) is the authorial agent of the events that follow. Read in this way, there can only be two answers: either the West as rhetorical situation

is to blame, or East as willing speaker-subject is to blame. Now, the good rhetorician or film theorist would readily point out that there are other ways of reading this narrative, but that perhaps this is the most obvious to one's *traditional* critical apparatus. However, this traditional claim misses the point – a point essential to the type of rhetoric this paper wishes to develop.

If one takes contingency as a first principle of any rhetorical situation and if one takes serious the material form of *dunamis*, then this vignette cannot simply be read categorically as a metaphor of the destructive nature of the West. The bottle cannot be read as merely representing some other (whether that other is a country, ideology, or philosophy), but instead must be recognized as being an actor in its own right, with its own potential power and agency to alter reality. Therefore, just as the blue mug in chapter two cannot be reduced to its blueness when seen in another light, neither can the Coke bottle only represent the metaphor of East meets West. Rather, the Coke bottle in *The Gods Must Be Crazy* must be read as a real, independent object with an influence all of its own, divorced from any authorial agency either willed by the situation or a speaker-subject.

Once the reading that the Coke bottle as representative of some other ideology, point of view, or social organization is taken away, one is left with examining the bottle itself, its effects with its own singular ecology of surrounding agents. In other words, the *dunamis* of the bottle and the rhetorical situation are actualized in all sorts of ways from all sorts of individuals and through all sorts of relationships. The bottle is only one agent, but a non-traditional agent that affects a number of the other agents with which it comes into contact. Therefore, the bottle resonates with its environment from the time it first appears on screen. It is a beverage bottle, it is a gift from the gods, it is used to crush grain, it is perfect for rolling snake skins, and it makes music. In each instance, the bottle resonates in quite different ways without ontologically becoming a different object. And in each case, its *dunamis* is affected and translated by its surroundings in quite different ways. However, as seen in the film, the bottle resonates in other less obvious ways than these initial findings, for the bottle is also instrumental in bringing about

a degree of social unrest. If understood as an independent object with its own unique *dunamis*, interacting with the *dunamis* of other objects, then the bottle can easily be seen as only a single agent (and not necessarily the authorial agent) in the entire rhetorical situation, neither superior nor inferior to any other agent (whether human or nonhuman). Rhetorically, then, the bottle bumps up against and blurs the lines between what typically is considered symbolic action and what traditionally falls under the category of non-symbolic motion.

3.7 Non-Symbolic Motion and Symbolic Action

In her book, *Addressing Postmodernity: Kenneth Burke, Rhetoric, and a Theory of Social Change*, Biesecker states that nothing could be more important for understanding the rhetoric of Kenneth Burke than the distinction between motion and action. In fact, for Biesecker:

> To have read Burke's work is to be familiar with the action/motion distinction. Indeed, upon asking any reader of Burke's corpus about this pivotal distinction, one invariably receives the same response: "human beings act; things move." It seems as though nothing could be more simple and no other aspect of Burke's thought could be more consistent with mainstream androcentric Western philosophical thought that characteristically divides the world into the human and the nonhuman on the basis of a categorical distinction between that which is active and that which is passive, between being that is *a priori* capable of transcendence and being that is always already given over to immanence. (25)

But this “simple” but “pivotal” concept is not without its own complications. Where does Burke draw the line between the two? How does one correctly identify an action?

For Burke, the divide between the non-symbolic (and nonhuman) realm and the symbolic realm is of utmost importance to rhetoric. Events happen in the natural world, which are purely non-symbolic—a ball rolls across the pool table, a tree grows out of rich soil, etc.; whereas humanity is unique because it has access to the symbolic realm to describe and make sense of these events. As he states in *The Rhetoric of Religion*, Burke finds that “A duality of realm is implicit in our definition of man as the symbol-using animal. Man’s animality is in the realm of sheer matter, sheer motion. But his ‘symbolicity’ adds a dimension of action not reducible to the non-symbolic—for by its very nature as symbolic it cannot be identical with the non-symbolic” (16). Therefore, for Burke, while motion can exist on its own, there can be no

action without motion—i.e., there can be no symbolic action without the influence of the non-symbolic realm. Yet, action can never be reduced to the realm of motion, for Burke. In other words, symbolic action is different by definition of its own symbolicity. For example, an animal might die (motion) but only humans will recognize that event as “death” and everything associated with it. Humans, for Burke, add symbolicity by way of being the symbol-using animal. In this way, because of his work in rhetoric Burke is often thought of as a proponent of symbolic action only.

For example, in *A Grammar of Motives* Burke gives us the following scenario: “If one happened to stumble over an obstruction, that would be not an act, but a mere motion. However, once could convert even this sheer accident into something of an act if, in the course of falling, one suddenly willed his fall (as a rebuke, for instance, to the negligence of the person who had left the obstruction in the way” (14). Motion, here, becomes imbued with a purpose or motive—effectively changing it into an act. But this could also be read as every motion is always-already a potential action (or a potential rhetorical act). For Biesecker, though, “Clearly, motion designates for Burke an act whose character derives solely from ‘the interaction of forces’ over which the agent has no control, those ‘'instincts,' 'drives, 'or other sheerly compulsive properties’ (79) to which the agent necessarily adheres” (26). In Biesecker’s view, then, motion is clearly distinct from action. As she states, “humans beings acts; things move” (25). However, this view of Burke’s distinction between the non-symbolic and the symbolic requires one to view the rhetorical act either as willed by a subject or willed by something in the situation (the obstruction). As was shown above, though, these two conclusions lead to readings that reduce the myriad agents of any given act into authorial agents—a reading I claim is short-sighted.

Instead, what is needed is a view of the motion/action split that blurs the distinction by showing the overlap between the two; a view that truly allows the non-symbolic to influence the symbolic. In *Moving Bodies: Kenneth Burke at the Edges of Language*, Debra Hawhee argues

that Burke is often erroneously seen as a staunch proponent of symbolic action to the detriment of non-symbolic motion, favoring language or the mind over the body. Instead, for Hawhee, Burke incessantly insisted that motion can and does continue without symbolic action, something she finds ever present in Burke's work that deals with the body. For example, in his early work on music Hawhee finds that:

> Burke would not settle for merely pointing out the importance of the body and moving on. Instead his inquiry into music's effects on bodies takes him to the edges of language, particularly language as rhythm, wherein rhythm becomes not merely an aesthetic feature but an enlivening force—sheer energy—with a unique capacity to mingle with and transform bodily energies and rhythms already churning, humming, and moving. (28)

The realm of motion, therefore, has an effect on the realm of action. The two overlap for Burke, as Hawhee argues. And like Hawhee discovers in his work on music, she also contests that Burke's other work on mysticism, drugs, and the nervous system all deal with the movement from the physiological to the psychological or from motion to action.

Ultimately, Hawhee posits that realms of non-symbolic motion and symbolic action are not as clearly defined as some rhetoricians might want or believe. Instead, "Bodies and language…[for Burke] are irreducibly distinct and yet parallel and complimentary, mediated by sensation and attitude—at times undermining, at other duplicating each other, but often, if not always, in effect moving together" (166). Motion, therefore, is not a separate realm that merely acts as the groundwork for action, but as Hawhee points out, it exists parallel with or alongside (sometimes overlapping) the realm of action. And, perhaps more importantly, what Hawhee's argument makes clear is that action is not simply motion plus motive; but that, instead, action is never separated from motion so that it isn't something added or subtracted from motion. It is simply recognizable as different. For example, take the old adage "where there is smoke, there is fire." The tendency is to assign a formal cause to a final cause—fire to smoke. However, doing so is a retroactive form of causation, where fire is added only after the event of smoke. But is smoke efficient enough to ensure the necessity of fire? Are there not things that smoke without fire? This same process of retroactive causation can be attached to the idea of motive.

Where there is action there is motive. The point is that motive does not alone make an action. A rhetorical act is instead a complicated mesh of *dunamis*, both material and psychological.

If Hawhee finds Burke at the edges of language, it is the goal of a posthuman rhetoric that recognizes nonhuman agency to push past these edges by allowing action to be seen in nonhuman agents. But in order to do this, one would have to take serious the material *dunamis* of all objects, and not (like Hawhee) just the human body. For the missing masses that Barnett wishes to bring back to rhetoric are more than the bodily natures that Hawhee sees influencing language from the edges.

Rhetoric is filled with both psychological and material *dunamis*, whether it exists in the situation, the speaker-subject, or any of the numerous agents that inhabit a given case. Regardless, *dunamis* exists as a potentiality for all objects, which is simply another way to say that all things are in some way contingent. And, because of this universal nature of contingency (or *dunamis*), human and nonhuman distinctions are difficult to maintain. The connections made thus far have been an attempt to explain how because of *dunamis*, rhetorical acts are on par with acts that are devoid of any symbolism whatsoever. Since neither can successfully maintain an authorial agent, and since both are equally contingent in nature, the line between (non-symbolic) motion and (symbolic) action becomes blurred. Where does the *dunamis* of the Coke bottle in *The Gods Must Be Crazy* stop and the *dunamis* of the humans (either individual or tribal) begin? In order for rhetoric to move into a truly posthuman realm of criticism, it must understand how it is that the missing masses are themselves rhetorical in their actions. How a bridge collapses, for example, is no more or less rhetorical than a public transportation strike—they are both acts that follow from previous acts and which will lead to other specific (yet contingent) acts. Neither the bridge nor the striking workers have complete authorial agency in regards to their respective situations, meaning each is a response to larger, more complex network of agents and agencies of other human and nonhuman actors. And each relies on perhaps smaller agents or networks of agencies in order to achieve their goals. In other words,

a rhetorical act does not necessarily need human agents in order to be understood rhetorically. If the only difference between motion and action is a human intention, and if this intention itself is just as contingent as the situation it finds itself in, then really there is no difference—instead there is, perhaps, just another agent. As Hawhee finds, and as I pointed out in the first chapter, Burke—although typically misread as keeping the divide between the non-symbolic and the symbolic intact—is insistent on allowing for constant overlap between the two realms of symbolic action and non-symbolic motion, so that human symbol-using animals are always influenced and limited by the nonhuman, non-symbolic world of motion.

What I proposed above, by way of contingency and *dunamis*, was to remove even this distinction, arguing instead that all things act, whether symbolic or not, and that *these actions can be read rhetorically*. This is not an attempt to remove the symbolic realm from rhetoric, but a move to be more inclusive as to what counts as a rhetorical act. In other words, this is my attempt to bring back the missing masses, or the object(s) of rhetoric.

3.8 The Three Parts of *Kairos*: An Introduction to Object-Oriented Rhetoric

Hawhee's connection of Kenneth Burke's fundamental split between symbolic action and nonsymbolic motion to the human body is one attempt at blurring the boundaries between the two. Hawhee insists on the body being the point at which both sides of this binary meet and overlap for Burke. And although this connection is exciting for scholars of Burke and rhetoric (adding to the building literature on corporeal natures and body-focused rhetoric), I argued that Hawhee didn't go far enough. If Burke understood that these two realms (symbolic/non-symbolic) overlapped at some point, why not push past the *human* body? Why not look at this blurring in other *nonhuman bodies or objects*?

Perhaps the reason for not doing so, traditionally, has been rhetoric's close connection to the *human* body. Take, for example, Aristotle's work with emotions in *On Rhetoric*. Or even earlier, Gorgias' comparison in his "Encomium of Helen," of the power the rhetorician has over the soul to the doctor prescribing drugs for the ill body:

> The power of discourse stands in the same relation to the soul's organization as the pharmacopoeia does to the physiology of bodies. For just as different drugs draw off different humors from the body, and some put an end to disease and others to life, so too of discourses: some give pain, others delight, others terrify, others rouse the hearers to courage, and yet others by a certain vile persuasion drug and trick the soul. (p. 14)

Gorgias' comparison echoes the one made by Socrates in Plato's *Phaedrus*. Therefore, rhetoric, or so it seems, has a historical connection to the human body. So it might come as no surprise that even the aforementioned, contingency-filled concept of *kairos* had its start in relation to the human body.

In the introductory essay for the edited collection *Rhetoric and Kairos*, Phillip Sipiora finds that, "As far as it has been determined, *kairos* first appeared in the *Iliad,* where it denotes a *vital* or *lethal* place in the body, one that is particularly susceptible to injury and therefore necessitates special protection; *kairos* thus, initially, carries a spatial meaning" (2). To kill an enemy, one had to know the appropriate spot on the body in which to strike. *Kairos* became linked to an opportune space or spot. Another way to think about *kairos* and its relation to space would be through the argument put forth in *DissoiLogoi*. Here, the anonymous author puts forth the argument that what would be appropriate in one city may not be appropriate in another—criticizing the Spartan way of life might be acceptable in Athens but perhaps not Sparta. In this way, *kairos* is again connected to place. Yet, as was discussed above, *kairos* also came to be described in terms of precise moments in time, such as the opportune moment to speak—distinct from *chronos* or linear time. For example, if someone were to advertise a large gun show around the same time as a mass murder occurred, one could argue that this would not be the correct *kairos* for such an advertisement. In this way, the definition of *kairos* as opportune moment, therefore, took on two important aspects for rhetorical study: right time and right place.

The problem, as was explained above, is that although situational, *kairos* is anything but predictable. Each situation is different since the *kairos* of each situation is contingent. As Sipiora explains:

> Since each discourse must be shaped in immediate response to the present occasion, instruction in *kairos* becomes virtually impossible. While theory, grounded in successful past discourse, provides models of right and wrong strategies, rhetorical theory cannot cast its net over the unforeseen, unpredictable, and uncontrollable moments. In a sense, then, every rhetorical act becomes a reinvention of theory as well as of the discourse itself. (5-6)

Because of the contingency of the situation, the moment, and the speaker-subject, there is no guarantee that a rhetorical act will be persuasive. There can be no theory of persuasion, but as Metzger points out in Aristotle, only awareness that persuasion is possible; an imperative that rhetoric be defined as a contingency. Therefore, rhetoric should teach its students to become *aware* of the available means in which s/he might be persuasive. The student must be able to not only describe the situation and act, but must rationalize it and account for motives. But there is an inherent danger to this process of rationalizing *kairos*.

In *Permanence and Change*, Burke uses a slight foray into psychoanalysis to argue that this type of rationalization is actually a complicated process. This doesn't stop Burke, however, from attempting to map it out. Burke finds that rhetoric:

> [A]dvanced as follows: (*a*) There is a sense of relationships developed by the contingencies of experience; (*b*) this sense of relationships is our orientation; (*c*) our orientation largely involves matters of expectancy, and affects our choice of means with reference to the future; (*d*) *in the human sphere*, the subject of expectancy and the judgment as to what is proper in conduct is largely bound up with the subject of motives, for if we know why people do as they do, we feel that we know what to expect of them and of ourselves, and we shape our decisions and judgments and policies to take such expectancies into account. (emphasis added; 18)

In other words, one first recognizes the contingent nature of the world and tries to develop relationships between seemingly disparate objects, agents, or acts—i.e., a series of relationships Burke calls an orientation. Based on one's orientation, s/he begins to make judgments upon what is proper and improper in order to rationalize another's motives for their (own) actions. These judgments are what rhetoric deems "motives."

When one moves backwards through this process, however, Burke's overlap between the non-symbolic and the symbolic becomes a little more apparent, as it is only the last part of the process that is particular to the "human sphere." If posthumanism, as was defined in the first

chapter, is an attempt to move outside or beyond this human sphere toward an understanding of humanity's imbroglio in the world, then such a step must be bracketed. What is left when the last step is removed is a world of objects oriented in their own ways, by their own relations to other objects and the world around them. Even before rationalization and the search for motives, objects, animals, and humans all attempt to make sense of *kairos* by way of a series of relationships called orientation. To be oriented to the world, therefore, does not mean that a human subject is necessarily involved; it merely means that some sort of relational sense—affect, perhaps—is made of the contingency inside each object and situation.

Therefore, if *kairos* points to the opportune moment in time and space, it must also point to the appropriate set or series of relations—i.e., orientation. An orientation is limited by the agents involved and limits the agents that can be held accountable. When a car flies over a speed bump and damages its under-carriage, *it is the orientation or series of relations* between the car, speed bump, and driver that act rhetorically (that is, in a series of specific relations at an opportune moment in an appropriate space), and not necessarily the millions of neutrinos that pass through all three. *Kairos*, then, needs to be understood as having three parts: appropriate space, opportune time, and *appropriate orientation*.

What I have been building towards is an understanding of the limitations of rhetoric when confined to the actions of a human subject. By connecting Meillassoux's absolute contingency to both the situation and the speaker-subject, rhetoric can be seen as reliant upon an inherent contingency in all aspects of a rhetorical act or situation. Ambient *kairos* points out the (inter/intra) connectedness that exists between all agents in a rhetorical act, so they all "take part in" rather than author an act. Expanding upon this notion of *kairos*, I argued that through *dunamis* all objects and scenes have a potential both to be different (or not) and to influence other objects. By allowing all things to take part in *dunamis*, I offered a possible explanation as to how nonhuman objects can be seen as acting—blurring the line between Burke's

motion/action binary. And so I am left with explaining how an object-oriented rhetoric might behave or what it might look like.

To begin with, an object-oriented rhetoric takes up some of the tenants espoused by Levi Bryant and other object-oriented philosophers. First, object-oriented rhetoric recognizes that objects are not simply bundles of qualities, but are instead autonomous objects each with their own virtual proper being or substance. What this means is that, following Bryant, all objects are essentially split between this aforementioned substance and their relations with other objects actualized by way of their local manifestations. While an object manifests itself through its qualities (such as being blue or tasting sweet), these qualities do not define the object completely. Instead, each object maintains a reserve of potential or virtual manifestations. Object-oriented rhetoric, therefore, begins with these philosophical caveats in mind, but attempts to make them practical by explaining the ways in which they might work. An object-oriented approach to rhetoric, then, proposes the following four points:

1) Rhetorical situations are inherently contingent.
2) All objects (both material and psychological, human and nonhuman) contain a certain amount of *dunamis* or potentiality; therefore, to some degree, all objects act. This includes (but not exhaustively) nonhuman objects, nonhuman animals, humans, language, tools, "nature," etc.
3) Because of the first two points, there can be no absolute authorial agent to a rhetorical situation, but instead there exists *a mesh of agents* (potential and actual, human and nonhuman) engaged in a unique series of relations or orientation.
4) *Kairos*, as a function of rhetoric, therefore has three aspects: appropriate space, opportune time, and appropriate orientation.

Object-oriented rhetoric, therefore, attunes the rhetorician to the often forgotten, non-symbolic world around him or her by allowing rhetorical situations to appear at all levels of reality. Not only can rhetoric describe the ways in which a radical religious sect can persuade a

nation to go to war, but it can also concern itself with (as will be explored in the next chapter) the orientation of a bridge's gusset to the traffic that relies on it and the influence such a gusset has on the other objects that make up its unique series of relations, both nonhuman and human. By abiding by the premise that any rhetorical act and object is filled with *dunamis* and is ultimately contingent (by being unable to define a purely authorial agent), object-oriented rhetoric attempts to interpret the *actions* of the mesh of human and nonhuman agents (so that perhaps a better way of understanding these agents would be more as participants). In doing so, object-oriented rhetoric is accountable not only to the humans involved in each individual situation, but to the missing masses that allow object-oriented rhetoric to count as a truly posthuman rhetoric.

3.9 Recapitulation and Forward Movement

It was the goal of this chapter to set the groundwork for developing a posthuman rhetoric that moves beyond human motives and symbolic action. In order to do this I argued that, given the traditional reliance upon the rhetorical situation, a truly posthuman rhetoric (that would pride itself on not relying upon an authorial human agent) must take as its first premise that inherent in any rhetorical act is series of contingencies. Picking out the two most common arguments—that it is either the situation itself that is the authorial agent, or that there is a human speaker-subject who acts authoritatively—I showed how each is in a similar way contingent. On the one hand, for Lloyd Bitzer, the situation should be read as the authorial agent, calling the speaker-subject into being. However, when read through Thomas Rickert's version of *kairos* called ambience, it appears that every situation is an immersive mesh of influential and persuasive parts. Humans and human language merely "take part in" a rhetorical situation, instead of being created or called by it. For Richard Vatz, on the other hand the (human) speaker-subject takes advantage of the situation and places himself squarely in the role of authorial agent. However, as David Metzger's reading of *dunamis* points out, this speaker-subject (if created) is just as contingent as the situation that calls her to speak due to

the inherent potential found in both. Language (as well as Aristotle's imperative for observing) is reliant upon a contingent symbolic system, one also filled with *dunamis*.

All of this was done in order to point out the unnecessary (if not impossible) task of identifying an authorial agent in a rhetorical act or situation. With its necessary premise of contingency, the role of rhetoric to identify and understand motives becomes only one task which rhetoric can perform. Before such rationalization of motives takes hold, rhetoric can explore and describe the necessary links between the myriad numbers of objects that make up the world. By bracketing the human need for motivation behind an act, rhetoric can concern itself with how other objects make sense of the contingencies of experience and the world around them. This bracketing, in turn, opens up rhetoric to its missing masses and explore the influences the nonhuman sphere might have on the human one and vice versa. But in order to do this rhetoric must take into account a third aspect of *kairos*. For not only is *kairos* the appropriate place and opportune moment, it is also concerned with the appropriate orientation. In this way, object-oriented rhetoric unfolds the background world that inhabits each and every rhetorical situation by pointing out and explaining the influence of both human and nonhuman objects.

In the following chapter I do two things: first I address the question of language and its relation to rhetoric by explaining how rhetoric confronts its own form of correlationism; and second, after arguing that language itself is an object, I further develop a posthuman and object-oriented rhetoric. I begin this development by expanding on Burke's notion of orientation to include both humans and nonhumans. I then argue that prior to any form of symbolic identification, a nonsymbolic form exists. Using the visual model of the tag-cloud I argue that all objects surround themselves with a metonymy of potential identities. In this way each object is suggestive without necessarily being outright persuasive. However, as I argue, metonymy and suggestiveness give way to metaphor and persuasion. Using an example of ciphering from

Jacques Lacan and Bruce Fink, I show how metaphor grows out of metonymy and ultimately bestows limits on the contingency.

CHAPTER 4

OBJECT-ORIENTED RHETORIC, IDENTIFICATION, AND GENERATIVE METAPHORS

4.1 Introduction

Object-oriented rhetoric is a serious attempt to discover and explore the possible connections and relations that exist in all rhetorical situations, whether humans take part in them or not. But in order to do this, one major area of contention must be addressed: How does one handle language in a rhetoric that is focused on objects? In other words, how can an area of study such as rhetoric, which has predominantly been focused on the use and manipulation of language, suddenly turn its attention to non-language using objects? How is object-oriented rhetoric even possible?

To some degree, these contentious questions make a point. We know from Plato's dialogues (especially *Phaedrus* and *Gorgias*) that as early as the Sophists, rhetoric has been defined according to language usage (or misusage), and yet, I'm arguing that rhetoric can occur between two or more non-speaking, nonhuman objects. How is this possible? As I posited in my last chapter, object-oriented rhetoric is, more than anything, a slight shift in the perspective of rhetoric and not necessarily a completely new version of it. Instead of holding humanity's relationship with language in high esteem, object-oriented rhetoric argues that all relationships are just as contingent in nature and are therefore rhetorical. So where rhetoric might find a contingency in the outcome of a speech or other symbolic action, object-oriented rhetoric points out that a similar contingency occurs when cold weather, heavy traffic, and a bridge are found in relation to each other. In all cases, there is a possibility of failure and a possibility of success. And it is this ontological necessity for contingency that allows rhetoric to be actualized in such situations. This is not to say that they are rhetorically equal (for surely one might be able to write more about the possibilities of the speech and less about the possibilities of the bridge), but in

their *kairotic* contingencies (in that moment, space, and material relations) they are equally rhetorical in that each is an attempt to deal with or manage *dunamis*.

The following chapter is not only an answer to the language question, but it is also my attempt to outline and perform an object-oriented rhetoric. First, I expand the notion of orientation—Kenneth Burke's word for the way in which one maintains and develops a series of contingent relationships—that I uncovered in chapter three. The purpose of such expansion is to explain how it is that rhetoric can become oriented toward objects without necessarily getting rid of language and other symbolic systems. To be oriented towards objects simply means the emphasis of rhetoric is placed not on a speaker or a text, but on the situation, the scene, or environment that is created by a rhetorical event. I will continue to argue that agency is dispersed amongst a plethora of nonhuman and human things and animals, allowing for multiple rhetorical orientations. Orientation as a process of reading contingent relationships allows the rhetorical event to unfold in all of its complexities, pointing out and recognizing not only the missing masses, but the missing influences and sway from the nonhuman sphere.

Second, I explore the possibility of a form of persuasion outside symbolic systems. In response to an unflinching belief in the correlation between human thinking and being that posits the world as a world "*for us*"—a belief termed "correlationism" by Quentin Meillassoux—the philosophical movement known as speculative realism argues that it is imperative for philosophy to think beyond the human subject as the locus of all action in the world. Taking up a faction of speculative realist philosophy called object-oriented ontology, and expanding on the "ontographical" work (or ontological mapping) performed by Ian Bogost, this chapter will also attempt to uncover one way rhetoric can break free from its own correlationism. I posit that rather than merely nudging us awake from our correlationist slumber, one form of ontography—digital tagging or hidden digital metadata—offers the rhetorician a model for an extra-symbolic—and thus posthuman—form of identification. In a part that I will return to later, I find that tags and specifically tag clouds are often experienced as digital metadata, groups of specific but

divergent identifiers added to objects for grouping purposes. But rather than immediately moving to metaphor (a move necessary for symbolic systems), tag clouds work by way of metonymy, devoid of meaning and clear of connections. And because of this metonymic habitation, tagging insists that suasive or influential identification is compensatory not with division (where the focus is on separation by kind) but with difference (where the focus is on separation by degree). Difference, unlike division, allows for internal, extra-symbolic as well as external, symbolic identification.

Finally, I argue that out of this metonymic, extra-symbolic form of identification a certain grammar develops. Since a metonymy of qualities, say for an apple (e.g., red, juicy, shiny, waxy, dense, ripe, average-sized, etc.), makes no sense on its own, object-oriented rhetoric must account for how things influence one another, that is, how things "metaphorize" each other. Using Bruce Fink's coin-flip version of Lacan's dice throw, I argue that extra-symbolic influence is a result of metaphoric frequency. In other words, if metonymy is understood as a chain of random, nonsensical images (none of which have any meaning), and if metaphor is understood as an individualizing of one or more of these images, then the influential impact of a metaphor can be understood as its frequency. So that if an apple (object) is described by someone as bright red, or if it is found attractive by a nonhuman animal because of the way the skin of the apple reflects the red color spectrum, then the redness of the apple can be said to have a certain amount of rhetorical frequency in influencing either the human's or the nonhuman animal's appetite. Metaphoric frequency is what gives an object its meaning and influence over other objects. Such influence can be symbolic, but it is not a necessity. In fact, as I will argue, examples of extra-symbolic influence abound in a rhetorical situation.

4.2 Object Orientation

The first chapter of Kenneth Burke's *Permanence and Change* is titled "Orientation: All Living Things are Critics." Immediately, by including "all living things," one is offered a nonhuman approach to a typically human rhetorical act—criticism. As Burke points out, though:

> [A]ll living organisms interpret many of the signs about them. A trout, having snatched a hook but having had the good luck to escape with a rip in his jaw, may even show by his wiliness thereafter that he can revise his critical appraisals. His experience has led him to form a new judgment, which we should verbalize as a nicer discrimination between food and bait. A different kind of bait may outwit him, if it lacks the appearances by which he happens to distinguish "jaw-ripping food." And perhaps he passes up many a morsel of genuine food simply because it happens to have the characters which he, as the result of his informing experience, has learned to take the sign of bait. (*Permanence and Change* 5).

And as Burke concedes, the argument about whether or not this critical choice is done consciously or unconsciously is not the point. Instead, the actualization of the trout's hesitation to re-ingest objects similar to the "jaw-ripping food" is enough proof to claim that some sort of criticism has taken place.

Yet, perhaps this form of revised behavior is one step beyond what Burke ends up calling "orientation." In other words, behavior revision, as in the trout's refusal to eat anything that resembles "jaw-ripping food" after his experience with the hook, is already a complex form of relating to other objects in the world, a form of relating Burke later likens to "trained incapacity," a process whereby one's judgments also become a form of blindness—here the trout would chance starving if all future food resembled the "jaw-ripping food" of his earlier experience. Instead, orientation (as the rest of Burke's chapter uses it) is less a form of behavior modification and more of a kind of linkage between events and certain objects. Orientation, as he defines it, is "a bundle of judgments as to how things were, how they are, and how they may be" (14). In other words, the world is defined by any living organism according to its own orientation, its own linking of things, places, and time. The actions taken or not are formed out of this orientation. For example, Burke argues that Pavlov's dog has a specific orientation towards bells, whereby "the outstanding sound of the bell, in linkage with the outstanding experience of the food, imparted to the bell a food-character…The accumulation and interworking of such characters is an orientation" (14). But if this entire process seems to rely on a notion of the symbolic, it is because for Burke it does.

Orientation, for Burke, is a set of relations that revolve around interpretation. The trout (mis)interprets the original bait as food, only to reinterpret it as harmful after it has left him with a rip in his jaw. In this way, even the trout operates by way of some sort of symbolic system (if only one that distinguishes between food and not-food). Humans orient themselves much in the same way: for example if I were to take a certain route to the grocery store and get stuck in traffic, for future trips I would either leave earlier or take a different route. Much like the trout, I would take the initial experience as a sign and translate it by avoiding it in the future. It would seem, then, that orientation is dependent upon an assumed ability to read and interpret signs, no matter how arbitrary they might seem to be.

However, even for Burke a certain distinction is made with regards to symbol systems that make this assumption seem a little more porous. Early on in this first chapter of *Permanence and Change*, Burke argues that, "*Our* great advantage over this sophisticated trout would seem to be that we can greatly extend the scope of the critical process" (emphasis added; 5). What he means by this distinction is that humanity can discern between more than two options: food or not-food. Instead, humans can not only discriminate between different types of bait and different types of food, but they can also discriminate between different objects altogether—it is, as Burke puts it, the difference between living and living well. His point is that human symbolic systems extend beyond even the simple binary distinction he finds in animal orientations. Human orientation, therefore, is different, even if by degree, than nonhuman orientation.

But if this process of orientation is in fact *not the same* for all living things, seen when it is taken to an extreme by humanity (through complex symbolic systems), one could arguably take it in the opposite direction—that is, simplifying it beyond or prior to any symbolic process, allowing non-living things to experience a form of orientation. To start, where in *Permanence and Change* Burke identified the nonhuman animal's attempt at linking events and objects in its world as a form of orientation that relied upon an interpretation of signs, in a later essay entitled

“Non-Symbolic Motion / Symbolic Action,” he apparently has a different view of such nonhuman processes. Instead of attributing the trout’s distinction between food and not-food to a symbolic process, Burke states that, “So far as known at present, the only typically symbol-using animal existing on earth is the human organism. The intuitive signaling systems in such creatures as bees and ants would not be classed as examples of symbolic action” (810). Where Burke finds the difference between the two is that human symbol systems have a reflexive aspect that allows them to “talk about themselves” (810). It would seem that true symbolic action requires a human, if only to talk about herself. What is implicit in this statement when placed alongside Burke’s earlier work in *Permanence and Change*, then, is that symbolic action is not present in the trout or its decisions. One could easily argue that orientation, therefore, may not be as reliant upon symbolic systems as was previously thought, but that instead it might just revolve around the ability of an object (any object, including animals and humans) to respond to its environment.

To this point, the end of the first chapter of *Permanence and Change* bears repeating. Here Burke lays out how one can understand the progression he developed to get at the creation of motives. He advanced as follows:

> *(*a) There is a sense of relationships developed by the contingencies of experience; (*b*) this sense of relationships is our orientation; (*c*) our orientation largely involves matters of expectancy, and affects our choice of means with reference to the future; (*d*) *in the human sphere*, the subject of expectancy and the judgment as to what is proper in conduct is largely bound up with the subject of motives, for if we know why people do as they do, we feel that we know what to expect of them and of ourselves, and we shape our decisions and judgments and policies to take such expectancies into account. (emphasis added; 18)

As was pointed out in Chapter 3, it isn’t until Burke gets to the fourth point that he distinguishes the route by which the human sphere might make a split. Before the human processes of rationalization and reasoning, however, and given the above discussion of nonhuman orientation as exampled by the trout, when Burke states that “there is a sense of relationships developed by the contingencies of experience” and that “this sense of relationships is [one’s] orientation” one could argue that he is not necessarily stating that orientation is something that

only happens to the symbol-using animal or to animals in general, but at its simplest formation, this sense of relationships might be present in all things, human and nonhuman, living and nonliving. But since Burke focuses on human organisms, what's needed now is to explain how orientation may occur in nonhuman objects. The purpose of such an exercise is to get at and explain orientation as a general concept for how all objects create their unique rhetorical situations or environments.

4.3 Environment Building

So if it is possible to think about orientation outside of symbolic systems, such that the trout orients itself towards its food source without necessarily creating a specific symbol system leading to the trout into the realm of symbolic action, the question becomes is it possible to expand this way of relating to the world beyond even the living creature—i.e., to the object? The most nuanced view of object orientation is found in Levi Bryant's onticology. Taking a page from the systems theory of Nikolas Luhmann, Bryant argues in *The Democracy of Objects* that all objects (whether human or nonhuman objects) are operationally closed. What this means is that all objects in some way or another "possess only selective relations to the world around them…" (Bryant 141). For example, while my fingers might be relating to the computer keyboard at the time of my writing this sentence, they are operationally closed in regards to the solar flares that are erupting from the sun at the same time. One might point out that of course they are since they are divided by millions of miles of space (and time, as well, since it takes around eight minutes for the light from the sun to reach the Earth). However, some forms of systems theory argue that all things are connected (think here of the so-called "butterfly effect" whereby a butterfly flapping its wings can cause a hurricane halfway across the world). What this selective form of relating denies, then, is that all things are always already related to all other things. Instead, as Bryant argues, objects draw their own distinctions. That is, they create their own environments.

To begin with, and as was discussed in chapter 2, each object for Bryant's onticology is split between a substance or virtual proper being, and its qualities or local manifestations. Onticology holds that an object's virtual proper being always withdraws from any interaction, even with itself. But this doesn't mean that it is denied an impact on the object, quite the opposite, really. For Bryant, every quality or local manifestation that an object produces is an actualization of some "power" (or potential) that exists in the object's virtual proper being. In this way, the object is said to "act." For example, the tree outside of my window is a very specific tree, with very specific qualities unlike any other tree. The bark is a certain shade of grayish brown, the patter of the branches is unique, as well as its density and weight. For Bryant, then, this tree's unique qualities or local manifestations are created by the tree itself —with such creation being a purely active response for Bryant. In turn, these local manifestations are selectively open and closed to certain aspects of their encounters with the wind, the sun, the earth, gravity, etc. The tree's orientation, therefore, is the process by which such qualities come into being. Orientation is the actualization of powers that exist in the object's substance. But more importantly, what this means, then, is that the local manifestations or qualities of all objects are produced by the object with respect to its orientation. They are not qualities that are possessed or held by the object or qualities handed down from the true formal object. For example, an orange's color is something produced from the potential of the orange's virtual proper being in relation to itself and its surroundings—it is not a quality of the orange "has" or "possesses." So while not present in the local manifestation (the orange's color), the substance or virtual proper being of the object is both what makes such a quality possible and what limits it.

Another way to look at this, as Bryant does, is by exploring how in systems theory the system itself creates the environment. Rather than distinguishing between substance and quality, systems theory distinguishes between a system and an environment, respectively. A system is the structure that makes the environment possible. As Bryant puts it, "the distinction

between system and environment is *self-referential*. Although this distinction refers to two domains (system and environment), the distinction itself originates from one of these domains: the system" (144). In other words, systems both result from and draw distinctions. Think of the way groups form in high schools, whereby a clique forms seemingly out of nowhere, drawing its own distinctions or environment (who is in and who is not, what to wear and what not to wear, what music to listen to and what music not to listen to, etc.). These distinctions are not present outside of the system of the clique. Systems (and high school cliques, for that matter) "are unique in that not only are they unities, not only are they operationally closed to the rest of the world, but they constitute their own elements" (142). This means that these elements are not pre-given to a system. Would there be "Goth music" if there were no "Goths?" Environments must instead be built by the system in order for the system to maintain itself by drawing such distinctions. Each system defines itself (i.e., distinguishes itself from not only other systems but also from itself) by constantly drawing this distinction between itself and the environment it creates.

Moving back to the realm of objects, Bryant finds in systems theory a way to explain how it is that a blue mug can appear blue with the light on, while almost black with the light off. The mug-as-system is constantly defined or distinguished from its qualities by locally manifesting itself through the production of colors. The mug is still a mug whether the lights are on or not, but the mug distinguishes itself from everything else through this blue-ing or orienting color distinction. These distinctions (the mug's differing colors) first point to the split between the mug as substance or withdrawn virtual proper being and the qualities or local manifestations the mug produces. However, it also points to the way the mug creates its own environment whereby it can orient itself differently under certain light conditions, inter-acting with multiple other autonomous objects. It can appear blue in bright light and dark blue or black in very little light. To put this process another way (and perhaps a better way for rhetoric), is to think of the mug as having a contingent response-ability towards its environment. Like I argued for in chapter

three, if we must account for the contingency (material *dunamis*) in the mug, and we recognize the mug's ability to "color" itself given a specific lighted environment, then we can also argue that the mug has the ability to respond and re-act to its surroundings. This ability to respond (or response-ability) is a contingent form of action, an action that is never separable from the specific environment. In other words, objects never act by their own accord, but are always oriented towards other objects, holding in reserve a certain amount of this contingent relationship or response-ability toward them. The important thing to keep in mind, here, is that the environment whereby the mug produces the blue color is an environment that is created from the mug-as-system through its local manifestations. Its blueness is not something that exists prior to the mug's system/environment relation. Being blue is a contingent response-ability taken by the mug-as-system when drawing a distinction (i.e., through its inter-action the mug can be said to "blue") between itself and its environment, thereby creating a unique environment. The mug, in essence, orients itself by way of these response-able, contingent relations with its environment.

This is not to say that the mug literally creates the room and the light, for both the room and the light are autonomous systems/environments. Instead, what this means is that the mug, much like our earlier trout, orients itself according to its own contingent experiences. Like Burke claimed orientation to be a "sense of relationships, developed by the contingencies of experience," Bryant claims that system "relations are contingent strategies for contending with the environment" (18; 146). Mug-orientation is therefore not reliant upon symbol systems external to the mug itself, but arises from a contingent, withdrawn system as substance or virtual proper being that both distinguishes and limits itself as object. To be response-able or to orient oneself means just this—to not only respond but that in responding creating a limit to one's ability to respond otherwise. So that when Burke's trout has difficulty deciding whether or not something is jaw-ripping food, a limit is placed on its response-ability to its environment. The trout might not be able to respond by simply eating whatever it finds. Instead, it orients itself

according to its environment, which now includes food that rips jaws. But this type of response-ability or orientation is unique to each object, so that it might make sense to say that the mug "mugs" and the pencil "pencils" just like the trout "trouts."

I've attempted to push the concept of orientation to its limits in the opposite direction of symbolic action. Instead of being the first step on a road to such human-only action, orientation has been shown to exist as a primary form of relating to the world inherent in all objects, either human or nonhuman, living or not. With some confidence, then, *"orientation" can be defined as the contingent strategies, developed with/in an object, through which it struggles and relates to its own unique environment*. An object's orientation is its response-ability or what *orders* the object. And here I mean the word "orders" in both senses: an orientation orders or structures the object by selectively being open to other objects; and an object's orientation orders or commands the types of local manifestations that can be produced by said object's virtual proper being. Its orientation sets it apart both from itself (through the creation of qualities) and others (by being selectively opened).

4.4 The Language Problem

At the beginning of this chapter I proposed an answer to the question as to the place of language in object-oriented rhetoric. Such an answer is of timely importance for two reasons: first, it will explain the need for the development of a rhetoric that might exist in excess of human linguistic functions; second, I hope such an answer will alleviate any fears some might have in my upcoming usage of terms like "metonymy" and "metaphor" to describe the ways in which objects relate to each other. To put my position bluntly, language is an object. As such, part of the answer to the language problem will be simply showing how like an object, language is also split, withdrawn, and builds its own environments. However, before this answer can be given, the language problem itself has to be fully articulated.

I propose that rhetoric is caught up in its own correlationist circle. To wit, much like Quentin Meillassoux argued that philosophy has been caught up in a correlation between

thinking and being, whereby one (thinking or being) could not be thought without the other, I argue that rhetoric and language are correlated as such. Rhetorical correlationism, therefore, is the mistaken assumption that rhetoric and language are ontologically inseparable—or that to speak of rhetoric is to speak of language (or language of language). Instead, I argue that rhetoric can function in excess to language, so that there does not always need to be language in order for the processes or rhetoric to take place.

Yet, in order to better understand the problem that language creates for an object-oriented rhetoric, an argument must first be made as to language's role in rhetorical discourse and the deep correlation between the function of rhetoric and that of language. In *Meaning, Language, and Time*, Kevin J. Porter succinctly restates the three dominant factions of rhetoric as espoused by James Berlin. They are as follows:

> ***cognitive rhetoric*** (e.g., Emig, 1971), the "heir apparent of current-traditional rhetoric" grounded in the methods of individualistic cognitive psychology and built upon the premise that "the structures of the mind correspond in perfect harmony with the structures of the material world, the minds of the audience, and the units of language" (p. 480); ***expressionistic rhetoric*** (e.g., Elbow, 1981), with its focus on the authentic "experience of the self, and experience which transcends ordinary non-metaphoric language but can be suggested through original figures and tropes" (p. 485); and, again the hero of the narrative [for Berlin], ***social-epistemic rhetoric*** (e.g., Bartholomae 1985/1996), which holds that knowledge comes into existence through discursive interactions comprised of "social constructions […] inscribed in the very language we are given to inhabit in responding to our experience" (p. 488). (Porter 31)

First, cognitive rhetoric, with its belief that the structures of the mind correlate exactly with the world, other's minds, and language, could very well be seen as an example of a strong rhetorical correlationism. Here, the emphasis is place on the mirroring that the mind is capable of rather than the world itself, so much so that, as Berlin remarks, cognitive rhetoricians like Janet Emig are "convinced that [they] could arrive at an understanding of the entire rhetorical context – the role of reality, audience, purpose, and even language in the composing act" (Berlin 480). The rhetorical act becomes nothing more than a construction of one's mind, then. Or, to put this still another way, for the cognitive rhetorician, there is no reason to look outside of one's mind. As Berlin puts it, "For cognitive rhetoric, the real is the rational" (482). All rhetorical

acts, therefore, are products, or compositions, of the rhetor. Cognitive rhetoric shifts the discourse of rhetoric away from the rhetorical act, so that instead of asking “what is it?” they wish to ask “how is it or how can it be composed?”

Second, there is expressionistic rhetoric, which values the individual. For this rhetoric, as Berlin argues, “the existent is located within the individual subject. While the reality of the material, the social, and the linguistic are never denied, they are considered significant only insofar as they serve the needs of the individual” (484). Unlike cognitive rhetoric (which in its own way denied a world outside of the mind), expressionistic rhetoric exploits the real world in order to serve its purposes. What remains significant is not the true ontological reality of the world and its real influences and presence, but instead the terministic screens or perceptions through which this reality passes. The expressionistic rhetorician seeks to create subjective metaphors by which the world comes into existence. Born out of a response to political and authoritarian discourse, expressionist rhetoric wished to place the power into the hands of the rhetor. In this way, Berlin remarks that “From this perspective, power within society ought always to be vested in the individual” (485). The individual knows best how to divide up the real world for expressionistic rhetoricians. Thus, this type of rhetoric places a heavy emphasis on personal experience—so that knowledge is gained through such subjective experience. For philosophy, we see this type of stance prevalent in all weak forms of correlationism; that is, much like the weak correlationist for whom the thing-in-itself could never be known, but for whom the phenomenal realm was ever knowable; the expressionistic rhetorician only ever knows his or her experiences of the real world.

Finally, for Berlin, there is social-epistemic rhetoric. To recap, “For social-epistemic rhetoric, the real is located in a relationship that involves the dialectical interaction of the observer, the discourse community (social group) in which the observer is functioning, and the material conditions of existence. Knowledge is never found in any one of these but can only be posited as a product of the dialectic in which all three come together” (488). At first, this form of

rhetoric might sound pleasing to a rhetorician working to get outside of the correlationist circle. Here one has a rhetoric that recognizes a dialectical interaction between individuals and groups of individuals, but most importantly of a real world. Unlike the other two factions of rhetoric, social-epistemic rhetoric incorporates an ontologically independent world with which the rhetor/rhetorician must deal. However, it is Berlin's next statement that I find troubling.

Following up on his definition of a social-epistemic rhetoric, Berlin states, "Most important, this dialectic is grounded in language: the observer, the discourse community, and the material conditions of existence are all verbal constructs" (488). Reality, though it may exist for the social-epistemic rhetorician in an assemblage of personal, social, and material realms, can only exit according to language. That is, everything can be reduced to language. It is the view of the Linguistic Turn, par excellence: Everything is a text. Like the cognitive rhetorician who reduced the objects of the world to a product of the mind, and like the expressionistic rhetorician who reduced the objects of the world to the individual's experiences, social-epistemic rhetoric reduces the objects of the world to language. The correlationist circle in rhetoric has simply been redrawn so that instead of claiming that there is nothing outside of the human subject and thinking, rhetorical correlationism posits that there is nothing outside of language. But Berlin is not the only rhetorician who favors this view. Porter's list of social-epistemic rhetoricians include: "Kenneth Burke, Richard Ohmann, the team of Richard Young, Alton Becker and Kenneth Pike, Kenneth Bruffee, W. Ross Winterowd, Ann Berthoff, Janice Lauer, and, more recently, Karen Burke Lefever, Lester Faigley, David Bartholomae, Greg Myers, Patricia Bizzell, and others" (488).

And although I've spent some effort in attempting to remove Kenneth Burke's name from this list, it is difficult to deny that the above three factions of rhetoric each seem to redraw the correlationist circle in a slightly different manner. For cognitive rhetoricians, the importance of rhetoric is on the processes of the mind and not the real world and its influences. For the expressionistic rhetoricians, the importance of rhetoric lies with the individual's experiences of

the real world. And for the social-epistemic rhetorician, the importance of rhetoric is to show how all rhetorical acts are a product of the function of language. Each faction uses the same correlationist structure—by shifting the goal of rhetoric from asking the question, "What is the rhetorical act?" to "In what way can the rhetorical act best be represented?".

If the goal of an object-oriented rhetoric is to break outside of these types of correlationism, we must find a way of defining rhetoric that does not reduce it to any of the above (or others) positions. Object-oriented rhetoricas I propose it, then, must be seen as separate not only from cognitive structures and personal experiences, but most importantly separate from its correlation with language. In other words, rhetoric outside of this language correlation would no longer be seen as a product (such that politics produces political rhetoric, the academy produces academic rhetoric, religions produce religious rhetoric, etc.), but *a productive process or orientation* in and of itself that is irreducible to mind, experience, or language. One needs to move rhetoric away from the *forms* of observation, and back toward the *faculty* (potentiality/potency/*dunamis*) of observing ***all*** of the available means of persuasion—including objects.

4.5 The Language Object

But if rhetoric is to clamber out of its correlationist sleep and attempt to understand itself apart from language, as I have suggested it must do in order to play a part in the posthuman project, then something must be done with language. Language must neither be seen as a product of rhetoric, nor as its cornerstone. Instead, in order for a posthuman and object-oriented rhetoric to take place, language must itself be seen and treated as an object. In other words, language must be seen as something that acts, that creates its own environment, and that is fundamentally withdrawn from any interaction.

The two traditional views of language that Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari argue against in *A Thousand Plateaus* are that language is either communicative or that language is informative. Instead, language for Deleuze and Guattari is at its core commanding. As they put

it, “Language is not made to be believed but to be obeyed and to compel obedience” (76). In other words, language works by ordering. Deleuze and Guattari give the example of why bees might not have language in order to better explain the complexities of what they are proposing:

> [The bee] has no language because it can communicate what it has seen but not transmit what has been communicated to it. A bee that has seen a food source can communicate the message to bees that did not see it, but a bee that has not seen it cannot transmit the message to others that did not see it. Language is not content to go from a first party to a second party, but necessarily goes from a second party to a third party, neither of whom has seen. It is in this sense that language is the transmission of the word as order-word, not the communication of a sign as information. (77)

Therefore, when they state that “the elementary unit of language—the statement—is the order-word” what they mean is that language functions as a command and not as a communicative process for information, signs, or symbols (76). These language units, order-words, or what I will call language objects, order reality not by interpreting signs or signifieds, but by requiring action.

Take for example Aristotle’s imperative that one should “Let rhetoric be defined as…” With such a statement, he commands his audience to allow rhetoric to be defined a certain way. Now, one could argue that such an imperative is only one type of proposition of language. Doesn’t language perform all sorts of acts, other than commanding? As Deleuze and Guattari point out, for the linguist, John L. Austin:

> There are also intrinsic relations between speech and certain actions that are accomplished by *saying* them (the performative: I swear by saying “I swear”), and more generally between speech and certain actions that are accomplished in speaking (the illocutionary: I ask a question by saying “Is…?” I make a promise by saying “I love you…”; I give a command by using the imperative, etc.). These acts internal to speech, these immanent relations between statements and acts, have been termed implicit or nondiscursive presuppositions, as opposed to the potentially explicit assumptions by which a statement refers to other statements or an external action. (77)

However, Deleuze and Guattari find that the performative view of language carries with it what could be described as a self-referential characteristic, whereby the performance is not a relation of the language to the act, but of the speaker to the language. The performative statement, “I swear…” must reference the speaker first and foremost. So that “by this account, a preexistent structure of subjectivity, or intersubjectivity, in language, rather than presupposing speech acts,

is adequate to account for them [i.e., speech acts]" (78). Therefore, what the performative cannot account for is the performer herself. The act of language in such cases merely commands that the performer be recognized.

Instead, Deleuze and Guattari argue that the performative can only come about by way of the illocutionary sphere. In other words, the only way that the actions accomplished by saying something are even possible is because of the actions inherent in the action in saying them in the first place. "Speaking" is an action of language, and not of a speaker. In this way, they argue, "the performative itself is explained by the illocutionary, not the opposite. It is the illocutionary that constitutes the nondiscursive or implicit presuppositions. And the illocutionary is in turn explained by collective assemblages of annunciate, by juridical acts or equivalents of juridical acts, which, far from depending on subjectification proceedings or assignations of subjects in language, in fact determine their distribution" (78). Therefore, the illocutionary view of language grounds the performative view; it is what allows a speaker or subject to come into being—not the other way around. Thus, for Deleuze and Guattari, "communication is no better a concept than information; intersubjectivity gets us no further than significance in accounting for these "statement-acts" assemblages…" (78).

Deleuze and Guattari propose a view of language—of which the most basic element is the order-word—that most resembles an object. Bear in mind that order-words are not solely imperative statements even though they function as commands. Deleuze and Guattari call "order words, not a particular category of explicit statements (for example, in the imperative), but the relation of every word or every statement to the implicit presuppositions, in other words, to speech acts that are, and can only be, accomplished in the statement. Order-words do not concern commands only, but every act that is linked to statements by a 'social obligation'"(79). Order-words, therefore (like the objects of OOO), are split. Each order is made up of the statement and the act. But the relation between the two is not an external relation of representation, or that between a signifier and a signified. Instead, one can read the relation

similar to the withdrawal of the object from its own actions. As Deleuze and Guattari argue, “The relation between the statement and the act is internal, immanent, but it is not one of identity. Rather it is the relation of *redundancy*. The order-word itself is the redundancy of the act and the statement” (79). Redundancy, like withdrawal, forces the two parts of the order-word to appear coextensive—the statement and the act, in a way, build each other. And much like the objects of OOO, whereby the split is what allows the objects to generate their environments, order-words generate their own assemblages through the redundancy of the statement-act. In this way, Deleuze and Guattari argue that if such a thing as language can be defined, it is “the transmission of order-words, either from one statement to another or within each statement, insofar as each statement accomplishes an act and the act is accomplished in the statement” (79). In other words, through the split—i.e., through redundancy—the order-word creates, it acts, and as a result there is language.

But since order-words are linked by a “social obligation,” they are experienced in what Deleuze and Guattari call a collective assemblage. Any discourse is made up of a multitude of voices, actions, and order-words. Discourse is therefore experienced as indirect with no clear beginning or end. And for this reason, “indirect discourse…is of exemplary value: there are no clear, distinctive contours; what comes first is not an insertion of variously individuated statements, or an interlocking of different subjects of enunciation, but a collective assemblage resulting in the determination of relative subjectification proceedings, or assignations of individuality and their shifting distributions within discourse” (80). The collective assemblage is not a collection of subjects, but of the statement-actions of order-words. However, collective assemblages, which “are in constant variation, are themselves constantly subject to transformation” (82). To put it another way, because order-words act through redundancy, there is no static collective assemblage. Much like the environment of an object could be seen as changing each time a new local manifestation was generated, so too do collective assemblages change based on the redundancy of the statement-actions of order-words.

But in the creation of collective assemblages, the redundancy of an order-word also has an effect on other order-words. Order-words act on each other by way of something Deleuze and Guattari call "incorporeal transformations." Because of the redundant split between statement and act, and because of the social character of collective assemblages, the actions of order-words "seem to be defined as the set of all incorporeal transformations current in a given society and attributed to the bodies of that society" (80). Here, Deleuze and Guattari mean "body" in the broadest sense of the word, since incorporeal transformations are not something that just happens to human bodies, but are also something that affects nonhuman ones as well. To be clear, an incorporeal transformation is not something that affects the physical body, but is rather a transformation in non-corporeal attributes of those in the collective assemblage. Deleuze and Guattari give the following example:

> In an airplane hijacking, the threat of a hijacker brandishing a revolver is obviously an action; so is the execution of the hostages, if it occurs. But the transformation of the passengers into hostages, and of the plane-body into a prison-body, is an instantaneous incorporeal transformation, as 'mass media act' in the sense in which the English speak of 'speech acts.' The order-words or assemblages of enunciation in a given society…designate this instantaneous relation between statements and the incorporeal transformations or noncorporeal attributes they express. (81)

The incorporeal transformation is, therefore, not something expressed by the order-word in the statement, but is an effect of the redundancy of the order-word: "This is a hijacking!" Instantaneously, the passenger-bodies are transformed into hostage-bodies and the plane-body becomes prison-body. The scene becomes one of a crime and not of a vacation. No physical transformation necessarily took place, yet the regime of order-words, or collective assemblage has mutated. The order-word, like the object, is contingent, so that "'I swear' is not the same when said in the family, at school, in a love affair, in a secret society, or in court: it is not the same thing, and neither is it the same statement; it is not the same bodily situation, and neither is it the same incorporeal transformation" (82). Order-words, because they are split, act on each other by way of incorporeal transformations effectively creating their own collective assemblages. And in these ways, one could say that language is an object.

This foray into rhetoric's relation to language and attempt to understand language as an object is needed for two reasons. First, it is important to understand the possible necessity for a rhetoric that doesn't rely on language or the correlationist circle it has created with language. If rhetoric is to truly accept the challenges of posthumanism—i.e., to de-center the human subject—then the requirement that rhetoric be tied to language needed to be addressed. Second, by understanding language as an object (not unlike the others that have been explored in this project), I hoped to alleviate any fears (present and/or upcoming) that language is being used to argue for my own project. Object-oriented rhetoric is not an attempt to discard language, but to discover rhetoric in the cracks, holes, and withdrawn entities that make up this world. To this end, what is left is to explore how it is possible for rhetoric to persuade in excess of language.

4.6 Identification and the Rhetorical Wrangle

The "rhetorical wrangle" is a phrase that only briefly appears in Kenneth Burke's *A Rhetoric of Motives*, but as a concept (one that I wish to push to the fullest extent) it represents the ambiguity that Burke saw in what makes persuasion possible—i.e., identification. On the one hand, identification refers to unification, a wholeness or completeness. To be identified is to have definition as someone or something. However, on the other hand, as Burke makes extremely clear, this unification can only take place because "identification is compensatory to division" (21). In this way, identification is a consubstantial process, both joining while keeping separate. Including division as a major aspect of identification, though, allows Burke to create an oscillating binary (identification/division), but not without some ambiguity. For example, perhaps we have all had that friend who never seems to be satisfied with his job. And each time he accepts a new position, he seems to merge who he is with the job he is doing, at times self-identifying as a barista, a waiter, or a telecommunications consultant. However, there is always a point during each of these professions where division creeps in, and that friend starts to complain about feeling exploited as a worker. It is precisely at this point of uneasiness (or the

hesitation between belonging and exploitation) that for Burke, "you have the characteristic invitation to rhetoric" (25).

And, as if to head our questioning off at the pass, moments later Burke clarifies such an invitation, arguing that even if you believe to be working out of the purest of motives, the ambiguities of identification lead to argument. So that, no matter how "'pure' one's motives may be actually, the impurities of identification lurking about the edges of such situations introduce a typical rhetorical wrangle of the sort that can never be settled once and for all…" (26). Rhetoric, for Burke, only becomes possible through the push and pull of the wrangle as an effect of identification.

Building on the ambiguities of identification and the rhetorical wrangle, Diane Davis in her book *Inessential Solidarity*, reminds us that for Burke, identification is settled symbolically:

> According to Burke, there is no essential identity; what goes for your individual "substance" is not an essence but the incalculable totality of your complex and contradictory identifications, through which you variously (and vicariously) become able to say "I." Like the "official" Freudian version on which it's based, "rhetorical identification" depends on symbolic representation, on the production and intervention of meaningful figures, which Burke says are already persuasive: "whenever there is 'meaning,' there is 'persuasion.'" (21)

However, as Davis points out, if the self is constructed through multiple identifications, not only must we be foreign to ourselves – much in the same way our unemployable friend appears to always be playing a new role with a new identity. But, paradoxically, if identification is to only come about through shared meaning, we must also know ourselves "as and through [our] representations" in relation to an other (21). Yet it is the first split that troubles Davis. Before the rhetorical wrangle of identification ever takes place, Burke has set up a prior division (and possible identification) between self and other. For Burke, Davis argues, "the division between self and other is the 'state of nature' that is identification's motivating force: identification's job is to transcend this natural state of division, and rhetoric's job is identification" (22). Here, identification (and by default rhetoric, as well) becomes mixed up with desire. As a desiring, material organism separate from its thoughts, the human for Burke, is individuated—that is, set

off from itself. Yet, as a symbol using animal, the human becomes, in Burke's words, "homo dialecticus."

Homo dialecticus is a split subject (both self and other) desiring to belong. For Davis, "Essentially enclosed and alienated, [Burke's] homo dialecticus already desires to transcend this state of nature—'[b]iologically, it is of the essence of man to desire'—and is ontologically equipped to do so via the inborn powers of his or her imagination" (23). So while Burke maintains individuality among human persons, he immediately places these already desiring individuals into a complex network of identifications and rhetorical wrangle of shared meanings. What Burke implies but avoids ever saying, as Davis sees it, is that "identification can no longer be understood as an identification of one with another, at least not at first, since it would necessarily precede the very distinction between self and other" (26). And this prior identification lends itself to a rhetoricity or "affectability or persuadability that is at work prior to and in excess of any shared meaning" (26). Does this mean, then, that there is a possibility for a extra-symbolic identification?

4.7 Beyond Freudian Identification

For Burke, only when identification is seen as being both unification and division can it also be seen as the foundation of rhetoric. Complicating matters, Diane Davis's work in *Inessential Solidarity* points to a cover-up in Burke's definition. Placing Burke's identification in comparison with Freud's, Davis discovers that what is left out of Burke is any notion of a extra-symbolic identification even though Burke calls for his subject to be divided (between self and other) before existing in any social relations.

On the other hand, for Freud, as Davis reads him through Borch-Jacobsen, there is a suggestiveness that cannot be accounted for when a subject is hypnotized. Suggestion, here, is best understood as an indirect persuasion. As Davis puts it, "Unlike political persuasion, suggestion is an improper rhetoric, a bastard form that induces action (or attitude) without properly persuading, a directly suasive 'discourse' that defies the presumed distance between

self and other, evading cognitive discretion and so all possibility for deliberation" (33). For Freud, suggestion was dangerous, leading him to reject it as a form of analysis. Instead, as Davis informs us, Freud trades in the analyst's suggestions in favor of the patients "free-associations." However, he finds himself going back to hypnosuggestion to later explain group formation as a kind of such suggestion—where members, before identifying as a group, identify with a leader, a father, aführer (31). What suggestion exposes, then, is a type of identification that is not produced by and from the self, but instead is issued from an Other.

Following Davis just a little bit further, what we find in Freud is that, in relation to alterity, identification is at a loss. Identification fails to wholly signify the self in response to this other. And, as Davis remarks, "It is not in identification, but its failure, in the withdrawal of identity, that I am exposed to my predicament of exposedness and become capable of demonstrating concern for another finite existent" (35) The originary other that splits the subject from it's self for Burke is, for Freud, "a surplus of alterity that remains indigestible, inassimilable, unabsorbable" creating a negative, a lack that is also a surplus (34). But since, as Davis reminds us, there are no negatives in nature for Burke, what are we to make of this remainder that is not part of the symbolic?

By pointing out extra-symbolic form of identification that revolves around this non-signified other, Davis ends her discussion of Burkean identification by stating that:

> [W]hat Burke censored in Freud—consciously or unconsciously—is the possibility that no flex of reason, no amount of proper critique, can secure the interpersonal distance on which Burke had pinned his hopes. According to Freud, an affectability or persuadability operates irrepressibly and below the radar of the critical faculties. (35-6)

What is needed now is a formation of how this extra-symbolic identification might work. Davis makes it clear that in order to understand this process neither Burke nor Freud will be of much help. Instead, we must turn our attention to Lacan and his two-fold process of identification.

4.8 Metonymic Formations

Rhetoric and OOO can at times seem polar opposites. While rhetorical identification is concerned with unification and signification, OOO seems to worry about the individual

substances of objects, withdrawing from any totalizing unification or signification whatsoever. But as we've seen, the two "realms" may not be so divisive. In fact, as Diane Davis's comparison of Freudian identification to that of Burke's has shown us, there is a form of extra-symbolic persuasion that is unaccounted for in Burkean rhetoric. My aim in the following, then, is to use Lacan to clarify this split between pre- or extra-symbolic action and that of the symbolic.

To say that the Lacanian subject is complex would be an understatement. However, this shouldn't deter us from examining at least some part of Lacan's split subject in order to better understand identification. Identification for Lacan is a two-fold process: alienation and separation. In *Rhetoric and Culturein Lacan*, Gilbert D. Chaitin clearly describes the way alienation works in terms of subject-hood:

> Adopted from Hegel, Marx and their interpreters, Lacan's alienation designates the birth of the subject of language, an occurrence that is more like a stillbirth. The subject comes into existence through the discourse of the Other, when the Other…imposes a signification upon the individual, calling her to take up a particular function, investing her with a certain position in the human family or society at large…At this point the subject is confronted with the forced choice of the Lacanian *vel* (Latin for 'either,' 'or'), which results from the interplay of subject and meaning (attributes) in the functioning of language as predication: either he chooses being , thus loosing out on meaning entirely, or he chooses the meaning imposed on him, and thereby forfeits that meaning-less aspect of signification which constitutes the unconscious. (183)

This forced choice of alienation can be boiled to down to the following: either choose meaninglessness and reject language and subject-hood, or you accept the meaning of the Other, and become an instrument of the Other and have subject-hood taken away from you. Either way, you will lose subject-hood. For Lacan, the only way out of this forced choice of alienation is to recognize a third option, that of the choice itself—or separation.

Separation, then, is this way out of the forced choice of alienation. It opens up a space of unknown meaning in signification. If alienation offered the subject an "either/or," then in separation the subject defines his relation to the Other as a "neither/nor." As Chaitin understands it:

> Either the subject refuses language (meaning) entirely, in which case the nonsubject of psychosis results. From this point nothing further can result. Or she accepts meaning, in which case her individual being is crushed by the universalizing function of the signifier. From this "all" [present in the all or nothing choice of alienation] there is a possible way out, provided the totality of meaning can be disrupted. And that is just what separation involves: opening up a space of non-meaning within language; that is, forming an unconscious. (187)

To open this space up, the subject begins to move between signifiers, neither this one nor that one. And for Lacan, the space between signifiers is also the space of non-meaning in the desire of the Other; that is, the object cause of desire—objet petit a.

Approaching this process rhetorically, David Metzger, in *The Lost Cause of Rhetoric*, puts alienation and separation in terms of metonymy and metaphor, respectively. What Metzger shows is that, for Lacan, "metonymy functions as a ground for metaphor" (69). One way to understand this is to recognize that the goal of separation (or metaphor) is to temporarily choose a signifier, completing subject identification. However, as we know, Lacan has a previous step before this choice is complete—alienation (or metonymy)—which can be understood as a meaningless chain of possible signifiers. For Metzger, language and the signification of separation forces the meaningless formations of metonymy to be repressed, or given up in favor of the signifier.

What Metzger's formation should allow us to see, though, is that before identification, we are faced with a meaningless list of things, a metonymy of stuff, if you will. So the problem for object-oriented rhetoric is not *how then do we identify the object?*, but *what meaningless lists came before such an identification?* And instead of asking *what is that object for me*?, we should be looking for what metonymy can provide in order to work in an extra-symbolic manner, and describe the object-for-itself.

4.9 Listing Things

In *Alien Phenomenology, or What It's Like to Be a Thing*, digital media scholar Ian Bogost argues that one way to describe the object-for-itself would be to develop an ontograph. Bogost adopts ontography from object-oriented philosopher, Graham Harman, "as a name for a

general inscriptive strategy, one that uncovers the repleteness of units [Bogost's word for objects] and their interobjectivity" (38). In Bogost's terms, ontography is a "aesthetic set theory" that does not seek to describe the object for us, but instead is a "particular configuration [which] is celebrated merely on the basis of its existence" (38). And one of the simplest forms of ontography is the list.

Lists and Latour litanies (termed as such because of Bruno Latour's use of lists to explain the connection of actors) have become a staple for object-oriented philosophy. For example, in Graham Harman's *Guerrilla Metaphysics*, we are treated to the following lists: "shards of glass, bulky towers, land animals, dolphins, and neutrons," and "trade winds, storms, radiation, continental plates, chattering birds" (66-67). Bogost, however, argues that such lists offer a practical way of doing one part of object-oriented philosophy. For Bogost:

> The inherent partition between things is a premise of OOO, and lists help underscore those separations, turning the flowing legato of a literary account into the jarring staccato of real being. […] When made of language, lists remind the literary-obsessed that the stuff of things is many. Lists are perfect tools to free us from the prison of representation precisely because they are so inexpressive. (40)

Bogost's assumption is that the typical way of description is by way of narrative. And if the goal of literature is identification, as Bogost sees it, lists are counter narratives, breaking up identification by bringing together objects that may not necessarily go together.

Already, we might be able to see how lists act as one form of metonymic description. By offering a catalogue rather than a narrative, lists exist as meaningless clusters of things, people, actions, thoughts, and abstractions. Like the realm of metonymy found in Lacanian alienation, lists offer no set structure for the symbolic and can be said to exist pre- or at least extra-symbolically. As Bogost puts it, lists are messy in that, instead of a flowing description of the Benjamin Franklin Bridge, the list explodes it into cars, pedestrians, roads, potholes, peeling paint, steel bars, stone pillars, cables, towers, gravel, tar, birds, Camden, NJ, Philadelphia, PA, commuters, trains, walkways, highways, road signs, cigarette butts, trash, the Delaware River, Paul Phillipe Cret, Ralph Modjeski, light poles, zipper barriers, grass, the musical Godspell,

mud, traffic helicopters, water, television news organizations, It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia, etc.

Placing the list in a context, such as the previous list for the Benjamin Franklin Bridge, does not take away from its power to break up literary fluidity. Instead, as Bogost points out, "In addition to mere mention, things also ought to be considered conjunctively, lest the lighthouse, dragonfly, lawnmower, and barely all collapse into the abstraction of example without exemplification" (39). But instead of offering clear connections, lists juxtapose objects rather than relating things comfortably. Much like Rene Magritte's surrealist painting in which a train is seen jutting out of a fireplace, lists offer no explanation as to why one object is listed after another. But one type of list, the tag-cloud, can offer an insight into the suggestive or suasive realm that inhabits each object.

4.10 Tag-Clouds

In early 2010, Bogost developed a website advertising Georgia Tech's OOO symposium. Along with the symposium information, he engineered a piece of software for the website designed to "illustrate the diversity of objects by demonstrating individual examples one at a time" (97). The software scoured the photo sharing site Flickr, pulling out images with very specific user-generated tags. However, Bogost ran into trouble when a dean at a women's college brought up the website only to find the object-oriented symposium to be advertised with an image of a woman in a bunny suit. Running the risk of having the identity of his OOO symposium misinterpreted, Bogost reluctantly changed the search terms for his software to exclude the tags: sexy, woman, and girl. Yet, this example does more than show how one can perform "carpentry" (Bogost's word for a type of object-oriented composition). This example can also serve to illustrate a very important point—namely, that metaphoric constructions of identity are always in need of another metaphor, so that one is always looking for a "better" understanding. For Bogost, this lesson presented itself when he attempted to leave his creation in the realm of metonymy, not fully realizing perhaps that it would be interpreted in all sorts of

ways by all sorts of other objects. But if listing does not do enough work, and metaphorism (Bogost's word for how objects relate) runs the risk of being misinterpreted, is there a way of performing object-oriented identification that falls in between? What would such carpentry look like?

Surprisingly enough, the answer to these questions can be found in Bogost's example of his image toy. In order not to offend anyone with the images associated with his OOO symposium, Bogost manipulated the types of images his search software looked for by excluding certain tags. Tagging is a process by which users (or in some cases, programs) create keywords or phrases for an individual object. These tags are often used as identifying markers for these objects. For example, users of Facebook can tag other users in images they've uploaded, allowing the image to be identified as a photo of both users. Tags can be added or deleted to an object at anytime. But more importantly, tags work in the background as metadata. And if metonymy is the ground of metaphor, tagging and other metadata is the ground for any digital object. In this way, tags are akin to the metonymic lists operating prior to metaphoric identification. Yet, unlike the meaningless lists of objects, tags and especially tag-clouds seem to have slightly more rhetorical power.

In *Lingua Fracta*, Colin Gifford Brooke defines tag clouds as "weighted lists of keywords extracted from a body of material, whether the back issues of a journal or the entries on an individual weblog" (110). Tag clouds present keywords found in a digital object's metadata, usually in alphabetical order, according to frequency by ever increasing font size. The more frequent a word is used, the larger the word appears in the tag cloud. Although tag clouds point to frequency, like metonymy and Bogost's lists, they do not give the words or their connections meaning. As Brooke notes, "[T]ag clouds are the output of code that almost entirely remains behind the scenes. Other than typing in the feed addresses and setting up a page where the cloud will appear, this form of aggregation requires little involvement on my part unless I choose

to follow a particular keyword for further investigation" (163). Therefore, tag clouds are not necessarily composed by an author(although they can be).

Regardless, existing as output code, any causal connections or symbolic identification is done in relation to another object. Tag clouds work primarily at the level of extra-symbolic suggestion. No one word comes to stand in for the object's identity; it merely suggests possibilities. But in this suggestion lies a contingent world of parts, wholes, qualities, real and sensual objects; coming together in a type of set or unity. The larger words exist on the same plane as the smaller words; each word equally exists without existing equally. And unlike the consubstantial identification narrative of Paul Cret and Ralph Modjeski, object-oriented-identification is a suggestion made by the object's tag cloud; an identification which calls to (symbolic) action without properly persuading—that is, without properly working in the symbolic order. In order to truly understand this though, it is imperative that the objects in tag clouds not be seen as separated by division (a, b, c), but by difference (a, a', a'', a'''…a^n). If symbolic identification is compensatory to division, then this is because it works at the level of metaphor. Extra-symbolic, or object-oriented-identification, however, works at the level of metonymy and therefore must be seen as compensatory to difference. But lest one forget, object-oriented ontology dictates that *this is the case for all objects*—including those that metaphorically identify with the term, subject.

4.11 From Metonymy to Metaphor

To briefly recap, Burke's understanding of orientation has been opened up to include all possible objects, not just those specific, symbol-using, human animals. Essentially, I argued that it might be possible to simplify orientation to include nonhumans. A parallel line was then drawn between orientation and the system/environment distinction that Levi Bryant made in his onticology. Much like Burke's orientation, Bryant argued that systems both create and limit an object's relations to the world. These series of distinctions, both between the system and the environment and the elements of the environment, create the object's unique environment. This

parallel between orientation and systems theory made it possible to for me to then argue that all objects begin with a similar process of making sense of contingent relations. And so far I've explored how one could envision this process rhetorically by arguing that all objects create a metonymic tag-cloud of possible metaphoric encounters. Unlike symbolic systems which rely on metaphor to develop identifications, I argued that these metonymic tag-clouds offer an extra-symbolic form of persuasion I called (following Diane Davis) suggestion. However since this metonymic realm is essentially nonsensical, I still need to explain how it is possible for an object to persuade without words. In other words, I need to find a way to explain how objects move from suggestion to non-symbolic persuasion.

When I argue that each object has its own orientation, and as a result its own metonymic suggestiveness, I've only argued for how objects might be seen as persuasive on their own—i.e., how they are merely suasive. In other words, a tag cloud or an object's metonymic realm isn't *per*-suasive until it encounters another object with a different orientation. In such an interaction, there is always a degree of translation. Out of these unique metonymic realms created by each object, subsequent metaphoric relations are necessarily made. Metonymy gives way to metaphor. Much like a system creates and limits the object through its local manifestations of its environment, metonymy offers the base, substance, or system out of which metaphors are created. These metaphors in turn limit the contingency of the object.

Since we used Lacan's formation of the unconscious as a model of an object's metonymy of potential local manifestations, it makes logical sense to also understand how Lacan saw the formation of metaphor out of the nonsensical base of metonymy. To begin with, the metonymic realm of the unconscious is not devoid of knowledge, though it is devoid of meaning. In other words, much like Bryant's virtual-proper-being and Harman's "real," the metonymic realm of the unconscious for Lacan is a never-ending supermarket of potential. As Bruce Fink puts it, "There is a type of structure automatically and autonomously unfolding in/as the unconscious, and there is absolutely no need to postulate any kind of consciousness of this

automatic movement…The unconscious contains ‘indelible knowledge’ which at the same time is ‘absolutely not subjectivized’” (23). In other words, the metonymic realm of the unconscious not only holds the possibilities of the conscious, but it also structures the conscious without the need for a subject—in fact, the subject comes about only after this structuring process is complete, only when alienation is coupled with the act of separation.

For Lacan, the contingency of the unconscious specifically gives way to a structure of ordering. In a simplified version of what Lacan argued for, Fink explains the ordering of the unconscious according to “the flipping of a well-balanced, unloaded coin” (16). As Fink points out, “With such a coin, there is no way to predict, at any one toss, whether the result will be heads or tails,” which means that each single coin toss is (to a degree) contingent in nature (16). Now suppose, as Fink does, one tosses the coin 9 times in a row, leading to a chain of results. If one non-arbitrarily assigns a “+” for heads and a “-” for tails, this chain might look something like this:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 Toss Numbers
+ + - - + - - - + Heads/Tails Chain (16)

This contingent chain of coin tosses begins to structure itself immediately, as relations between the individual tosses are made and pairs are formed. As such, there are four possible combinations: ++, +-, -+, --. Both Lacan and Fink assign each pair a number: ++ = 1; +- and -+ = 2, and --=3. For both Lacan and Fink, this numerical assignment is seen as the first step of language; or as Fink puts it, “This is the first level of coding we are going to introduce and it marks the origin of the symbolic system we are creating here” (17). This creates a chain that reads: 1, 3, 2, 2 (whereby toss 7 is not counted because of the odd number of tosses).

However, this introductory coding is only the beginning. As Fink points out, if one begins to overlap the tosses so that the second toss can be included in both the 1/2 pair and the 2/3 pair, a new level of coding becomes available, so that the above chain reads: “1, 2, 3, 2, 2, 3, 3, 2” (17). And as Fink points out, for Lacan this type of pairing off (even when overlapping the tosses) creates a type of grammar or ordering, so that “a category 1 set of tosses (++)

cannot be immediately followed…by a category 3 set [(--)], as the second throw in a category 1 is necessarily a plus, whereas the first throw in a category 3 has to be a minus" (17). There are two important points to be made here.

First, in creating pairs, not only is the nonsensical metonymy of coin tosses given a sense of structure, but the frequency by which these couplings appear gives way to a type of persuasive power. By pairing the coin tosses, the chain begins to dictate or order the remaining potentials for the chain while maintaining the independence and specificity of any single coin toss. For example, if category 1 becomes more frequent than category 2, the possibility for a category 3 pair of tosses lessens. Frequency gives way to a similar type of ordering found in Deleuze and Guattari's order-words. For like Deleuze and Guattari's order-word is not only that which gives commands or orders the audience, but the order-word also gives the event a specific structure.

Second, for Fink, what this ordering means is that what develops out of these pairs is *an impossibility in contingency*—a limit to metonymy. *Relation* between each contingent toss *creates order* much like Deleuze and Guattari's order-words both structured and dictated. So that, as Fink points out, "A restriction in terms of possibility and impossibility has arisen, it seems, ex nihilo. Important too, though, is the syntax produced, which allows certain combinations and prohibits others" (19).In this way, the random, contingent field of metonymy gives way to a structuring, syntactical realm of pairing—i.e., metaphor. Because metaphor creates limits out of the nonsensical images, objects, and qualities of metonymy, it becomes the way one describes relations. Specifically, metaphor as object-object relation is an idea that will be explored in the next chapter, not only in terms of what Ian Bogost calls "metaphorism," but metaphor itself will be taken up as a way of composing under an object-oriented view of rhetoric. Suffice it to say, though, metaphor is only one side to an object-oriented rhetoric. Whereas metonymy suggests potential relations, metaphor persuades one to accept a specific orientation.

If rhetoric can be seen as *suggestive* before such metaphoric pairing, and *persuasive* by way of such pairing, then what object-oriented rhetoric entails is a holistic approach to the rhetorical act. Rhetoric should neither hold the speaker, the audience, nor the text above the others. Instead, a rhetorical act must be understood at one time existing as a contingent mesh of potential local manifestations, of qualities, and of order-words, and at the same time a forced pairing (i.e., metaphor) of objects: bridge and bank, voice and language, and colleagues A and B. To be properly posthuman, rhetoric must shift its focus away from its correlation with language (by understanding language as one object among many) and allow for other nonhuman orientations. Rhetoric must not only create the space for technological orientations and corporeal orientations, but also bridge-orientations, coffee mug-orientations, and flower-orientations. For if I am correct in claiming that rhetoric takes place in and out of the contingency of any given situation, there is no difference between the way that human subjects orient themselves to their environments and these contingencies and the ways in which objects do so.

4.12 Recapitulation and Forward Movement

If anything, this chapter is both an introduction to object-oriented rhetoric and a furthering of the argument that rhetoric is in need of a more expansive approach to posthumanism. Where the beginning of the chapter laid out a proposition that like humans, objects also develop their own unique orientations to their respective contingent relations and environments, the later part of the chapter could be seen as an argument that all objects (without human involvement) use this orientation to influence or sway other objects. Using the tag-cloud as a visual example of the myriad potential qualities an object might put forth in an event, I posit the extra-symbolic realm of metonymy as a way to understand how it is that an object might act without acting symbolically. Then, through the realm of metaphor I explore a possible way for objects to interact that didn't specifically involve human significations. Instead,

when objects relate metaphorically, they develop a grammar or structure by which they turn contingency into limits.

The next chapter will build off of this idea of metaphor by exploring the ways in which metaphor can be seen as act of composition. To this end, I argue that under an object-oriented lens, rhetoric can rework metaphor into a form of posthuman composition—into something I call the *material metaphor*. Material metaphors not only juxtapose two unrelated objects, but do so in a manner that allows the objects to swim in, exploit, and translate each other's qualities. The objects involved are irreducible to both each other and the larger metaphor. But more importantly, I claim that as a form of posthuman and object-oriented composition, a *material metaphor should be seen as a type of object* unto itself, straddling the line between non-symbolic motion and symbolic action. I conclude by arguing that because of their immediacy (in terms of need for translation) material metaphors are an ontological occasion of rhetorical *kairos*, for both *kairos* and material metaphors are timely and both require that connections be made.

CHAPTER 5

MATERIAL METAPHORS AND OBJECT-ORIENTED COMPOSITION

5.1 Introduction

Whether from Aristotle's claim in the *Poetics* and later in *On Rhetoric* that the act of creating metaphor is something that cannot be taught or from I.A. Richard's claim in *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* that metaphor is not only the main principle of language, but of thought as well, rhetoric and metaphor have shared a close bond. But the move towards posthuman rhetoric—whether technological, corporeal, or object-oriented—requires that rhetoric take a fresh look at its deployment and use of metaphor if its goal is to truly de-center the human subject (and, perhaps, language) from the rhetorical act. As I argued for in my last chapter, rhetoric's reliance on language is itself a form of correlationism that must be overcome if rhetoric is to become posthuman. This means that if rhetoric is to take part in any kind of posthumanism, its reliance upon and use of linguistic tropes must at minimum be reworked.

The following chapter will first develop an act of posthuman and object-oriented composition I call the *material metaphor*. In short, material metaphors work by relating two previously unrelated objects, but can be identified in the unique way that they allow the two objects to unfold in the other. By taking up an object-oriented approach to rhetoric, I will argue that by creating material metaphors, one is not only creating a unique quasi-object, but is in essence composing a rhetorical act in a moment of *kairos*. Next, I offer my own example of a material metaphor: bridge as inverted building. Here, I explain my material metaphor by arguing that when thought of ecologically, a bridge contains the same structural layers as a building; however, the layers are flipped inside out—where the inner layer of a building becomes the outer layer of a bridge and the outer layer of a building is the inner layer of the bridge. Such a metaphor allows one to think of the bridge as something more than a transportation structure, allowing the bridge its own ecology and rhetoric. By not pigeon-holing the bridge as merely a transportation structure, one is allowed to open the bridge up to an complex entanglement of

human and nonhuman interactions, perhaps leading to better design and overall safety. And finally, I address some ethical questions raised by my project as a whole. Essentially, what I find is that object-oriented rhetoric is important precisely because it draws attention not only to the missing masses but to the ways in which humanity tends to deal with such objects.

5.2 Object-Oriented Ontology and Metaphor

Object-oriented philosophy originated as an offshoot of a philosophical movement known as speculative realism, as we saw in the second chapter. The main complaint of speculative realism is that so much of contemporary philosophy has been built around the erroneous notion that thinking and being are inseparable. French speculative realist, Quentin Meillassoux, coined the term "correlationism" to identify "the idea according to which we only ever have access to the correlation between thinking and being, and never to either term considered apart from the other" (5). For philosophers like Graham Harman, the obvious way out of this correlation was to sidestep the correlation altogether by allowing all objects the same ontological status that under correlationism only humans enjoyed. Therefore, in an object-oriented ontology, everything exists as an object, including human beings. Hard drives, carpets, street tar, and graduate students are all objects. And though each is recognized as its own, autonomous object with distinct qualities and powers, they all exist and relate to each other in similar ways.

In *Guerrilla Metaphysics*, one of his earlier object-oriented philosophical texts, Graham Harman describes the relation between two objects as a form of metaphor. For Harman, each object is made up of two realms: a "real" realm which always withdraws from any relation (a realm that could be described as the object's essence); and a "sensual" realm made up of the numerous qualities an object puts forth in relation to other objects. In an earlier chapter, I position this split between the real and the sensual as similar to the split found in Sigmund Freud's examination of the uncanny. Much like the psychological split of the uncanny between the known and the unknown, an object is uncanny in that it straddles the line between what is

present (or known) and withdrawn (or unknown). Yet, because of the withdrawal of the object's essence, any relation between two individual objects is always a relation that takes place in the sensual realm. In this way, objects in Harman's philosophy, are said to "bathe" in each other's sensual realms while never accessing the other's real realm.

This type of relation that is also a type of non-relation is what Harman calls metaphor. In a move that he is completely serious about, Harman argues that: "[A] thing relates to its own parts in the same way it relates to other things, and indeed in the same way that we ourselves relate to things: namely, by distorting them, caricaturing them, bringing them into play only partially," much like metaphor (172). Since objects always only interact with each other in their sensual realms, no two objects ever *directly* interact with each other. Instead, each object metaphorizes, or distorts the other object, in relating to it. Every relation requires multiple translations.

Using the work of Jorge Oretga y Gasset, Harman contemplates one specific example of a metaphor given by Ortega: "the cypress is a flame" (106). As Harman points out, metaphor offers a strange relation whereby the two objects do not necessarily have to be similar. In fact, whereas "'[t]he cypress is juniper' fails as metaphor precisely because the names can be fused together with ease, 'the cypress as flame' succeeds only because they cannot" (106). Metaphor, in other words, provides a structure whereby the two objects begin to pull out certain qualities from each other. When given the metaphor of cypress-as-flame, one begins to immediately understand the cypress in terms of the qualities of a flame, and the flame in terms of the qualities of a cypress. So that "[o]n the one side we have the cypress-feeling…[with its] shadowy intuition of brooding vegetative power combined with funerary gloom and the fear of lurking criminals. On the other side there is the flame-feeling, with its festive joy, its delight in destructive power, its jubilation of infernal color, and its hypnotic void of information" (108). Neither one grasps the two objects entirely, much like the two objects never grasp each other. Instead, they each relate only partially.

As digital media professor and fellow object-oriented philosopher, Ian Bogost puts it, “Objects [for Harman] float in a sensual ether. When they interact…they do so only by the means they know internally but in relation to the qualities [of the other object] in which they ‘bathe’” (66). Each object makes sense of the other object according to its own logic—that is, it translates the other object according to its own structure and desires. Water and soil, for example, are both autonomous objects (in their own right) but become “fuel” for a plant. The plant relates by metaphorizing, distorting, or caricaturizing the water and soil into fuel.

Bogost takes this idea of relating-by-metaphor a step further and describes a process he calls “metaphorism.” For Bogost, “Metaphorism offers a method…that grasps at the ways objects bask metaphorically in each others’ notes…by means of metaphor itself, rather than by describing the effects of such interactions on the objects. It offers a critical process for characterizing object perceptions” (67). Metaphorism, therefore, offers up the metaphor as a caricature of the perception of an object. Much as Jakob von Uexküll’s *Umwelt* theory allowed biologists and animal studies scholars to discuss unique world views for animals such as honey bees and ticks, metaphorism is Bogost’s attempt at developing a perceptual scheme whereby one might glimpse the world from the point of view of a particular object. In his book *AlienPhenomenology,* Bogost metaphorizes how a Foveon image sensor in a Sigma DP camera “sees” the world. Metaphor, for Bogost, then is a way one can attempt to understand what it might be like to be a specific object.

And although this approach to metaphor makes sense from the philosophical and ontological perspective, where there is an importance placed on describing what is necessary (i.e., the object itself), rhetoric (as I argue for in an earlier chapter) deals with the contingency of these objects’ relations to each other. For object-oriented rhetoric, then, metaphor is a method by which the hitherto unforeseen sensual qualities of objects might be brought to forefront when two objects are juxtaposed or forced to relate. In order to get at a rhetoric of objects, one must compose or build something I call a *material metaphor*.

5.3 Material Metaphor

A few points need to be made about material metaphors before we progress. First, there is a specific emphasis placed on the materiality of the objects that make up the metaphor. In other words, in building a material metaphor, a certain amount of respect should be given regarding the individual material make-up of each object. Neither the metaphor nor the objects should be seen as substitutes or ever be used to reduce the objects to the metaphor. For example, if I were to say that a key is a kind of knife, I neither want to reduce the key to the qualities of a knife, nor the knife to the qualities of a key. Rather, the material metaphor of key-as-knife respects the materiality of both objects allowing the two to relate, bathe, and interact exactly because of these material differences. Both can be serrated, both are a times sharp, and both can used to get inside other objects. However, a knife has a long handle that fits the entire hand whereas a key often does not. The point is, regardless of the connections made, each object is irreducible to the other object and to the larger metaphor. Something is always left out.

But this brings me to the second point: material metaphors are a way of modeling the uncanny nature of objects—allowing the two objects that make up the metaphor to generate, bathe, and make present certain previously unknown or withdrawn aspects of either one or both of the objects that participate in the metaphor. Such modeling is similar to that put forth by sociologist Andrew Pickering in *The Mangle of Practice*. For Pickering, as well as for object-oriented rhetoric, metaphor as a way of modeling "is an open-ended process with no determinate destination. From a given model…an indefinite number of future variants can be constructed. Nothing about the model itself fixes which of them will figure as the goal of a particular passage of practice" (19). In this way, material metaphors should not be seen as limiting compositions, but should instead be seen as generative objects, requiring further models and further material metaphors.

Take the following example given by Thomas Frentz regarding the influential work of Donald Schön:

> Schön recalls a group that was charged with improving paintbrushes made with synthetic bristles. Compared to brushes with natural bristles having split ends, the synthetic ones without split ends delivered paint unevenly, in "glops," as they put it. Even splitting the ends of the synthetic bristles didn't help. Then someone said, "You know, a paintbrush is a kind of pump," implying that when a brush is pressed against some surface, paint is forced out through the spaces between the bristles, like a pump. The implications of this "paintbrush as pump" metaphor led to a series of modifications in the synthetic bristles that eventually produced a brush equal to or better than ones with natural bristles—and far less expensive (105).

For Schön and Frentz, the paintbrush-as-pump metaphor not only allows the designers to better understand the sensual qualities of the paintbrush through its forced relation to the pump, but it also allows the generation of other such metaphors whereby the pump becomes more than just a liquid transportation device (pump-as-bristle) and the bristles of the paintbrush more than means to getting paint on a canvas.

Finally, the composition of a material metaphor is the composition of what sociologist Bruno Latour calls a "quasi-object." For Latour, quasi-objects exist in between the social and natural poles, so that:

> [I]f religion, arts or styles are necessary to 'reflect', 'reify', 'materialize', 'embody' society– to use some of the social theorists' favorite verbs –then are objects not, in the end, its co-producers? Is not society built literally– not metaphorically –of gods, machines, sciences, arts and styles?… Maybe social scientists have simply forgotten that before projecting itself on to things society has to be made, built, constructed? And out of what material could it be built if not out of nonsocial, non-human resources? (*We Have Never Been Modern* 54)

And it is precisely these nonsocial, nonhuman resources which Latour calls quasi-objects. These quasi-objects are not only the speed bumps in a school zone and the soccer ball in play on the field, but I would argue they are also the key-as-knife and the paintbrush-as-pump. As quasi-objects, material metaphors enjoy both abstract and material translations. They not only allow the two objects to unfold in each other, but the material metaphor as a whole becomes an object (of sorts) with which to be reckoned. The quasi-object, soil-as-fuel has repercussions not

only for the plant, but also perhaps for the farmer, the gardener, and the small agricultural business owner.

Neither the linguistic significance of each object, nor the meaning of the overall metaphor itself is of great importance to the composition of a material metaphor. Instead, what is important for a material metaphor is what each object draws out of the other and what inner depths the two objects plunge, allowing each to be seen in their unique uncanniness. Material metaphors as quasi-objects exploit, point out, draw attention to sensual qualities of both objects, but never reduce them to those same qualities. They take part in objects by forcefully relating them to each other, and because of this "taking part in," each material metaphor requires subsequent material metaphors. As Harman puts it, if the metaphor is a new object, then "to create such an object is to de-create the external images that normally identify it, reshaping the plasma of their qualities into a hybrid structure" (110). By allowing the two objects to push and pull each other's qualities, by allowing them to not only bathe but to exploit and transform the other object, material metaphors offer a unique way of composing hybrid or quasi-objects.

In summary, material metaphors:

1) are irreducible neither to the material qualities of either object nor to the metaphor as a whole.
2) are models of the uncanny split present in each object which, in effect, allows the two objects to pull out, exploit, or transform qualities from each other; this in turn requires more models or metaphors to be created.
3) are themselves quasi-objects, enjoying both material and symbolic translations.

But why use metaphor? If the goal is to get at the rhetoric of objects, why use metaphor as the primary form of composition? The answer, I'd argue, is in the way that metaphor works. Or more specifically, the composition of a material metaphor is the composition of a rhetorical act in its entire contingency.

Take for example the way object-oriented ontologist Timothy Morton describes how an object comes into being:

> Crash! Suddenly the air is filled with broken glass. The glass fragments are fresh objects, newborn from a shattered wine glass. These objects assail my senses and, if I'm not careful, my eyes could get cut. There are glass fragments. What is happening? How many? How did this happen? I experience the profound givenness of beginning as an anamorphosis, a distortion of my cognitive, psychic and philosophical space. The birth of an object is the deforming of the objects around it. An object appears like a crack in the real. This distortion happens in the sensual realm, but because of its necessary elements of novelty and surprise, it glimmers with the real, in distorted fashion. Beginnings are open, disturbing, blissful, horrific. (124)

Much like the birth of an object, a material metaphor causes a moment of distortion in its rhetorical situation, a "crash" between two objects and the creation of a new quasi-object. In this way, material metaphors, too, are instantaneous and require immediate translation.

And like material metaphors, rhetorical acts are ripe with connections from one object to another. One contemporary understanding of a rhetorical act is through the concept of *kairos*. In chapter three, *kairos* was linked to contingency, an opportune time, a fitting place, and a third aspect: appropriate orientation. For John Muckelbauer, however, *kairos* also carries with it an ontological dimension. As he points out, often pre-Socratic notions of *kairos* defined it not only as the opportune moment, or fitting place, but also "considered *kairos* to be 'one of the laws of the universe'" (115). Therefore, moments of *kairos* or *kairotic* events happen regardless of human involvement. However, here's the rub. As Muckelbauer finds, *kairotic* events often require a response. Quoting philosopher John Smith, he states that "A *kairotic* event does not happen randomly; in some qualitative sense, it is a 'time of crisis [and]…opportunity,' which is solicited or even demanded by the situation itself" (116). So if a human subject is not necessary for a *kairotic* event to take place, but yet such an event demands a response, who or what responds?

For Muckelbauer, the *kairotic* event itself is an erasure of the line between situation and audience:

> As an ontological principle, a *kairotic* response does not have recourse to generality of any kind (either through intelligibility or judgment), but must be entirely singular and

> situated. […] If we are to encounter the singularity of situatedness, it would be imprecise to say that a *kairotic* situation 'demands' or 'solicits' a response. Instead, within this ontological rendering, *kairos* as qualitative time indicates a style of connecting that undoes the very distinction between a situation and a respondent. *Kairotic* connections simply happen. Or not. (116)

Seen ontologically, *kairos*, instead of simply being an opportune time or appropriate place, becomes a nonindividuated resonance—the connections made simply happen or not.

Similarly, a material metaphor demands that connections also be made, but it does not dictate which ones work and which ones won't. As Harman points out:

> If someone tells me that a cypress is like a juniper, what happens is that my attention is absorbed by a set of remarkably similar qualities; I am adrift in a world of *attributes* of things. But if someone tells me that a cypress is a flame, then I have entered the magic world of a cypress-flame-feeling-thing. Since the two images are unable actually to melt together instantly by way of their truly minimal common qualities, the cryptic essences that my life senses in them remain before me in a kind of permanent collision. (109)

When we are presented with the key-as-knife or paintbrush-as-pump, the material metaphor (like the *kairotic* event) undoes the distinction between primary and secondary objects, vehicle and tenor, and instead concerns itself with the connections that "simply happen or not." By composing a material metaphor, one is as close as one can get to composing a *kairotic* event, to creating an object-oriented rhetorical situation. Composing a material metaphor becomes not a moment of human perception or representation, but a moment of carpentry. The rhetorician becomes an engineer, a designer, an architect.

5.4 Bridge as Building

On August 1, 2007, the I-35 W Mississippi River Bridge in Minneapolis, Minnesota collapsed, killing thirteen and injuring many more. An investigation began almost immediately. Eventually, the reason for the collapse was argued to be weak and insufficient steel gusset plates (Frommer). Although engineered to withstand a certain weight load at the time the bridge was constructed, the gussets used were not exchanged in response to the increase in traffic over time. Such a tragedy reinforces the notion that no object exists in a vacuum, isolated from all others. Even though the gussets gave way under the stress of the weight, the many objects that made up that weight were just as much involved in the inevitable collapse. The cars,

people, trucks, gussets, steel beams, concrete, river, mud, and weather—the ecological system of all bridges—each played a role in the collapse of the I-35W Mississippi River Bridge.

For Timothy Morton, the term ecology is radically expanded past the traditional notion of the study of natural ecosystems. Instead, he wishes to push our thinking of ecology into a plethora of human and nonhuman arenas. For Morton, ecology becomes a mesh of entities:

> The mesh of interconnected things is vast, perhaps immeasurably so. Each entity in the mesh looks strange. Nothing exists all by itself, and so nothing is fully "itself." [...] They are strange, even intrinsically strange. Getting to know them makes them stranger. When we talk about life forms, we're talking about *strange strangers*. The ecological thought imagines a multitude of entangled strange strangers. (Morton 15)

To think ecologically, then, is to recognize that the mesh of networks is neither centered on the culture/nature divide nor around the subject/object divide. Instead the ecological thought involves cars, pollution, English instructors, coffee mugs, Vicodin, flowers, waste...etc. It involves vast networks and individual objects.

Ecologically, a bridge can be understood as much more than just its parts. It is an individual object, but an object that exists in and creates its environment. Akin to Morton's ecological thought is the speculative realist and object-oriented work of Levi Bryant. As a reminder, for Bryant, it is a necessity that all objects be seen on the same ontological plane. As Bryant puts it, "The democracy of objects is not a political thesis to the effect that all objects ought to be treated equally or that all objects ought to participate in human affairs. The democracy of objects is the *ontological* thesis [first put forth by Ian Bogost] that all objects…equally exist while they do not exist equally" (Bryant 19). This flat ontology allows Bryant to uncover a being that exists for all objects regardless of their size, shape, species, or spatiality—an ontology he gives the name onticology.

Along with this flat ontology, where all objects equally exist, Bryant holds that all objects are essentially split between a virtual proper being (or substance) and their local manifestations (or qualities). If an object is experienced as having this color or that quality, for onticology this is a result of an actualization of a power present in the substance of the object. In this way, an

object's virtual proper being is a structure of nonrepresentational powers that forever recedes or withdraws, and it is only when one of these powers is manifested locally that the object can relate to another object. For Bryant, "If it is crucial to distinguish between virtual proper being and local manifestation, then this is because the qualities of an object can undergo variations while still remaining the object that it is" (114). Therefore, onticology, as Bryant argues, is a philosophy of substance, but a virtual substance that exists as potential. Yet, this does not mean that an object's virtual proper being is less real. Instead, the virtual proper being or substance of an object "is concrete without being actual" both to its relations with other entities and with itself (117).

Because of this withdrawal of the object's virtual proper being to other objects and to itself, Bryant argues that objects can only be selectively open to the world around them. Drawing upon the autopoietic systems theory of Nikolas Luhmann, he makes a distinction between systems and environments. Onticology holds that objects are made of other objects, but they also exist as autonomous beings. Each substance maintains a distinct internal structure, apart from other structures. This endo-structure, for Bryant, is what constitutes the object's system. The structure of these systems is such that it works to maintain itself, and in doing so creates a difference that sets it apart from its environment. In this way, the system can be said to be operationally closed. As Bryant remarks, "The distinction between system and environment is a distinction drawn by each system. This is not only one of the origins of the operational closure of systems, but is also a condition for the *autonomy* of systems as individual and independent substances" (144). What this means, then, is that unlike an ecology that works within the culture/nature divide, or even the subject/object divide, each object in onticology exists as a separate selectively open system, thereby composing its own unique environment; so that a paper bag's environment is different than a pit bull's environment.

An ecology that proposes self-made ecosystems is a radical change from our traditional notions of environment and "nature" as containers. Instead, onticology understands

environment as the result of a generative process emanating from the object itself. What it teaches us about the world is not simply that we are all interconnected, human and nonhuman, but more importantly, onticology uncovers an ecological thought that begs us to answer, what types of environments or ecosystems have these strange strangers made for themselves? What is the ecology of the Styrofoam cup? What might the ecology of the dung beetle be? What about a building?

There seems to be a recent trend in some major urban areas to take old warehouses or hotels and turn them into trendy, upscale lofts. The rough, weather-beaten exteriors of these aged buildings give way to modern, hip interiors filled with every conceivable contemporary amenity. But what's really changed? In his fascinating book on building design, architecture, and building preservation, Stewart Brand lays out the six layers of *How Buildings Learn*. For Brand, these layers are not only ways of discussing the relations between the many parts of any given building, but more importantly, add a temporal dimension to understanding the ways buildings adapt and "learn."

Translating the work of architect Frank Duffy, Brand argues that buildings consist of the following six layers. First there is the Site of the building. The site consists of "the geographical setting, the urban location, and the legally defined lot" (Brand 13). Second is the Structure, or the "foundation and load-bearing elements." Third is the Skin or "exterior surfaces" of the building, including the roof, siding, brick-work, etc." Fourth are the Services of the building. As Brand states, "These are the working guts of a building, communications, wiring, electrical wiring, plumbing, sprinkler systems, HVAC (heating, ventilating, and air conditioning), and moving parts like elevators and escalators." Fifth is the Space plan which is "[t]he interior layout—where walls, ceilings, floors, and doors go." And finally, sixth is the Stuff of a building. Stuff consist of "chairs, desks, phones, pictures; kitchen appliances, lamps, hair brushes; all the things that twitch around daily to monthly" (13).

For Brand and Bryant, each object (or part or layer of an object) is selectively opened to its environment. Therefore, a building's Services are selectively opened to the other layers of the house and perhaps closed to the undulations of a seahorse off the coasts of Florida. At the risk of sounding limiting, however, one might easily see how, when coupled with Bryant's philosophical understanding of how objects create their own environments, each layer of Brand's building comes alive with a certain amount of agency. Site perturbs Structure, causing local manifestations to form in shifting foundations. Structure perturbs Skin, causing cracks to form in the brick mortar. Skin perturbs Services, forcing pipes to burst or drafts to be let in. The building's Services cause local manifestations to arise in the Space plan, such as peeling paint, cracked walls, and moldy floors. And finally, based on the disrepair (or not) of the Space plan, different Stuff is needed or desired to furnish the interior.

Yet, as Brand argues, coupled with each material layer is a temporal layer as well. Sites rarely if ever change; structures last from 30-300 years; skins are changed around every 20 years; services wear out every 7-15 years; space plans might last 3 years, although Brand notes that quieter houses might go as long as 30 years; and stuff moves in and out daily and monthly (13). Thinking of the ecology of buildings from a temporal perspective allows Brand to peek further into the agency of buildings, something otherwise missed by designers and architects. For Brand, even the simple act of turning on the heat starts a cavalcade of interactions and perturbations between the layers. For example, a damaged roof not only perturbs the rest of the building's Skin, but it also could cause local manifestations in the building's Structure and Services, causing the house to grow mold. Temporally speaking, though:

> [T]he lethargic slow parts are in charge, not the dazzling rapid ones. Site dominates the Structure, which dominates the Skin, which dominates the Services, which dominate the Space plan, which dominates the Stuff. How a room is heated depends on how it relates to the heating and cooling Services, which depend on the energy efficiency of the Skin, which depends on the constraints of the Structure. (17)

What Brand points to here is the network of interactions between parts, layers, and temporal agencies. For if the Skin of the building is in disrepair, it won't be able to keep its occupants warm or cool. The longer the layer resists entropy, the more agency it has on the other interactions. Therefore, if object-oriented ecology is concerned with studying the relations between objects and their environments, Brand would insist on recognizing the temporal dimension of each layer, part, or strand of the mesh.

As the tragedy of the I-35W Mississippi River Bridge exemplified, it is hard to pinpoint blame when it comes to the seeming "failure" of an object. Typically, such failure is assumed to issue from somewhere inside the object. Yet, as Bryant's onticology reveals, an object is not simply part of a larger environment, but instead each object issues its own environment in terms of its substance's endo-structure or system. Systems can be complex, with multiple layers between many parts. And as Brand argued, these layers should not just be thought of as material, but should also be understood as temporal parts. However, bridge ecology is not the same as the building ecology espoused by Brand.

Mapping out bridge ecology will require one to think about relations in terms of material connectedness and temporal difference. But it also requires that one think about these things in terms of bridge-being. In his essay "Building Dwelling Thinking," Martin Heidegger begins the work of developing bridge ecology by explaining how the bridge "gathers":

> To be sure, the bridge is a thing of its *own* kind; for it gathers the fourfold in *such* a way that it allows a *site* for it. But only something *that is itself a location* can make a space for a site. The location is not already there before the bridge is. Before the bridge stands, there are of course many spots along the stream that can be occupied by something. One of them proves to be a location and does so *because of the bridge*. Thus the bridge does not first come to a location to stand in it; rather a location comes into existence only by virtue of the bridge. (emphasis in original; 151-52)

Heidegger describes how the bridge creates its own environment by coming into being. The site is site not because it was waiting for the bridge to make it so, but because of the *existence* of the bridge. Like Brand's buildings, bridges "gather" or create their environments, giving way to their own Site, Structure, Skin, Services, Space plan, and Stuff.

Unlike buildings, though, bridge ecology flips the temporal layers of the building inside-out. In a building, the fastest changing layer was that of Stuff on the interior—the office supplies, furniture, people, clothing, decorations, etc. However, the fastest changing layer of a bridge is an exterior layer. Cars weighed down with junk, trucks carrying heavy loads, bicycles, pedestrians, rain, hail, and snow—the Stuff of bridges moves and changes hourly. The Space plan of the bridge would be the roads, walkways, and train tracks of the bridge. These change at a slower rate, and are often dependent upon the Stuff. Potholes, cracks, and accidents all require a change to the Space plan. Streetlights, road signs, and moveable parts (such as those found in bascule bridges) make up the bridge's Services, which need to be maintained yearly. While the paint, stonework, or steel frames make up the bridges Skin, and might be changed every 20-50 years. The Structure of a bridge is in fact its load-bearing elements, such as its supports, cables, and anchors, all of which require minimal maintenance. Finally, the Site of a bridge is its "geographical setting, the urban location," and the two banks it connects—and as Brand remarks, "Site is eternal" (Brand 13).

Understanding bridge ecology as such allows one to recognize that a bridge is not a mere static entity. Instead, as an object with its own ecology, it exists in a unique ecosystem where disturbance or change to one part (say, for example, the weight applied to a bridge's Space plan as happened to the I-35 W Mississippi River Bridge) can have detrimental ramifications to others (the bridge's Structure). And tending to a bridge, ecologically, requires one to be attentive not only to the roads that make up the Space plan and the Stuff that travels over it, but to the interactions between all levels and temporal parts because all objects can break. As Bryant points out, all objects tend to entropy, and "entities exist at a range of scales, from the unimaginably small to the unimaginably large, each characterized by their own duration and spatiality" (Bryant 243). Bridges, then, are merely one example of this larger *democracy of ecologies*.

The name for Bryant's version of object-oriented philosophy, onticology, can be read as a mash-up of the ontic and ontology. For Heidegger, the ontical and the ontological were two separate realms: that of exiting entities and that of Being, respectively. However, for Bryant and his flat ontology, all entities that exist are objects. As Bryant remarks in his essay in *The Speculative Turn*, "In the past I have jokingly referred to the position I am outlining here as 'Onticology' to emphasize its orientation towards objects, or its status, as Graham Harman calls it, as an Object-Oriented Ontology" (Bryant 270). In other words, to exist is to already be an object. Therefore, object-oriented ontology can be seen as an ontic-ontology—onticology. However, as was shown above, Bryant doesn't stop simply with a description of being.

Onticology holds that all objects are individual, autonomous entities, while also being enmeshed in relations with other objects. At the same time, objects are only selectively open to other objects, giving each object the ability to create its own environment of interactions. And because of this selective openness, onticology gives way to an ont(e)cology—the study of an object's unique onticological ecology—whereby the water bottle, computer chip, and Brahman bull are not simply cogs in a larger network, but are themselves starting points for further ecological thought. Each object in ont(e)cology, such as Brand's building and the I-35W Mississippi River bridge, exist as part of a larger ecology while also creating their own ecology. For example, my computer is part of my desk ont(e)cology, but like the building and the bridge, it too selectively gathers its own environment, opening up a site for a computer ont(e)cology. Electrical outlets, wood drawers, Ethernet cables, books, USB chords, pens, and keyboards are just some of the many strange-strangers in this ontological ecology. Ont(e)cology recognizes not only the interplay of parts and layers, networks, or connections between these objects, it also emphasizes the material and temporal dimensions that permeate each object-ecosystem. To think ont(e)cologically, then, is to take into account the autonomy of object environments while recognizing the mesh of connections such autonomy results in. Above all, ont(e)cology

exposes what it is like when ecologies collide, spilling into other ecologies, destroying, benefitting, and perhaps tending to each other.

5.5 Handle with Care

It seems fitting to end a chapter devoted to the creation of material metaphors with a poem. “Conversation with a Stone,” written by Polish poet Wislawa Szymborska and published in her collection *Nothing Twice: Selected Poems*, begins with a moment of anthropomorphism:

> I knock at the stone's front door.
> "It's only me, let me come in.
> I want to enter your insides,
> have a look round,
> breathe my fill of you."
>
> "Go away," says the stone.
> "I'm shut tight.
> Even if you break me to pieces,
> we'll all still be closed.
> You can grind us to sand,
> we still won't let you in."

Using an object-oriented approach, one could easily claim that the speaker immediately metaphorizes the stone. First it is metaphorized as stone-as-house, including a front door on which the speaker can knock. The metaphor of stone-as-house gives way to the metaphor of stone-as-lover, whereby the speaker wishes only “to enter your insides” and “breathe [his/her] fill of you.” And each metaphor is met with complete denial (both in terms of entry and in terms of ontological substance) by the stone. The stone is more than a house or a lover. Yet, each of these metaphors (house and lover) perhaps points to the larger ways in which humans attempt to “get at” objects.

By projecting an inside/outside relation, the speaker begins the relationship with the stone under the pretense that an object is something that can be entered, examined, or explored. The stone is approached by the human speaker as a static moment of knowledge, as a vessel for human understanding and intellectual consumption. However, as Barbara Johnson points out, “Wislawa Szymborska’s poem ‘Conversation with a Stone’ perfectly illustrates the booby traps that figurative language can lay for those who think they are avoiding it” (16). As the

rest of the poem shows, no metaphorization of the stone by the speaker will ever get at the absolute truth of what the stone is as an object:

> I knock at the stone's front door.
> "It's only me, let me come in.
> I've come out of pure curiosity.
> Only life can quench it.
> I mean to stroll through your palace,
> then go calling on a leaf, a drop of water.
> I don't have much time.
> My mortality should touch you."
>
> "I'm made of stone," says the stone,
> "and must therefore keep a straight face.
> Go away.
> I don't have the muscles to laugh."
>
> I knock at the stone's front door.
> "It's only me, let me come in.
> I hear you have great empty halls inside you,
> unseen, their beauty in vain,
> soundless, not echoing anyone's steps.
> Admit you don't know them well yourself."
>
> "Great and empty, true enough," says the stone,
> "but there isn't any room.
> Beautiful, perhaps, but not to the taste
> of your poor senses.
> You may get to know me, but you'll never know me through.
> My whole surface is turned toward you,
> all my insides turned away."
>
> I knock at the stone's front door.
> "It's only me, let me come in.
> I don't seek refuge for eternity.
> I'm not unhappy.
> I'm not homeless.
> My world is worth returning to.
> I'll enter and exit empty-handed.
> And my proof I was there
> will be only words,
> which no one will believe."
>
> "You shall not enter," says the stone.
> "You lack the sense of taking part.
> No other sense can make up for your missing sense of taking part.
> Even sight heightened to become all-seeing
> will do you no good without a sense of taking part.
> You shall not enter, you have only a sense of what that sense should be,

only its seed, imagination."

I knock at the stone's front door.
"It's only me, let me come in.
I haven't got two thousand centuries,
so let me come under your roof."

"If you don't believe me," says the stone,
"just ask the leaf, it will tell you the same.
Ask a drop of water, it will say what the leaf has said.
And, finally, ask a hair from your own head.
I am bursting with laughter, yes, laughter, vast laughter,
although I don't know how to laugh."

I knock at the stone's front door.
"It's only me, let me come in."

"I don't have a door," says the stone.

Each time the speaker metaphorizes the stone, the stone denies the speaker entry. The stone is neither palace, concert hall, nor is it a home. As Johnson sees it: "Despite the care taken to describe the lack of violence he or she will commit inside the stone and the avoidance of anthropocentric assumptions in the speaker's desire to get inside, the stone says, in effect 'I have no inside'" (16-17). But the stone denies more than just an inside in the final stanza of the poem. By effectively calling the speaker out on the assumption that the stone even has a door to knock on in the first place, the stone underscores the anthropomorphic danger in (and ubiquitous nature of) metaphor. For Johnson, "The warning against projecting onto the nonhuman an inside/outside relation that characterizes the human is loud and clear, but all the while that is not the anthropomorphism the speaker is taking for granted. The stone finally growls at the speaker, 'I don't even accept your assumption that I present a place to knock, or that you are left outside something that I can open'" (17). If, as Bogost claimed earlier, all objects metaphorize each other and each object works in terms of its own logic (e.g., soil as fuel for the plant) then the speaker's actions make sense. Human beings, simply put, work by way of anthropomorphizing anything nonhuman.

Ultimately, what Szymborska's poem points out is that any human approach to the nonhuman is going to end in a type of anthropomorphic metaphorization. As Johnson states, "In

a poem that expresses the desire to experience the thingness of a stone without anthropomorphic projections, Szymbroska shows that such knowledge is even harder to obtain than the humble speaker thinks" (17). However, humanity's anthropomorphic encounters with nonhumans are not unlike other object-object relations. When the plant metaphorizes the soil and water into fuel, an argument could be made that the plant is acting in a manner one might describe as "botanimorphic." No other object orients itself and metaphorizes exactly like the plant. But in this uniqueness of orientation and metaphorization, there is also a sense of nonhuman ethics.

Whether human philosophy will ever get at a complete nonhuman ethics, whereby there is a washing-machine ethics or a baseball bat ethics, one could only speculate. But what can be gotten at (rather easily, I might add) is an ethics of composition. If the danger in orienting oneself towards objects is the incessant return and use of anthropomorphic strategies, then a special attention must be given to the composition of the forced object-object relations found in material metaphors. If, as Bogost puts it, ethics is "a self-centered practice, a means of sense making necessitated by the inherent withdrawal of objects" and a "filing system for the sensual qualities of objects that map those qualities to internal methods of caricature, a process often full of struggle;" then a certain amount of care must be given to any operation or act of composition that proposes to create and relate two individual nonhuman objects with as little anthropomorphic interference as possible (79). Material metaphors engage in an ethical project by their recognition of the unique qualities, local manifestations, and potential powers each object maintains. In its requirement that neither object is reducible to the other object nor to the entire metaphor, material metaphors open up a space whereby humans might freely anthropomorphize only to understand that such characterizations of objects are really caricaturizations, distortions, and translations.

The composition of material metaphors requires that objects be seen not as ends, but as forms of *dunamis* or potential. What this means for the composer is an understanding that

the objects—regardless of their relations—are never exhausted in their being. There is always more to the object than meets the eye (or metaphor). When the stone in Szymborska's poem denies the speaker entry because he or she lacks a "sense of taking part," the stone is denying the speaker's view of it as a final cause—the stone as static object, so that the speaker can come in and finally know all there is to know about the stone. The stone makes clear that it is not just a house, a lover, or a vast concert hall. It is always in excess to these metaphors, an excess the speaker refuses to understand. So how is it, then, that one can develop a sense of taking part?

Having a "sense of taking part" is more than imagination, as the stone in Szymborska's poem points out. To take part implies a sort of working alongside and not from above or below the object. This might mean a certain amount of letting things be, to see what happens, or to experiment with things. Material metaphors take part, to a degree, in that they allow the two objects to pull out or exploit each other. There is no attempt to organize or reduce the objects in a material metaphor, though that danger still exists.

Deleuze and Guattari, however, offer a different although not necessarily dissimilar account of a "sense of taking part" in their imperative in *A Thousand Plateaus*: "Find your body without organs. Find out how to make it. It's a question of life and death, youth and old age, sadness and joy. It is where everything is played out" (151). For Deleuze and Guattari, the body without organs (BwO) is a presupposition of actualization or organization to identity. Before an identity is ever formed, there exists a smooth space across which all sorts of desires, powers, and intensities flow. This smooth, un*organ*ized realm is the BwO. As Delezue and Guattari put it, "*The body is the body. Alone it stands. And in no need of organs. Organism it never is. Organisms are the enemies of the body*. The BwO is not opposed to the organs; rather, the BwO and its 'true organs,' which must be composed and positioned, are opposed to the organism, the organic organization of the organs" (emphasis in original; 158). In this sense, the organism signals the end of the object and its flows of powers and intensities. The organism is

the final form. The BwO, on the other hand, exists alongside, after, and prior to the organism. It is "what remains when you take everything away," and "what you take away is precisely the phantasy, and significances and subjectifications as a whole" (151). The BwO, then, is a critique of these organizing structures: organism, significance, and subjectification. It exists not as the final cause of the object, but is instead the object in its full contingency, as *dunamis*. As Damian Sutton puts it, "The BwO is thus both desire and potentiality, an *awaiting*" (*Deleuze Reframed* 111). Like the ethical call from the material metaphor to never allow reduction, the BwO resists defining finality in terms of an organism. A mechanic, for example, can be defined by his occupation; however, the man or woman behind that identity is always in excess of this occupation. Across their bodies (both physical and psychological) a myriad of intensities and contingent flows crisscross intersect, relate, and pass on.

So when Deleuze and Guattari implore their readers to find their BwOs, the urgency is one of putting a stop to certain identity or definition (especially in terms of the psychoanalytical Oedipal structure). Wrapped up in this cry for doing away with organisms, significances, and subjectifications, one could also read an ethical call for recognizing things as more than what they are. The order becomes more universal—find all objects as BwOs. And it is precisely this recognition that material metaphors perform. By approaching objects as autonomous agents each with their own unique qualities, powers, and potentialities, the composition of a material metaphor approaches objects as bodies without organs. When the bridge and the building ecologies collided, the building pulled out both material and temporal qualities and intensities that looking at the bridge alone might never have appeared. And when the paintbrush was seen as pump, the intensities and powers of the pump were allowed to flow into the paintbrush pulling out specific qualities of the bristles that were even too difficult to replicate artificially.

Therefore, a lot of care must be given to developing and working through material metaphors. For the rhetorician and composer must both straddle a fine line between approaching objects as BwOs and attempting to limit their own anthropomorphic views. As Bogost states, "Metaphorism

is necessarily anthropomorphic, and thus it challenges the metaphysician [and I would add, the rhetorician] both to embrace and to yield the limits of humanity" (74). In order for rhetoric to become truly posthuman and not simply another version of cyborg transhumanism, the objects that surround us must be handled with care. One simply can't go knocking at the stone's door, but must await the actions of the stone whether it's through experimentation, carpentry, or composition. Only then will there be a better sense of taking part in the rhetoricity of objects.

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