

KAIROS, NOMOS, NEW MEDIA: PARADOX AS A RESERVOIR FOR
INVENTION

by

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For Toni, who turns tears into smiles
And Alex, who turns smiles into laughter

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ABSTRACT

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In the wake of the so-called “social turn” in writing studies, the scholarship of invention has enjoyed renewed interest. This dissertation is primarily concerned with invigorating the research of invention by turning towards viable but untapped generative approaches for composing that have been forged by artists working in areas external to composition studies by putting into practice what media theorist Gregory Ulmer calls a “heuretic” approach to invention. (I use the term heuretic to indicate the appropriation of an inventional model from a domain or discipline such as art, though other domains such as engineering would suit just as well.) To move towards this practice, the project proceeds through theoretical and practical issues of invention in the domains of rhetoric, history, psychoanalysis, media studies, and composition. The

major problem that this dissertation seeks to overcome is the tension between the terms *kairos* and *nomos*. The way these terms unfold in the course of this study suggest that invention—the bringing into being of the unknown—is thwarted by our culture(s), histories, and traditions. I come to argue that we perceive a problem because our traditions have given us an understanding of temporality that follows a straight line, a line mirrored in the linear paradigm of print. I show that new media opens up different narrative configurations for writing and composition, configurations that illustrate that rather than being a logical flaw, paradox can serve as a “reservoir,” a productive starting place for thinking and writing with new media.

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CHAPTER 1

PREFACE: INSTITUTIONAL INNOVATION: AN OXYMORON?

The best of all worlds is not the one that reproduces the eternal, but the one in which new creations are produced, the one endowed with a capacity for innovation or creativity...

—Gilles Deleuze

A toothless humanity that would exist in a prone position using what limbs it had left to push buttons with, is not completely unconceivable.

—Andre Leroi-Gourhan

In his book on Gilles Deleuze, Alain Badiou says, “When all is said and done, there is little doubt the century has been ontological, and that this destiny is far more essential than the ‘linguistic turn’ with which it has been credited” (18). Even for a so-called poststructuralist philosopher, such a statement doesn’t pose much of a problem. Ever since Plato’s *Seventh Letter*, philosophers have marveled at the inconstancy of language, or what in modern parlance is typically called something like “the limits of representation.”¹ As such, the inability of language to contain or represent things or descriptions forms a nexus between the two natures of language and existence (or being), even though one might choose to emphasize one over the other. For most non-philosophers, too, Badiou’s statement does not pose much of a problem. As the popular American academic imagination would have it, our global culture of late capitalism

ensures that most people do not bother themselves with questions that are not immediately practical.

Which leaves scientists. Consider this statement from physicist Stephen

Hawking:

Up to now, most scientists have been too occupied with the development of new theories that describe *what* the universe is to ask the question *why*. On the other hand, the people whose business is to ask *why*, the philosophers, have not been able to keep up with the advance of scientific theories. In the eighteenth century, philosophers considered the whole of human knowledge, including science, to be their field and discussed questions as: Did the universe have a beginning? However, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, science became too technical and mathematical for the philosophers, or anyone else except a few specialists. Philosophers reduced the scope of the inquiries so much that Wittgenstein, the most famous philosopher of this century, said, "The sole remaining task for philosophy is the analysis of language." What a comedown from the great tradition of philosophy from Aristotle and Kant! (174-75)

There is a degree of truth to Hawking's statement that science became too technical for philosophy, but where Hawking wants to ask whether the universe had a beginning, he fails to ask whether the univers-*ity* had one. Hawking misses completely, perhaps intentionally, that the period of downgrade he alludes to is coeval with the creation of the modern university and the consequential division of knowledge into different disciplines or faculties. Hawking's beloved Kant published an essay entitled "The Conflict of the Faculties" in 1798 that served as the blueprint for the creation of the modern university. At its core was the division of knowledge into separate disciplines, ensuring that no philosopher would ever be obligated to think about science again and

that no scientist such as Hawking would have to think about philosophy (or history, for that matter).²

Did I need all of this to say that Science is not concerned with Badiou's statement? It is excessive, no doubt, but not needless. This excess serves a purpose beyond a *Well, he asked for it!* to which we will come. For now, the question is for whom *does* Badiou's statement primarily concern? It goes without saying that it is a question for the history of thought. *How* will thinkers in the future remember the work of the twentieth century? But it matters *primarily* for those in rhetoric. Why is this?

This dissertation developed from a simple yet what I consider an exciting and valuable idea. The basic tenet took its start from the notion that the digital revolution radically changes what it means to write. People such as George Landow, Greg Ulmer, and Stuart Moulthrop were three major forces in what many of my readers will recognize as hypertext theory. The basic premise for hypertext is that the web opens nonlinear connections that the print paradigm does not allow. In short, the web is a rethinking of what it means to tell or weave a narrative, one that works explicitly against the linearity aligned with print.

These writings by Landow, Ulmer, and Moulthrop were written in the early to mid-nineties, during the hey day of high theory; they took poststructuralism as their premise and sought to put that theory into practice. George Landow said explicitly that hypertext theory put poststructuralism into practice in an "almost embarrassing" way (34). Taking this as a starting point, it was easy to recognize that the development of the web moved not only into nonlinear modes of expression but also into non-linguistic

ones. Images have become just as ubiquitous in writing studies as language. These days, even highschools require that students become visually literate. In 2003, the NCTE incorporated all modes of electronic expression, including making sound and video into the goals of language instruction. Recently, I have just published an essay in *Computers and Composition* that is not an essay in the literal sense. Instead, it is an audial composition, an exploit of the kinds of writing available to those infatuated with the possibilities of writing in non-traditional forms. The argument that writing is expanding outside the domain of words into alternative modalities is not difficult—or not necessary—to make. Anyone who has kept up with the mainstream NCTE statements knows that the expansion into alternative media forms has become the next requisite step towards being an efficient writing instructor. The next step beyond the *addition* of media is the recognition of what Friedrich Kittler calls *convergence*—the combination and fusion of media that results when all media take on a binary computer code (*GFT 2*). With rich applications (Adobe Macromedia currently leads the way), the combination of optoelectronic, audioelectronic, videotronic, and textual elements combine to make forms that are continuously unrealized and, with the help of programmers, constantly unique. A journal published by the University of Southern California specializes in making academic versions of these emerging vernaculars. The journal is called *Vectors*.

The seed for this dissertation, inspired by Greg Ulmer and Marshall McLuhan, was deceptively simple. McLuhan called artists “the antennae of the race.” They act, he said, as an early warning system. Artists have always been able to portend the future,

but non-artists (the general public) and academics have traditionally been too preoccupied with other matters to listen. Where the public was concerned with making a living, academics (those who should have been most receptive) were distracted by matters of aesthetics. But Greg Ulmer, influenced by Jacques Derrida and other thinkers, was attuned to McLuhan's portents. After reading *Applied Grammatology* and *Teletheory*, I came to realize that it was worth listening whenever Ulmer spoke. Like McLuhan, Ulmer had been saying all along that art's purpose lay in the future. Consequently, my idea was to pick artists I identified with, study their methods of (non-linear) invention, and appropriate them into writing studies. I had in mind the Dadaists and the Surrealists, montage theorists Eisenstein and Vertov, the DJ, William Burroughs. Since they all worked in nonlinear ways, anyone who wanted to learn to write in new media could borrow the methods of these groundbreakers and put those methods into practice. This application from the arts into theory (rather than the other way around) is principally what I learned from Ulmer. Knowledge, and, consequently, rhetorical invention, wasn't a matter of following a canon, for how could the new be created from what had already been done? Knowledge and rhetorical invention was a matter of working like what William Gibson calls a cut-and-paste artist, or a graffiti artist, or an experimenter, a surfer—like one of those Z-boys such as Stacy Peralta, Tony Alva, and (especially) Jay Adams who brought skateboarding to a whole new level by copying the tricks of the best wave riders.

Such an assignment did not seem difficult. I could have simply begun with the premise that writing in the digital age requires new approaches towards invention,

picked my artists somewhat arbitrarily and gotten started. But the problem that became clear to me itched from the beginning. I found myself beginning further back, all the way back to the Greeks. I came to realize that I was becoming bored—not with the project and prospect, but with its simplicity. That is not to say, however, that I hunger complexity over simplicity. *That's not it!* (yet . . .). My idea was novel, but it was not new. These artists had done their share; my itch told me that if I pursued this direction I'd merely be acting as connector or catalyst (at best).

The underlying, *festering* issue for me was the difficulty (if not the impossibility) of moving towards *anything* that is new. Bypassing the ridiculous problem of having any idea of what actually exists, it is only now that I can come to this troubling passage in Derrida's *Of Grammatology*. It is only now that I feel as though I can understand what Derrida means when he says that dissatisfaction is but a symptom of one's relationship to the problem of writing's epistemology:

Not only does the theory of writing need an intrascientific and epistemological liberation Now a reflection must clearly be undertaken, within which the “positive” discovery and the “deconstruction” of the history of metaphysics, in all its concepts, are controlled reciprocally, minutely, and laboriously. Without this, any epistemological liberation would risk being illusory or limited, proposing merely practical conveniences or notional simplifications on bases that are untouched by criticism. (83)

The above passage struck home. I felt the stirring, bubbling quality of the problem. *I* was part of this so-called epistemological liberation. I came to realize that although I was advocating the new and originality, I was continually being held back. Why didn't I just jump in? Why didn't I just get the thing done ahead of schedule? Why didn't I just

find enjoyment in the very thing I said I wanted most? Why didn't I repress any feeling I had that stood in the way of my objective? What, exactly, I had to ask myself, did I want from my writing?

I'll tell you what I wanted, but I must reflect on the uses of the word *I* and *self* that I am currently using. This language suggests that I was doing some kind of soul-searching and that kind of language suggests a Romantic notion of the self. I will save you the discourses against the discussions of the self which, from a traditional Western historical perspective, became complicated once people began to think that language forms thought. Instead, what I mean when I say *I* is the multiple voices, flows of information, the known and unknown influences that flow through but make up this mysterious thing we so easily call an *I*. On this issue, I take the same stance as does Mark Taylor in *the Moment of Complexity*. Taylor writes:

It is as if I were the screen though which the words of others flow and on which they are displayed. Words, thoughts, ideas are never precisely my own; they are always borrowed rather than possessed. I am, as it were, their vehicle. Though seeming to use language, symbols, and images, they use me to promote their circulation and extend their lives. The flux of information rushing through my mind as well as my body (I am not sure where one ends and the other begins) existed before me and will continue to flow long after I am gone. "My" thought—indeed "my" self—appears to be a transient eddy in a river whose banks are difficult to discern. (196)

The pluralistic situation Taylor describes occurred no less as this dissertation is being written than as the dissertation was being "pre-written." The reflections, thoughts, connections, decisions, determinations are made by the information moving through me as much as by anything that might be called a *me*, an idea which, from the perspective

of a communicational model, is just another point on an informational meshwork. So what is meant when I say *I* is that all these other forces, this (oftentimes) disconnected and disembodied amalgamation of information, is the stuff and nonstuff that makes my intellectual self.

Back to the narrative: I had to ask my bits of data (held delicately and tentatively together), what did I want from my/our writing? What I wanted is what so many want from the work they engage in. A feeling of satisfaction, of a job well done. But my greatest satisfaction was not found in an *object*; for example, it was not found in the completion of a chapter. My greatest satisfaction was found in the act of writing itself. But this did not take me far enough. I changed the orientation of my question and asked, what *didn't* I want? Or, better, what did I fear? Now this was a question to work with. I found that I feared that what I was going to write was not going to be a worthy contribution. In Lacanian terms, I wanted the love of the Other. (Perhaps one day I will fear the extreme version of this love of the Other. Maybe one day I'll fear what only comes at the price of success: being accepted rather than rejected, but now is too soon to tell.) The genre of the dissertation, however, determines that what is acceptable is that which makes a contribution. Anyone who completes a dissertation or writes a new book should be *adding* something that *needs to be added* because the writer has identified a lack or need within her domain. In short, what is acceptable has some degree of *newness*.

This opens a paradox of originality not only for me (us) but for anyone who writes in relation to other writers. My original idea was to write “the new”; it was the

newness of the idea that I feared would not have enough impact—not because I was concerned the idea’s originality wasn’t “good,” but for another reason. Even if it had met the requirements for the Ph.D. (which is the only thing with which many people told me I should have been concerned), I feared that although I was trying to do something that was new, *because newness means the unknown*, it was the very newness of the project that would be rejected. In other words, at the very same time that a person is to make a new contribution, that new contribution cannot be made because if it *is* new, it cannot be recognized as such, to say nothing of the possibility that there is a hidden order in the directive to write something which says, on the surface you are supposed to write something new, but in actual fact, I want you only to repeat what others have said.

The paradox was that from my perspective at the time, I saw my own work as being different from others because, I *was* trying to write the new rather than rehash what had been done or to follow some trend that was becoming worn. At the same time, this caused an anxiety, I think understandably. I was supposed to be making a contribution to my domain but the contribution itself—so long as a contribution is an original addition—is effectively unacceptable. A version of this appears in Plato and is known as Meno’s paradox. Plato writes: “You argue that man cannot enquire either about that which he knows, or about that which he does not know; for if he knows, he has no need to enquire; and if not, he cannot; for he does not know the very subject about which he is to enquire” (*Meno*). Not only does this statement say that one cannot know what is truly new, but it also says that any act of knowing involves knowing the

past. The dilemma is how can the new be absorbed by the tradition yet at the same time remain new? When T.S. Eliot wrote, “Someone said: ‘the dead writers are remote from us because we know so much more than they did.’” Eliot answered, “Precisely, and they are that which we know” (6). This paradox of originality is a reflection of the tension between our situation as subjects born into history and (to use a loaded but appropriate term) our desire to *transcend* that history.³

But it is exactly this attempt and its utter impossibility that acts as a deadlock against any who would hope to introduce the new. My original project, then, as an appropriation of the old in order to fit it to the new suffered from two theoretical dilemmas: First, was the matter of McLuhan’s thesis concerning art as “antennae of the race” which I took as a justification for relying upon art in order to theorize the future. My assumption here was reliant on the premise that history has a tendency to repeat itself, that what was true for McLuhan’s era would be true for ours. I am far from the only one who has accepted this notion. On this score, Jay Bolter and Richard Grusin popularized the notion of “remediation,” a concept that illustrates the representation of one media in another (such as web pages taking the form of newspaper pages). This notion works well not only for the way Bolter and Grusin use the term to show how past forms are repurposed for new media but also for the how old ways are repurposed to suggest cutting edge concepts.

But concepts are remediated no less than are technologies. From the wooden dash in my car that shadows a different age of automobiles (remediated auto) to webpages that resemble the newspaper (remediated print) to genre studies in

composition (remediated modes of discourse), remediation is a form of plagiarism only by degree, not by kind. These remediations are nothing different from remixes and mash-ups; remediation is a new concept only insofar as it puts an academic label to a process that everyone is already familiar with. As formal plagiarism has many different levels, from stealing on one hand to appropriating a form on another, *conceptual* plagiarism also has different layers.

What I mean by this is that my “brilliant” idea of using past artists to portend possible methods for future rhetorical / compositional invention was reliant not on some kind of originality but (as should be appropriately intuited by the reader) as nothing more than a second order of appropriation. In other words, this method was already *sanctioned* by others, which reveals, in structure if not in politics, an ideological interpellation.

Not only was I simply arguing that we should conceptually remediate the avant for electronic media (the first order), but I was secretly basing that decision upon others who had already done so and, more, I was keeping that secret from myself.

Only now, *retrospectively*, can I say to myself what I could not say then. Although I was doing it, I was doing it without my knowing it, which sounds suspiciously like the classic position of ideological “false consciousness” that Slavoj Žižek rephrases from Marx: “They do not know it, but they are doing it” (28).

Not only was I merely arguing for the need to appropriate the methods of the avant-garde, but I was secretly masking *from myself* my justification for doing so. The decision to appropriate avant-garde methods did not only belong to me but I saw and

was consequently *hailed* by it, making me part of another group of writers who were, in turn, no more original than I. I can offer here three quick examples. First, McLuhan's *The Medium of the Message*. Second, a graphic that appears in an interview with Stuart Moulthrop in *Kairos*, and third, Erik Loyer's *Hollowbound Book*. Images are produced in figures 1.1-1.3.

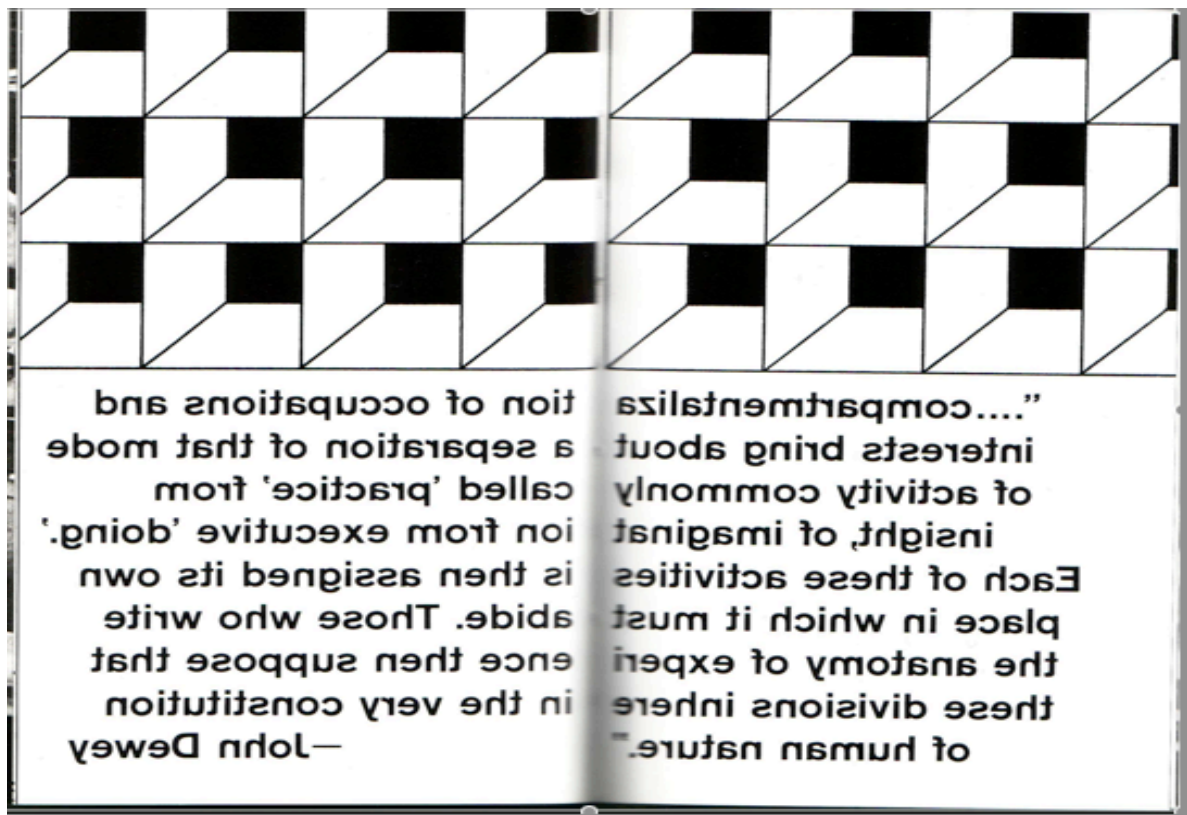


Figure 1.1 Mirror Writing. This example is from Marshall McLuhan's *The Medium is the Message*. 54-55. The text reads “. . . compartmentalization of occupations and interests bring about a separation of that mode of activity commonly called ‘practice’ from insight, of imagination from executive ‘doing.’ Each of these activities is then assigned its own place in which it must abide. Those who write the anatomy of experience then suppose that these divisions inhere in the very constitution of human nature.” —John Dewey.



Figure 1.2 Gutenberg. This example is from “New Literacies and Old” by Stuart Moulthrop and Nancy Kaplan.

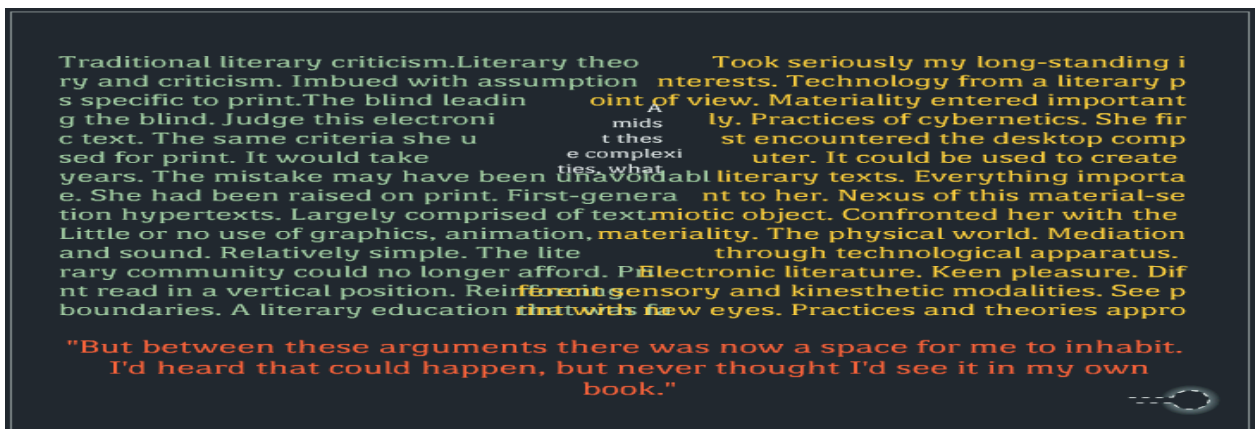


Figure 1.3 Screenshots of Eric Loyer's *Hollowbound Book*.

All of these things have one thing in common: their rejection of the print paradigm. In *The Language of New Media*, Lev Manovich has specifically explained that what makes media new is digitization (and its consequences). Alternatively, Brian Massumi has argued that while new media is new because of its digitality, humans do not encounter it as digital. The machine may read it as digital but we experience it as analogue. It is the analogic quality of digital media that exposes how remediation works in the above images. As Bolter and Grusin have shown, there is nothing particularly *new* about Marshall McLuhan's *The Medium is the Massage*, yet we see the same thing at work in the Stuart Moulthrop image. Even in the journal *Vectors*, although the modes of expression are generally experienced as new, what is happening there most often is that theoretical, political, and literary writings—in short, the kind of thinking that comes straight out of the print paradigm—is translated and interpreted through collaboration by designers such as Eric Loyer and others. What makes the journal *Vectors* unique, what makes it stand above the crowds of electronic academic journals is, of course, the intelligence and the backing to recognize that the combination of print with new technologies, programming, and other collaborators changes the style and mode of expression (to use another loaded term).

This is the aspect that any casual reader will notice when engaging *Vectors*. Intrigued if not impressed by the forms, interfaces, attractive designs, puzzling orientations, immersive dimensions, and confusing genre contracts, most new readers see the site and utter the typical expression that Gen X-ers utter when confronted with that which they recognize but that which themselves cannot do: *cool*. But what makes

Vectors “cool” is actually its paradoxical structure when visibility is placed in front of recognition. *Vectors* is noteworthy, attractive, interesting, etc. on the level of visibility because its artistic and technical features are unmatched (no matter how technologically inclined compositionists think they are or how many follow the popular trend of podcasting or how many brag about their savviness with CSS).⁴ While many “tech-rhetors” are apt at putting together HTML pages and dazzling you with CSS tricks, in the domains of design, technical knowledge, and innovation, *Vectors* is at another level all together. This is because *Vectors* is well funded and collaborative in nature, recruiting and working with video game designers and others from the visual arts, a collaborative process that results in products that are technologically inclined; still, traditional humanist scholars only wish they had the support to keep up. It cannot be denied that these technical, artistic, immersive, and experiential architectures are those very things that make *Vectors* appear special. Yet, anyone who spends a little time at *Vectors* soon realizes that those responsible for its immersive and experiential dimensions go unrewarded. On the other hand, those who are recognized are those who work in the domain of writing (in the sense of print or at least, linearity), and here, with the best electronic journal we have available for these emergent vernaculars, a large though not unsurprising flaw shows through. Not only are print authors such as Kate Hayles venerated and respected beyond the work of the designers, but the journal in general seems to owe quite a large debt to print, for without print, without writers who think with ideas and *words*, it would hardly be conceivable that something as

remarkable as *Vectors* could survive on its own steam or be recognized as an academic spot worthy of so much attention.

This is all to say that in our best journal, print writing continues to hold the line. This suggests that people such as Erik Loyer and other designers would not be able to *think* and create without someone there to think and create for them, to inspire them. What we see at *Vectors* is primarily the *repurposing*, the *remediation of ideas*, not just the remediation of forms discussed by Bolter and Grusin. In fact, if one is willing to extend the concept a bit, what is at work at *Vectors*, especially because of its advanced, exciting, and developed stage, is a repurposing of an epistemology,⁵ of the very mode of knowing and style of thinking molded by hundreds of years of writing and the kinds of *organic*, *whole*, and *totalizing* discourses and philosophies postmodernism has reminded us about. The paradox of *Vectors* is the paradox of the best that the digital revolution has to offer. It claims to offer the very best of so-called immersive and experiential vernaculars, yet these vernaculars are only deflated balloons without the Brain that belongs—uncontested—to the Book (no less than its Believers).

Right here, at this moment, the time seems so right to give you what you expect. That sentence that says that this all about to change, that digital writing does not need the paradigm of the book to stand on its own two feet, and that I have those answers for you. It would be ironic, would it not, to find those answers reflected in a doctoral dissertation, where the rules of academic, non-innovative discourses are considered primary. It is worth remembering, is it not, that the doctoral dissertation is the ultimate writing exercise?

Instead, I cannot say to you what I wanted to say when I began this project. I cannot say to you that we can turn to the artists, to the “antennae of the race” as McLuhan said immediately, quickly, and without question to look for guidance. I cannot say to you that we should not repurpose the book for digital writing and then find another paradigm to repurpose in its stead. It is not the object that must change. Instead, it is the thinking itself. The problem is not with the noun. The problem is with the verb. The problem is in the connections. It is in the linkages that we make. *Vectors*, for all its impressive qualities, makes the same linkages that we have come to expect. It seeks guidance. It seeks a father. It seeks a head. It is a child and does not know how to think on its own. It is trying so hard, but it forgets that it has been born unto a new world and without doubt the rules this world follows are uncertain, but one thing is not—no longer are the rules the rules of its parents. What is needed is what is always needed when a child comes of age and finally says *no* . . .

The argument and the confrontation. Not the brash child who leaps forwards without considering the consequences, the brash child I was setting myself to be by saying that invention for new media has its answers ready-made in the work of the avant-garde, where all one needs to do is to institutionalize these methods, an institution that now would be willing to accept these ideas because of an increase in tolerance attributed to postmodernism and the digital age. In an interview with Chris Carter published in *The Politics of Information*, a book from the alt-x critical e-book series, Greg Ulmer writes: “One lesson of the avant-garde and experimental arts, especially the lesson of its failures, is that it is not enough to invent new forms. Forms must be part of

institutional discourses in order to survive and become functional” (366). I think Ulmer is quite observant and right here, and while the trick may be to keep the spirit of innovation from institutional fat (something that Ulmer’s Florida Research Ensemble does), new forms need something sticky to which they can attach themselves—whether this “substance” is self-generating or located elsewhere.⁶ For an innovator, experimenter, or artist, Ulmer’s statement—*new forms need to be attached to institutionalized discourses*—is a sobering, maybe even painfully pragmatic, statement—is it not?

If it sounds so, the question that we should keep in mind is the question that belongs to the innovator: the question is not *whether* to leap. The question is *when*.⁷

Is the gap between innovation and institution primarily a matter of two mediums confronting one another? Surely, on the one side, institution immediately suggests history and tradition, or, to use a term whose edges are beginning to fray, *discourse*. In an older context, we wouldn’t associate discourse with tradition, figuring discourse as (always to some degree loaded) a term that could whatever degree of the poles of serving or frustrating the institution. And this continues to hold true for print thinking. Rather than adding Marshall McLuhan’s well known statement that the medium is the message, however, what should be added is that *institution*, no less than the word *rose*, conjures up, as Gertrude Stein remarked, all the associations that are part of the name. *Discourse is a medium*, and Friedrich Kittler reminds us in *Discourse Networks* that “A medium is a medium is a medium” (229). If you are perplexed, it is because we are now getting to the heart of the matter and the heart of this dissertation.

The question is what are some of the ways that this *medium* prevents us from innovation? I cannot imagine to cover them all, but what do we know about this medium, this *discourse*, this *institution* and all those things that the name brings along with it? Since structuralism, semiotics, post-structuralism, we have learned quite a bit, but what we have not learned is that institutional discourse is dead no less than it is alive. If in vitalism, discourse is commonly thought of as being organic and alive in what it does, it must also be recognized in what it does *not* do, in its overwhelmingly more massive dormancy than action, *discourse* is to active speech what the sea is to the island it surrounds (which is also a way of saying that discourse is the unconscious); above all, discourse is *stored*. Discourse is a medium and a medium is a storage technology. In the language of Martin Heidegger, then, discourse has the same fate as nature.⁸

We can get some insight of what we might mean when we say that innovation ought to attach itself to institutionalized discourse by recognizing that these terms, from a specific though very productive perspective, are substitutes for any host of opposites, ranging, in ways that will be made clear throughout this study, from information and meaning to nouns and verbs to machines and bodies and so on. Returning to Kittler, a preview can be seen in how discourse functions as a storage technology. Kittler writes:

A medium is a medium is a medium. As the sentence says, there is no difference between occult and technological media. Their truth is fatality, their field the unconscious. And because the unconscious never finds an illusory belief, the unconscious can only be stored. (229)

Kittler goes on to describe what he calls the discourse network of 1900, the beginning of a treatment of language as a storage technology that has close resemblances with the Lacanian Real. As we will come to see, these are not mere exercises of the theoretically active imagination. The only way to think productively with innovation and institutional discourse is to think in terms of media. In the translators' introduction to another book by Kittler *Gramophone, Film, and Typewriter* Geoffrey Winthrop-Young and Michael Wutz explain why this is the case:

Step 1: We recognize that we are spoken by language. Step 2: We understand that language is not some nebulous entity but appears in the shape of historically limited discursive practices. Step 3: We finally perceive that these practices depend on media. In short, structuralism begot discourse analysis, and discourse analysis begot media theory. Media, then, are (at) the end of theory because in practice they were already there to begin with. . . . Media are the alpha and omega of theory. If media do indeed "determine our situation," then they no doubt also determine, and hence configure, our intellectual operations. One could easily reappropriate Derrida's much-deferred pronouncement *il n'y a pas a de hors-texte* and suggest that the fundamental premise of media discourse analysis is *il n'y a pas de hors-media*. (xx)

That is, at least from Kittler's perspective, and if we are less inclined to adopt such fantastic statements in either Derrida's or the case of Kittler's translators, this singular problem of how to combine innovation with institutional discourse remains.⁹

In the hope of working through the complexities of this singular problem of combining innovation with institutional discourse, which is also to say that I hope to work through this problem in several of its different configurations, I hope in this dissertation to achieve two related things. The first question I want to answer is *how* is it possible to think these two things together without one blanking the other out. This is

actually a fairly large question, for if one is going to move into a way of rewriting that is new and innovative, then one has the trouble of having to move through the present and past discourse. This means that the threat that concerned me earlier, the threat that of using avant-garde methods that would ultimately prove ineffectual because they leap hastily over institutional discourse, may manifest itself in the opposite way, where innovation gets buried under the weight of discourse. The question I am seeking to answer here, then, is how can innovation and institutional discourse, while they move in opposite directions, exist in two simultaneous and possible worlds? The second thing I want to know is whether this kind of thinking, this kind of overcoming of the print paradigm, is suitable to a new media way of writing. Do we learn from this exercise? Ultimately, this dissertation is against the dominance of linearity. What we learn from this dissertation, what this dissertation's largest contribution is to writing studies is that productive paradox is a way of writing suitable to new media. Badiou's statement that this century has primarily been ontological largely concerns his own description of Deleuze's project towards a transcendental empiricism. Those two terms in themselves create a paradox. Empirically, transcendence is not possible. Yet paradox is the name of the game. It certainly has everything to do with rhetorical invention and new media. I hope this becomes clear for you on the journey. See you on the other side.

CHAPTER 2

THE KAIROS CONNECTIONS

“Stop, dwarf!” I said. “It is I or you! But I am the stronger of us two: you do not know my abysmal thought. *That* you could not bear!” Then something happened that made me lighter, for the dwarf jumped from my shoulder, being curious; and he crouched on a stone before me. But there was a gateway just where we had stopped.

“Behold this gateway, dwarf!” I continued. “It has two faces. Two paths meet here; no one has yet followed either to its end. This long land stretches back for an eternity. They contradict each other, these paths; they offend each other face to face; and it is here at this gateway that they come together. The name of the gateway is inscribed above: “Moment.”

—Nietzsche *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*

Developing the practical methods suitable to the new medial societal configuration is the major concern of this dissertation. The question arises, then, why it should be necessary to turn to the ancient notion of *kairos*. In *The Electronic Word*, Richard Lanham has already framed the debates represented at one pole by Marshall McLuhan and on the other by his detractors according to “*the quarrel of Western culture*,” that is, the quarrel between philosophy and rhetoric (202). Lanham defines the “philosophers” as those who still believe in a transcendental truth that exists independently of language, media, and technology, and those “rhetoricians” epitomized by McLuhan in media studies who take a flippant, playful approach, outraging the philosophers by turning truth into a second order delivered by the medium. Lanham states convincingly that when writing moves from the page to the screen, “the fixed, authoritative, canonical text [of print] simply explodes into the ether” (31). The “unfixed” and “interactive” digital

“text” brings back to education the play of rhetoric so long suppressed by the logic print has persuaded us to consider as natural. The personal computer is primarily a rhetorical device. Through “its memory storage and retrieval, in its dynamic interactivity, in the dramatic rehearsal-reality it creates, in the way game and play are built into its motival structure, it expresses the rhetorical tradition just as the codex book embodies the philosophical tradition” (105-06). Lanham finds the tension between print and digital mediums to be a reinscription of the debate between philosophers and rhetoricians, and while there is some amount of truth to this binary, and while such a division helped with the formalization and professionalization of rhetoric and composition at an important historical moment, this division is driven more by party lines than by conceptual lines; as such, it merely reinforces the role that rhetoric plays in relation to philosophy—the role of the other. My concern is neither to uphold nor “explode” these party lines; nor to find some long lost solution to modern day challenges; instead, I am driven by ways to investigate methods of invention necessary for the emerging hybrid mediated forms of the electronic revolution. In the later chapters of this dissertation, I echo the prophetic anticipation of the new media age by experimental artists mentioned by both Ulmer (throughout all his work) and Lanham (throughout *The Electronic Word*). I start with *kairos*, however, because I am trying to avoid the pitfall of speaking past those who define rhetoric with the apparatus of literacy from Plato, Aristotle and onward. My desire is to address those rhetoricians working within the apparatus of literacy to argue for invigorating invention studies in the new instauration and locating (unlike Lanham) an opening that brings together the history of rhetoric and its movement forward. It is

necessary to state that those working within rhetoric do not need to abandon or reinvent the rhetorical tradition, to give up on what it means work within the field; instead, my desire is to bring to light a potential within rhetoric that was once suitable to orality and one that can bridge the span between literacy and electracy. In short, rhetoric needs invention and innovation but it does not need to reinvent itself. Sophistic rhetoric already contains the event of language that moves working rhetoricians into the new instauration.

2.1 Platonic Kairos

In rhetorical theory, *kairos* is typically read as providing the opportune moment for the rhetor, athlete, or doctor to speak or act correctly at the opportune moment. Since *kairos* is a term that seems to be appropriated and misappropriated in the service of various programs, it is, as Sharon Crowley notes, “slippery business” (85).¹ Nonetheless, in the introduction to *Rhetoric and Kairos: Essays in History, Theory, and Praxis*, Phillip Sipiora attempts an overview of the nuances of the term. Beginning from the accepted notion that *kairos* means “right timing” or “proper measure,” Sipiora explains that the earliest account appears in the *Iliad*, “where it denotes a *vital* or *lethal* place in the body,” adding that in its originary manifestation, *kairos* is a physical space rather than a dimension of time (2; original emphasis).² Sipiora explains that the sense of *kairos* becomes “due measure” and “proper proportion” in Hesiod’s *Works and Days*, and then appears on numerous occasions in the works of prominent ancients such as Pindar, Theognis, Solon, Aeschylus, Euripides, Sophocles, Menander, Pythagoras, Pericles, and others. In addition, *kairos* carries the connotations of the “right time”

(*eukairos*) and “wrong time” (*kakakairos*) and the moments where no opportunities arise (*akairos*) (2). But there is no easy way to isolate the term. Sipiora explains that throughout the ancient world, the term carried meanings that included “opportunity, occasion, crisis or urgency, measure, proportionality (which carries connotations of justice), convenience, advantage, profit, fruit, fitness, propriety, and decorum” (116). In addition, John Smith contrasts *kairos* with *chronos* in order to further isolate the term’s meaning. In its modern manifestation, *chronos* is said to mark linear time, duration, or quantitative time.³ *Kairos*, on the other hand, is *qualitative*. Smith provides the example of a vintner recognizing when the grapes are ready for harvest, a readiness or *eukairos* that, as a function of *chronos*, is “largely a function of conditions—soil, temperature, moisture—ingredients in the growing process itself” and, hence, beyond the direct control of the vintner. It is here, when the grapes are ready for harvest that they may be said to have reached a “certain critical point at which a qualitative character begins to emerge, and when there are junctures of opportunity calling for human ingenuity in apprehending when the time is ‘right’” (48). This readiness or plenitude of the grapes cannot be separated from the process of duration; the rhetor, on the other hand, is able to recognize and take advantage of the opportunity presenting itself when the grapes are ready for harvest.

Beginning with the notion of right timing, Sipiora and Smith work backwards to ground the quality of *kairos* into individual choice. Having established its contrast against *chronos*, their definitions allow the everyday, popular notion of *kairos* as right timing and proper measure to subsist. Most discussions of *kairos* and even ones that

link *kairos* to art (such as Mason below) continually return to the notion that *kairos* is a matter of the rhetor, like the vintner, having had the training to recognize *eukairos* and to practice proper measure (*prepon*). This explanation is consistent with Plato's conception of *kairos* illustrated in the *Phaedrus*.⁴

One scholar who has made much of the Platonic understanding of *kairos* is James Kinneavy. In “*Kairos*: A Neglected Concept,” Kinneavy does not consider the cosmological and irrational power that Rostagni, White, Untersteiner and others take into account (below). No doubt Kinneavy chooses Plato not only because *kairos* had been overlooked by those involved in the disputations concerning the “rhetorical situation” debates inaugurated by Lloyd Bitzer complicated by Richard Vatz and picked up by a host of others that continues until today,⁵ but also because the so-called Platonic *kairos* is an easily domesticated concept that can put into the service of “virtue” required for “civic education” (92). Kinneavy cites the *Phaedrus* at the moment when Socrates explains that only after a student rhetor studies and perfects the rhetorical arts can he be ready for *kairos*:

It is when he can do all of this and when he has, in addition, grasped the concept of propriety of time—when to speak and when to hold his tongue, when to use brachylogy, piteous language, hyperbole for horrific effect, and, in a word, each of the specific devices of discourse he may have studied—it is only then, and not until then, that the finishing and perfecting touches will have been given to his science. (272a-272b)

Kinneavy cites more of the passage than I do here, but a Platonic rhetorician can put *kairos* into his bag of rhetorical tricks only after he has mastered the nuances of his rhetorical training, the number and types of souls and speeches, their corresponding

relationships (certain types of souls require certain types of speeches), and the ability to confirm his theoretical knowledge to the knowledge of everyday discursive affairs. Only then is the rhetor able to identify the opportune moments to deliver speeches and to give them their finishing touches. Kinneavy uses this passage to illustrate that *kairos* is integrally bound to *prepon* (86).

In *The Sense of an Ending*, Frank Kermode attributes both an *arche* and a *telos* to *kairos* (two qualities that thwart the extended connotations of the concept that I turn to below). Kermode defines *kairos* as “a point in time filled with significance, charged with a meaning derived from its relation to the end” (47). Here, *kairos* is shorn of its earthly temporality and finds a habitation in the *narrative* structure of reading, where the interaction between author and reader is *kairotic* if it makes meaning (50). In an essay on the relationship between *kairos* and art, Gregory Mason holds to the usual definition and conflates the Sophists not only with each other but with a Platonic *kairos*: “The Sophists of ancient Greece recognized the qualitative dimension of time by the term *kairos*: ‘the right, the favorable, the critical or the opportune time’” (199). Scott Consigny claims the Gorgian rhetor to “accede fully to the operative protocols of reasoning” and, with a hint of old-fashioned sophistic antinomy, describes Gorgias as “an opportunist in form . . . as well as subject matter” (286-87). Sipiora describes that the “success of nearly two millennia” of Isocrates’ influence may be “attributed to his formal system of rhetorical *paideia*, structured on the principle of *kairos*” and goes on to state that “one of the reasons for the general ineffectiveness of the sophists, according to Isocrates, is their inability to recognize the kairic exigencies of particular discourse.

They fail to consider the *right* time or make the *appropriate* adjustments in any given rhetorical situation” (7, 9; original emphasis). Paul Tillich, who is cited heavily by Kinneavy, argues “for the importance of the *kairos* approach because it brings theory into practice, it asserts the continuing necessity of free decision, and it insists on the value and norm aspects of ideas, it champions a vital and concerned interest in knowledge because knowledge is always relevant to the situational context. . . (in Kinneavy 90). The various writings of *kairos* I have mentioned are only a smattering of how *kairos* is continually subordinated to mastery, origins, ends, narrative structure, reason, opportunity, discourse, propriety, values, norms, ideas, and knowledge (to name a few).

What frequently occurs in these representative discussions of *kairos* is that the relationship between *chronos* and *kairos* is lost once the human subject enters into the equation. This model allows modern scholars, as Sharon Crowley has indicated, to place *chronos* into an external objective category and *kairos* into an internally subjective one, emphasizing the modernist desire for a dialectical correspondence between subject and object. Crowley writes:

This distinction between *chronos* and *kairos* allows modern scholars to argue that *chronos* designates an aspect of time that is objective and hence unavailable for human intervention—time as marked by the movement of the stars and the changing of seasons. On this model *kairos*, then, marks a more subjective dimension of time that is responsive or available in some way to the athlete or physician or rhetor who takes advantage of the right moment when it appears. (Rev. 83)

Crowley is correct to pick up this division and this split between *chronos* and *kairos* elaborated by Sipiora and Smith. Her next comments indicate the dominant way that

kairos has been reduced to a subjective experience that can be found in many descriptions of *kairos*, descriptions that usher in the elements of logical division. She writes: “The distinction [between *kairos* and *chronos*] seems to me to be tainted by a modernist desire to valorize individual subjectivity, and hence it may narrow our understanding of possible uses of the term *kairos* in times and places where the lives of individual human beings were not so thoroughly distinguished from movements of the cosmos as they are in modern thought” (83). This point is important, for it shows that Crowley understands that the “tainting” is not with the relationship between *chronos* and *kairos* but how the human subject as a *creator* or a *discoverer* comes to intervene in the cosmological relationship.⁶

To Bernard Miller, Gorgian interpretations of *kairos* have been approached and explained through a view towards knowledge that accepts modern versions of Socratic teachings (what could be more crudely called a *Platonic kairos*). The problem of understanding the complex concept of the ancient *kairos* does not begin with the matter of whether adherence is given to either Platonic or Gorgian influence as some scholars aver,⁷ but is more a matter of the primarily Platonic and Aristotelian sources confirming a modernist nostalgia to keep the individual subject at the center of a rhetorical situation, a function that results in the reduction of a rich sophistic, philosophical, and historical concept into the ability of a rhetor to recognize an exigency. In other words, a world view is reduced to a rhetorical trope. While the trope remains and *kairos* survives through essays on the subject (such as those mentioned above), the concept of the “opportune moment” carries with it important ways of

thinking about invention for writing that get missed when it is described in the usual way, that is, when the subject is placed in the center of the rhetorical situation.

More alarming perhaps than failing to recognize Plato's and Aristotle's own discussions of *kairos*, is when the Gorgian conception of *kairos* is translated as a Platonic one. This is what Bernard Miller describes in his essay, particularly in relation to W.K.C. Guthrie's *The Sophists*. Referring to the sovereign rhetor's ability to employ the device of *kairos*, Miller describes how Guthrie, in offering examples of *Gorgian kairos*, tells the anecdote of how when Bertrand Russell, faced with describing to his Soviet countrymen the dire conditions in Russia after the Great War, declared "the time was not opportune." Miller writes: "The examples are direct and easily understood, and I could continue to list them, but the point I would make in contrast to Guthrie is that both of his are good illustrations only of what becomes of the Gorgian *kairos* once it is projected through a Platonic epistemology and metaphysics" (173). If one considers the dominance of dialectical thinking over the centuries, that the Gorgian *kairos* would be poorly understood comes as a little surprise. What, then, to make of this so-called Gorgian *kairos*? The place to start is with the Pythagoreans.

2.2 Pythagorean Kairos

If we listen carefully, the major definitions of *kairos* that we have up until now associated with modern interpretations of Plato—the opportune moment and right measure—do not issue from the ability or judgment of the rhetor but are deeply imprecated in what Augusto Rostagni calls the "seminal philosophical principle" of the many and the one that issues from the Pythagoreans forward (31). Crowley calls

Rostagni's essay a "fascinating piece of dazzling detective work" (85) because Rostagni, oblivious to the rhetoric/philosophy party lines, furtively and surreptitiously crosses the border to show how *kairos* is indebted to the thought of the Pythagoreans, how the Pythagoreans themselves were split into two different sects (one issuing from the doctrine of flux ascribed to Heraclitus, the other from the division between truth and opinion of Parmenides), and how Gorgias was able to take advantage of both waves of thought.

With *kairos* in the lead and working from Rostagni, it is important to note that despite scholars Guthrie, Philip, and Gorman, the Pythagoreans, while it is true that they did not eat beans, had an "already fully-developed doctrine" that included the "two projects" of sophistics and music and their two most powerful figures were Gorgias and Damon of Oa (Rostagni 24).⁸ Rostagni locates a supply for *kairos* in the Pythagorean concept of harmony, but neither can this supply nor the relationship between *kairos* and Pythagoreanism be understood according to the rules of billiard-ball realism, as at the ontological level, harmony for the Pythagoreans, as for Heraclitus, cannot be separated from discord. In other words, a "source" for *kairos* cannot be attributed to the Pythagoreans since this kind of language continues to ground *kairos* in human agency, rather than attending the view that *kairos* is the expression of the differential between a human situation and the cosmological play of difference (or so the Pythagoreans believed). By failing to attend to the Pythagorean belief that they were *not* the source of *kairos*, then *kairos* also does not receive its due attention.

Of the two sects that divided the Pythagorean school, the first followed the “dogma of the old school” and the second, having passed through the “advanced Greek mind” of Parmenides, divided originary (Heraclitean) *logos* into Parmenidean truth and opinion. Heidegger calls Heraclitus and Parmenides (along with Anaximander) as “the only primordial thinkers” because “they think the beginning,” a thinking, Rostagni adds, that influenced the Pythagoreans, the sophist Gorgias of Leontini, and the musician Damon of Oa.

2.3 Damon of Oa (A Brief Detour)

Very little is known of Damon, and while I clearly cannot provide a genealogy, it is worth noting some similarities between the historical figures Damon and Gorgias. Damon of Oa was ostracized in Athens during the years 443-42, for reasons having to do with his abilities in both music and sophistry. It was said that Pericles was his parrot and that according to Plutarch, the *demos* ostracized Damon because they suspected him too “clever;” he was considered a sophist “of the highest order” who hid behind the name of music (Wallace 252-56).⁹ Both Wallace and Rostagni spend considerable effort including Damon and Gorgias on the same pages. Rostagni calls them “close friends” (24) and Wallace describes them as having similar abilities in rhetoric. Wallace draws from various ancients¹⁰ to explain that Gorgias and Damon “dazzled the Athenians;” Plato’s Hippias calls Athens “the very town hall of wisdom and Greece” (254); Gorgias and Damon shared gifts in speech that extended to music. Wallace tells us that music for the Greeks “was an experience profoundly different from the essentially passive thing it has become in Western societies. Greek music was communal, present at almost

all social gatherings, and often performed by everyone together” (261). He goes on to explain the role of music and high participation levels of everyone who would participate in the symposium: “Each guest then sang in turn simple stanzas, holding a myrtle branch” (261). By contrast, choral poetry (in the form of Dionysian festivals, “female cultic” gatherings, prayers, funerals, and marriages) was performed collectively (261). “The poetry produced for these occasions reflected the needs and concerns of the people who performed it.” In addition, “poetry’s public and communal quality was reinforced diachronically by the role of *mousike* in education, through the traditional songs taught together with gymnastics, transmitting basic social ideologies” (261). In the *Laws*, Plato remarks “one who cannot sing and dance in a chorus is uneducated” (261; Plato 654a-b). These forms of public and communal poetry and dance were reinforced through education and also took forms in the military, specifically through the war-dances of the *pyrrhichē* and the lesser known *gymnopaidikē*, a dance fusing wrestling and dance simulating “a fight between a robber and a ploughman protecting his field. In all of these instances,” Wallace writes, “music shaped the rhythms essential to the safety of the city” and adds that one example comes in the form of the poet Phrynichos being elected *stratēgos* because of his ability to write pyrrhics (262).

Rostagni tells us that music is intimately connected to the “art of the word” and “the art of medicine” through the Pythagorean *kairos*. “Although I say music,” he writes, “‘music’ had a very broad meaning for the disciples of Pythagoras; aesthetically, it was not different from poetry and eloquence, which depended solely on the principle of harmony or *kairos* and made use of the same spellbinding and persuasive influence

on the soul” (31). Whereas we could turn to a number of Plato’s texts, to Aristotle’s *Rhetoric* or to *Helen* for Gorgias’ comparison between speech and medicine, in regard to music, Wallace points out that aside from the well-known “psychological effects of music” to entrance and placate the soul or even to “disturb the social order,” he points out that music was considered to have the power to heal the physical body. Wallace writes, “Theophrastus reported the belief that if *aulos* music with a certain *harmonia* [*kairos*] was played over a limb afflicted with sciatica, the limb would heal” (262). That speech, music, poetry and dance were linked with medicine and the power to heal, soothe, and entrance brings with it, of course, the ostracism of Damon notwithstanding, the recognition of its abusive powers and the fear of anyone “possessing the power of *kairos*” to harm the city. But if the power of *kairos* continues to be located in the performer, we are still not lead to another, yet more powerful dimension.

An opening can be located, however, through the doctrine of *dissoi logoi* (the so-called *dialexeis*). This document comes at or around the year 400, at a time, Rostagni tells us, that does not “belong to the first and most interesting period” of the Pythagorean movement (40). Contrary to the usual accounts, Rostagni explains that the *dialexeis* (a performance of what Heidegger calls the *Zweifalt* or two-fold), is a less than remarkable document in itself, but deserves special interest because it is actually attempting to reconcile the tensions of the Pythagoreans who had been split into the Heraclitean and Parmenidean camps. (The Heraclitean influence is understood as holding to the principle that logos is a matter of appearance, that all things are contradictory and flowing (*panta chorei*); the Parmenidean camp divides logos into

“The Way of Seeming” and “The Way of Truth;” this camp holds to the principle of identity and is generally considered to be the source for the introduction of the principle of negation.) Of course, these divisions are quite complex, especially in the way that the popular rhetorical and philosophical traditions limit Plato’s discussions of ideal forms (*eide*) to the *Republic* and *Phaedo*. We get one version of the *eide* in these texts and quite another in the *Parmenides* (Plato’s most dazzling work on the philosophical problem of becoming and being).¹¹ Nonetheless, it remains possible to say that the issue between the division of the Pythagorean school Rostagni mentions is an issue with the introduction of Parmenidean thought, the matter of the relationship between knowing and/or not knowing being. One school held primarily to a Heraclitean influence and the other, “more advanced” school to the Parmenidean influence. Rostagni tells us that Gorgias belonged to this second school and that he served (maybe unwittingly) as a communicator of a Pythagorean way of thinking to the sophists. The division among the camps Rostagni identifies issues from the relation between *kairos* and *harmonia*. This relationship can be summed up in the following statement where citing Diogenes Laertius, Rostagni writes, “Let us bear in mind the Pythagorean concept *ab antico* with regard to the nature of the universe. All things consist of opposite qualities, as indicated by the categories of finite and infinite, even and odd, one and the many, and so forth. And yet there is a connecting link—*harmonia*—that turns these opposite qualities into unity, creating the universe” (37). With the introduction of Parmenidean thought enters the field of epistemology, Plato’s dialectic in regard to the *eide* and the rise of the “skepticism” embodied most notably by Gorgias. The following

passage in Rostagni's reconstruction, aside from linking Gorgias to the Pythagoreans through Iamblichus, shows how civic education is a Pythagorean idea that issues from *kairos*, one that suggests that education is an initiation into the mysteries of the strife of opposites.¹²

They say that he [Pythagoras] was the real inventor of civil education, having taught that nothing is simple and pure (. . .) but that each partakes of fire, and fire partakes of water, and wind . . . and so also the beautiful partakes of the ugly, and the just of the unjust (. . .) and, analogically, other things also (38).

The doctrine of the many and the one that this passage expresses, this “strife of opposites,” does not show that the opposites here are the same as those expressed in the *dissoi logoi* where the greater can appear smaller and so on. If that is all that is noticed, then one misses that the opposites “partake” of the other, are contained in each other, have the trace of the other, and that this trace is the movement of time, the movement of difference. While it would be somewhat premature, a turning to Derrida's *différance* would illustrate how this takes place, but rather than making that swerve, let us continue on our present trajectory.

2.4 Polutropia and Monotropia

Writing in the narrow sense—and phonetic writing above all—is rooted in a past of nonlinear writing.

—Jacques Derrida (*Of Grammatology* 85)

Polutropia is known as the ability to express a thought in many ways. This was a major sophistic principle of the logos. Polutropia, writes Rostagni, signifies the way that “thought, content, and argument are separate and abstract” from the language that is used, and the “word wraps around them one of its multi-colored cloaks; or rather,

thought, content, and argument cannot be grasped so much in their reality as in the opinion—*doxa*—that we have of them, and in the ways we have of presenting and describing them” (28). This is why it is a matter of *sophia* rather than *amathia* for a rhetor to discover a form of expression suitable to a particular audience, to be engaged in *polutropia*. There is a kairic relationship between speaker and audience at work in *polutropia*, where the discourse and audience are in an equilibrium and children’s speeches are made for children, etc. This is the usual understanding of *prepon* (suitability). *Kairos* makes this equilibrium possible, but this definition still shows, as Rostagni explains, that *kairos* “is a term that has assumed a technical and rather restricted meaning in the field of eloquence, but which . . . had a profound meaning in philosophy” (31). The turning point to get at the Pythagorean meaning comes from Rostagni’s discovery of the following perplexing statement found in Antisthenes.

The multiplicity of the ways of speaking (*polutropia logou*) and the use of varied speech for various ears becomes a single type (*monotropia*) of speech. For one thing is appropriate for each person. Thus, that which is adapted to each person reduces variety of speech to one thing—that which is suitable for each person. But that which is uniform and unadapted to different ears renders a speech (which is rejected by many) *polutropos*, because it has been rejected by them. (31)

The secret of this passage is that we begin with *polutropia*—the many ways a speech can be expressed, yet we see that somehow it becomes a single type because “one thing is appropriate to each person.” How can *polutropia* become *monotropia*? We then see the opposite movement at the end of the passage that one speech which is used for all hearers renders a *monotropic* speech *polutropic*. The answer, and Rostagni concurs, lies in the fact that the one cannot be seen in opposition to the many. Variety and difference

becomes unity because each hearer, being different, hears a different discourse that creates a harmony because of its discordance. Conversely, a single, unadapted, unmodified, a homogeneous rather than a heterogeneous speech becomes polutropic and creates *amathia* since everyone, being different, hears a different speech because it is the same.

Value cannot be ascribed to either *polutropia* or *monotropia* for harmony results in discord and discord in harmony. What appears as a paradoxical statement is not resolvable but is explainable through *kairos*. As an opening to what the natural philosophers believed to be the many in the one and the one in the many, where plurality is intimately tied to unity, *kairos* is not a decision coming at the opportune moment, but is instead the opening of the flux of forces, the orator being only one of those forces, through a logos that is always already separated from the will and agency of the speaker. *Kairos* is irrational because the forces of the many and the one are themselves irrational. As represented by Gorgias, sophistic is not interested in the pursuit of truth, of the *eide* in neither a Platonically connected nor in an Augustinian pure sense. It is concerned with the world of appearance, of the world of sense, and it is this world, this *logic* of sense, that is paradoxical. Logos issues from *kairos* and *kairos* is a slice in the transition of the world of appearances. All that it says in saying anything is that its other is always already contained in, *partaking* of, the word; like a monad, the world is contained within its overabundant silence, which is to say that the not in nothing is aporetic. All the nothing is the all.

2.5 The Fold and the Same

One cannot deny, however, that insofar as *harmony* suggests *correspondence*, it makes a problem of our attempt to appreciate and work with this antinomial double movement, what Heidegger, Derrida, Foucault, and Deleuze, all following Nietzsche, call “the two-fold.”¹³

In *Kant's Critical Philosophy*, Deleuze explains that in rationalism prior to Kant (what Deleuze calls “dogmatic rationalism”), “the theory of knowledge was founded on the idea of a *correspondence* between subject and object or of an *accord* between the order of ideas and the order of things. This accord had two aspects: in itself it implied a finality; and it demanded a theological principle as source and guarantee of this harmony, this finality” (*Kant* 13; original emph.). Philosophy-without-rhetoric usually says that Kant’s so-called “Copernican Revolution,” in its reinscription of the *theories* of empiricism and rationalism into the *realities* of the phenomenal and noumenal worlds caused a rupture in the experience of the *agent*, making the noumenal world unknowable in contrast to the phenomenal world, yet in the phenomenal world, the agent, detached from the constraints of the unknowable, becomes free. In a much larger context than what we have here posited, Nietzsche describes “the revolution” in the following terms:

Once did one believe in soothsayers and astrologers; and therefore did one believe, "Everything is fate: you shall, for you must!" Then again did one distrust all soothsayers and astrologers; and therefore did one believe, "Everything is freedom: you can, for you will!" (*Zarathustra* 201)

This comparison of ancient fate to modern subjectivity also appears in Deleuze’s

explanation of the Kantian revolution:

The fundamental idea of what Kant calls his “Copernican Revolution” is the following: substituting the principle of a *necessary* submission of object to subject for the idea of a harmony between subject and object (*final* accord). . . . The rational being thus discovers that he has new powers. The first thing that the Copernican Revolution teaches us is that it is we who are giving the orders. There is here an inversion of the ancient conception of Wisdom: the sage was defined partly by his own submission, partly by his “final” accord with Nature. Kant sets up the critical image in opposition to wisdom: *we* are the legislators of Nature. (14; my emphasis)

But this ancient “final accord” of the sage with nature *cannot*, if we seek to appreciate the import of what is thought in *harmonia*, be consigned the meaning of mere correspondence. What we have touched upon here is the paradoxical structure of the emptiness that is not empty. In other words, it is within *the same*, no less than it is within *difference*, that resides the two-fold. Like *différance*, the two-fold is not a thought in itself, but the condition for thinking. As Derrida calls it, is “the thought that has no weight.” He writes: “It is, in the play of the system, that very thing which never has weight. Thinking is what we already know we have not yet begun” (*Of Grammatology* 93). On one hand, the Pythagoreans speak of the living voice of speech which is not separable from being (*legein*). On the other, we speak of thought. It is this relationship, between thought and being that Heidegger, in his 1952 essay “Moira,” (“Fate”) investigates in order to offer a fuller appreciation of how *harmonia* 1) might be thought as *the fold* and 2) what constitutes *the fold*.

The key for us is the same key for Heidegger: this very same *harmonia*, this “*the same*” cannot be thought of as identity but must be thought of as duality. The relation between being and thinking is to be revealed in this key word. Heidegger asks,

Does this word [the same] give us an answer to the question of how thinking belongs to Being, in that it says both are “the Same”? The word gives no answer. In the first place, because the determination “the Same” precludes any question about “belonging together,” which can only exist between things that are different. (88)

This sentence is worth of repeating:

In the first place, because the determination “the Same” precludes any question about “belonging together,” which can only exist between things that are different.

Even in correspondence, what can be the same, in other words, can only come to be, from that which is different. This statement amounts to saying that “the Same” can only be thought by those who are not the same, consigning sameness immediately into relations of difference, for the *possibility* of sameness rests in difference.¹⁴ Heidegger continues:

In the second place, because the word “the Same” [in our modern understanding] says nothing at all about the point of view from which, and for what reason, difference passes over into sameness. Thus, the Same, remains the enigmatic key word for both fragments—if not for the whole of Parmenides’ thought. (88)

And for the Pythagorean thinking to which Gorgias’ speeches belonged. Heidegger continues:

Of course if we are of the opinion that the word, the Same means “identical,” and if we accept “identity” completely as the most transparent presupposition of the thinkability of whatever is thinkable, then by this opinion we become progressively more deaf to the key word, assuming that we have ever heard its call. (88)

What occurs here is not a matter of continuity, but of *kairos*, a *cutting*. As Heidegger investigates, attentively listening to the call of the Same, it is required that he make “a daring attempt to think from the duality of the *eon* . . . to its unfolding.” “We are aided,” he writes, by “the saying that comes to pass and is governed in the duality. . .” (93). This duality is understood by both through the Heraclitean *logos* or the Parmenidean *thesis* (saying), which, for Heidegger, both amount to the “letting-lie-before that gathers” (93). The *logos* as a gathering is what Heidegger explains in his *Parmenides* as belonging essentially with *mythos* and *epos*. These three words, *mythos*, *epos*, and *logos*, express the multiplicity of oppositions that the Greeks bound up with Being, as expressed in *zoon logon echon*, as the living being who emerges from itself and has the word. The multiplicity of oppositions, the gathering, the *zweifalt*, is not simply a matter of following the platitude “a way of seeing is a way of not seeing,” one that follows a temporal structure, first obscured, then revealed. Instead, unconcealing is not opposed to concealing but both unfold “at the same time” (*Parmenides* 133). Heidegger explains this operation in *aletheia* (commonly translated as truth but more accurately, as *oblivion*):¹⁵

At the outset, “dis-closure” could only say as much as “un-veiling,” the removal of the veiling and the concealment. But disclosure or dis-concealment does not mean the mere removal and elimination of concealment. We must think dis-closure exactly the way we think of dis-charging (igniting) or dis-playing (unfolding). Discharging means to release the charge; displaying means to let play out the folds of the manifold in their multiplicity. Our first tendency is to understand disclosure or disconcealing *in opposition* to concealing, just as disentangling is opposed to entangling. Disclosure, however, does not simply result in something disclosed as unclosed. Instead, the dis-closure

[Ent-bergen] is at the same time and en-closure [Ent-bergen], just like dis-semination, which is not opposed to the seed, or like in-flaming [Entflammen], which does not eliminate the flame [Flamme] but brings it into its essence. . . . The word “dis-closure” is essentially and advisedly ambiguous in that it expresses a two-fold with an intrinsic unity: on the one hand, as *disclosure* it is the removal of concealment and precisely a removal first of the withdrawing concealment and then also of distortion and displacement; on the other hand, however, as *disclosure* it is a sheltering en-closure, i.e., an assuming and preserving unconcealedness. (*Parmenides* 133)

We proceed in the following way:

- To think *harmonia* is to think “the same.”
- To think the same, we cannot think identity because the same presupposes relations of difference in their duality.
- Duality is understood as logos as gathering of oppositions unconcealing/concealing.
- Unconcealing/concealing are released simultaneously, “expressing a two-fold with an intrinsic unity.”

To think this way requires (as Heidegger repeats throughout his career and especially in the *Parmenides*) an orientation to oblivion as primary instead of secondary. Once we are able to recognize, as Heidegger tells us the Greeks did, that concealedness is the ordinary rather than the extraordinary, the unconcealment (presence) is always flowing into oblivion (forgetfulness).¹⁶ (For more, see the discussion of “the uncanny district” *Parmenides* 118-21.) Thus, we apprehend, if provisionally, what constitutes the fold first.

It is at this stage, then we can decide whether *harmonia*, the same, can be thought of as correspondence or whether, “the unfolding of the twofold is tacitly contained” in it. (“Moirai” 94). What is needed is to consider *harmonia*, not as correspondence between speech and hearers or subject and object, but as that “which lies at the core, what supports and maintains” (95). *Harmonia* is not some end point that results from *polutropia*, for this would still see both terms as cut off from the twofold. Disclosure, *polutropic* and *monotropic* speech themselves, “bestow,” in Heidegger’s terms, “the lighting of presencing” but at the same time need “a letting-lie-before [logos] and a taking-up-into-perception if what is present is to appear” (96). *Harmonia* is thus bound to the duality. In his analysis of the Parmenides fragment, Heidegger writes:

The enigmatic key word . . . the Same, with which the saying begins, is no longer a predicate repositioned to stand first, but rather the subject—what lies at the core, what supports and maintains. The unconscious . . . “is,” no means “comes to presence,” “endures,” and further, the bestowal of what endures. As such . . . the Same reigns. Specifically, it reigns as the unfolding of the twofold—and unfolding in the sense of disclosure. That which unfolds, and in unfolding reveals the twofold, allows taking-hold-of to get under way toward the gathering perception of the presencing of what is present. Truth [*aletheia*], characterized as the disclosure of the duality, lets thinking, from out of this duality, belong to Being. What is silently concealed in the enigmatic key word [the Same] is the revealing bestowal of the belonging-together of the duality of thinking that comes forward into view within it. (95)

With this much fuller explanation of *harmonia*, we are prepared to see that *harmonia* is more complex than the original suggestion of correspondence between an audience and a speech, but is that which endures in the duality of unfolding. The same is the key

which reveals that “by no means is there somewhere and somehow something present outside the duality” (96). It is in the movement of the twofold (a far cry from dialectics), this “displaying” that lets “playout the folds of the manifold in their multiplicity” wherein lies what Vitanza calls “the great excluded middle” (*Chaste* 12).¹⁷

I will end this section with a topper taken from Deleuze’s *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*, where Deleuze understands Heidegger’s explanation of the twofold similarly to the way we have described. Deleuze writes:

When Heidegger calls upon the *Zweifalt* [the fold] to be the differentiator of difference, he means above all that differentiation does not refer to a pre-given undifferentiated, but to a Difference that endlessly unfolds and folds over from each of its two sides, and that unfolds the one only while refolding the other, in a coextensive unveiling and veiling of Being, a presence and of withdrawal of being. The ‘duplicity’ of the fold has to be reproduced from the two sides that it distinguishes, but it relates one to the other by distinguishing them: a severing by which each term casts the other forward, a tension by which each fold is pulled into the other. (*The Fold* 30)

2.6 Untersteiner

Mario Untersteiner explains the Gorgias’s rhetoric is linked to the tragic view associated with the early Nietzsche (but if we keep in mind the radicality and irreducibility of the antimonies, then the tragic is at once pleasure and joy). This so-called “tragic view” comes from Gorgias’s epistemology. Untersteiner writes: “Gorgias’s proposition that nothing is knowable involved the consequence that all is false; the proposition affirming the uncommunicability of the thing known leads to the deduction that it is impossible to understand as a unity all that multiplicity which forms syntheses in the real, because only the individual thing from time to time [*kairos*] governs speech” (185). Gorgias is able to say that “all is false” because as knowledge,

logos can only express a small amount of the multiplicity. If so, then knowledge is false because any proposition, as in the case of the *dialexeis* always already contains its opposite. According to this way of thinking, any statement is already false because in order for it to be true, it must rely on a transcendental signified. But if the recourse is only to physics of changeable appearance (rather than Aristotelian substance), then the

bias inherent in every definition and proof means that those work by limiting themselves to a one-sided aspect of that which is complex, or to one alternative only of the ever-recurring ontologico-epistemological release from the contrary--'they deceive' and consequently they succeed in rendering knowable, and therefore communicable, only something limited and for this reason false. (186)

Any appeal to “right” or certitude without the possibility of reversal at once is a deception. Propositions as well as probabilities require an orientation to the world as static.¹⁸ This “condition” requires that one determine whether she chooses to “lie” or to “tell the truth” but, in either case, lying and truth-telling are paradoxical, so long as “this process of partial knowledge (which in accordance with strict logic is actually a not knowing) is a property . . . of every human faculty, whether intellectual or imaginative or perceptive” (186). Does one deceive by not admitting that a proposition in the moment of its truth is immediately false or does one tell the truth by admitting immediately that what one says is always already a deception? Hence, the heterological paradox.¹⁹ As Nietzsche says, “Not being able to contradict is proof of an incapacity, not of ‘truth’” (*Will to Power* 279).

So long as rhetoric is linked to propositions, logics, and probabilities—all of which are variations on the possibility of certitude—then rhetoric is reduced to a

deception without self reflexivity, a deception where claims to truth are falsified by misrecognizing their own contingency; deception, then, cannot be avoided but instead must be recognized both in its partiality (in that knowledge and meaning are temporary) and in its “universality” in the paradoxical sense that no truth is universal. That is why Gorgias' rhetoric and *kairos* as it is linked to the antinomies of the *dissoi logoi* is the expression of its own incompleteness; it is this recognition of this universality of incompleteness that leads Gorgian sophistics to leave the milieu of philosophy and enter into art. Untersteiner writes: “The knowledge belonging to art is both partial and universal: partial because it arrests our attention on some particular thing, in that it cannot suppress, even if it ignores, the corresponding antithesis by means of universalization; universal because by the very fact of not denying the antithesis it recognizes the irrationality of things—which . . . the treatise *On Not-Being* shows. . .” (186). In other words, even if it is possible to imagine the universal (sublime), it can only be thought of in its partiality. While Untersteiner has taken us this far, by turning to the tragic, Untersteiner begins to show a nostalgia for certainty and winds up succumbing to the easy way in which the *différance* of the antinomies can so often be mistaken for negation. The so-called “tragic view” as it begins from the recognition of the impossibility of knowledge is read here as a problem that would be desired if it could be overcome. Untersteiner writes, “Thus art, by bringing about the knowledge of the radical nature of the antithesis which stands in opposition to every other antithesis, moves man to feel the sorrow of another as if it were his own and therefore to suffer the universal existence of partial truth, of contradiction, of the irrational” (187).

Untersteiner's understanding of Nietzsche is no doubt part of the effort fueling his particular project. But Untersteiner's tragic view speaks to only one kind of being that Nietzsche's Zarathustra alludes to in the speech "On the Three Metamorphoses." If in the *Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche divides according to the Apollonian and Dionysian lines and calls for Greek tragedy as the highest expression of art, in this speech, Zarathustra divides human being into different categories expressed by the allegorical figures of the camel (weight bearing), the lion (master of the self), and the child (affirmation). In the *Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche lauded Doris Lessing as the "most honest theoretical man" who would "dare announce that he cared more for the search for truth than for truth itself" (95), but Zarathustra consigns the search for truth, while nobler than believing in truth itself, to be the figure who stands in for the tragic figure, the camel. The camel is he, who, in the search for truth, bears the greatest weight. Zarathustra says, "What is difficult? asks the spirit that would bear much, and kneels down like a camel wanting to be well loaded. . . . Is it this: feeding on the acorns and grass of knowledge and, for the sake of the truth, suffering hunger in one's soul?" (26). There is only one way that human beings suffer by the irrational; that is, if they wish for the beautiful in the sense of order. In comparison, after having passed through the "loneliest of deserts" (after having "gone under"), the lion becomes a child. Zarathustra says,

Why must the preying lion still become a child? The child is innocence and forgetting, a new beginning, a game, a self-propelled wheel, a first movement, a sacred "Yes." For the game of creation, my brothers, a sacred "Yes" is needed: the spirit now wills his own will, and he who had been lost to the world now conquers his own world. (27)

Only if one desires stillness, order, and sleep (how much further towards death?) does this longing for rationality and order come about. There is only the radically joyous in acknowledging the contingency that belongs to the moment; if one wishes to be a metaphysical believer who assigns a value of a loss and negation to the absence of truth and certainty, then one might see Untersteiner's point of the "tragic." But many have abandoned feeling self-pity for some time, and even if Untersteiner recognizes that the so-called deceptions of kairotic contingency achieve "a penetrating understanding of the irrational reality" which "favors an irrational communicability" he is also bound to recognize that *that* truth, too, is reversible according to the antinomies. What, then, is the effect of this "conditional knowledge of the unknowable and of this partial communication of the uncommunicable"? That is what art delivers: "pleasure" of knowing that our experience opens, intersubjectively, to the other (188).

We have not begun to touch upon Untersteiner's ethics here, so I will leave it to the reader to consider Untersteiner's description on her own and say only here, in a rather condensed way, that *kairos* understood in the sense of radical difference is able to avoid the arrogance associated with logic and "the right." A kairotic irrationality is always and perpetually open to multiplicity. Indeed, the strength of this position is that it recognizes that the moment is only singular in relation to the rest and so acknowledges the breadth and wisdom in everything not yet said. By remaining open to each perpetual moment and giving control over to whatever forces that moment will bring about, one is able to maintain a position of what might be, of the unknown, and of the unhomey.

CHAPTER 3

NOMOS

. . . behind him were the shades of all manner of dogs, half-wolves and wild wolves, urgent and prompting, tasting the savor of the meat he ate, thirsting for the water he drank, scenting the wind with him, listening with him and telling him the sounds made by the wild life in the forest, dictating his moods, directing his actions, lying down to sleep with him when he lay down, and dreaming with him and beyond him and becoming themselves the stuff of his dreams.

Deep in the forest a call was sounding, and as often as he heard this call, mysteriously thrilling and luring, he felt compelled to turn his back upon the fire and the beaten earth around it, and to plunge into the forest, and on and on, he knew not where or why; nor did he wonder where or why, the call sounding imperiously, deep in the forest.

—Jack London

So long as we are using language, or (what Jacques Lacan calls) “the Symbolic,” then *kairos* opens to a rather difficult problem, a problem wrapped tightly in the color and clothing of language itself. That clothing and color is history and culture, or what we in Rhetoric typically understand as *nomos*. “. . . [L]anguage,” Lacan writes, “is completely burdened with our history” (“XXII” 285). Gorgias *could not, was not, could not be* concerned with historical matters so long as his style was opened to the myriad forces of the flux of the present, the present kairic, ecstatic, exciting, and in-avoidable flow of the cosmic and cyclical changes. The styles that open to the ways of speaking and knowing that proceed from a Gorgian *kairos* are directly and forcefully antithetical to a dilapidated and *chronic* figuring of *chronos*, where the building and gathering of

time moves first by an eventual and climactic pregnancy then to a critical point and then to a discharge and finally to a state of exhaustion or *petite mort*.

But there is a *yet*, and this yet is the other side of language that Gorgias would have our ignoring and which Lacan would not permit our forgetting. We know that in the final analysis, our obligation to fairness would require that Lacan and Gorgias be read united against the mainstream of “philosophical rhetoric,” a static rhetoric that has already outlived its usefulness.¹ But the consequences of this thinking about *kairos*, this thinking about *kairos* as an opening to the novelty of the immediate moment cannot be construed as unproblematic, for the problem of thinking *kairos* is the problem of thinking “what there can be” in light of a persisting “what there is.” To discuss *kairos* means to discuss if there can be *kairos* without *nomos*.²

It does no good to think that *kairos* offers us a glance or an opening into a “window of time,” a passing possibility that we fail or succeed in seizing, a window that closes once we pause to think, measure, or judge (and consequently, fail to act.) Say the word “moment” and a new window opens. And as the first window slides down the tracks and its locks slide into place, another window opens to let in the breeze. Over and over and over and over, windows to the unknown open. But we’re too caught up to stop, to lift our heads in the air and catch a whiff of the cross breezes traveling from over seas and dancing throughout and about our house. Even the pleasure of those words, those sweet images, those light-hearted and dancing rhythms—even the pleasure—our academic compositions have taken away. Who was the first to say, “cut out your pleasure and song?” And so, it is this staleness, the wishing and putting of one hand in

the past, that a kairological—no, a *kairo*—*illogical* holdout avoids by any means. No one can say that since there is a need to be open to the moment that we've had no precursors. Of course, Nietzsche and his eternal repetition was aware, but we have the whole of modernism, and particularly, we have been given a gift of learning from Gertrude Stein. Stein was, perhaps, the strangest postmodern modernist there has been.³

3.1 Kairo-illogical “insistence”

What do we learn from Gertrude Stein? Because *kairos* opens to the irrational novelty of each perpetual moment, a kairo-illogical interpretation of writing recognizes that history, tradition, and memory all work together to close and limit the opening into the perpetually changing flux of the lifeworld. As Eric White also points out, Stein held to a practice that exploited a kairo-illogical view towards composition by writing in a manner that drew constant attention to each new moment by *para-tactically* repeating patterns (what Stein calls “insistence”) of language that required that (if they were to apprehend her meanings) her readers to recognize that repetition is more a matter of *difference* than redundancy. For Stein, each new moment is free to be repeated not because it relies on the past, but because every moment is always already new and being always already new means always already not the past. Stein's parataxis, then, *invents* rather than *reinvents* every and any moment. I'll explain that her language appears to repeat itself only because itself is that which it does not repeat. It seems to rely upon the past to construct the moment only because the moment is not constructed by the past. Stein's *insistence* upon the new flows from an *insistence* that the flow of time is immediately and always already disrupted by the kairo-illogical moment rather than a

chronic gathering of duration. Rather than redundancy, hers is always the new. Here's how Stein sounds at her best:

The trouble with a great many so-called intelligent people is they mix up remembering with talking and listening, and as a result they have theories about anything but as remembering is repetition and confusion, and being existing that is listening and talking is action and not repetition intelligent people although they talk as if they knew something are really confusing, because they are so to speak keeping two times going at once, the repetition time of remembering and the actual time of talking but, and as they are rarely talking and listening, that is the talking being listening and the listening being talking, although they are clearly saying something they are not clearly creating something, because they always are remembering, they are not at the same time talking and listening. (135; cited in White 17)

Through her beautiful *insistence*, Stein stops us in our tracks the moment our memories hit the path, memories that make so-called “intelligent people” sound confusing. But it is Stein's *sound* and *soundlessness* that is the key to this passage, a passing among remembering, repetition, confusion, talking, and listening. If there is anything that has to do with talking and listening, if there is anything that has to do with *being*, if there is anything that has to do with looking into your spouse's or child's *eyes* and seeing a human being *now*, if there is anything that would allow us to slow down the speed of time and listen to the now-sound (or what Walter Benjamin called *jetz-zeit*), then it would be forgetting remembering, forgetting repetition, forgetting confusion, and forgetting theory. An LSD trip may take you into the moment but a highschool girl waiting on a softball pitch, bat steady in hand and eyes focused, takes you there or here or now as well. But the actual now-times would not only be forgetting remembering—it would also be “talking being listening” and “listening being talking,” yet most of us (as

Stein points out) don't talk from listening but instead talk (and listen) from remembering; that is, we don't talk and listen from *being*, but we talk and listen from *having been*.

From Stein's perspective, talking, listening, and writing are intimately connected to being. Talking-listening-writing in the continuous moment requires recognizing that talking-listening-writing requires only one temporality but that since talking-listening-writing does not generally involve *being* talking or *being* listening (but instead *having* listened and *having* talked) it proceeds from a different "confusing" temporality—that of the past. This past temporality is confusing because it appears in the present, but rather than opening to the kairo-illogical flow of the present moment, the past infiltrates the present and closes the door to the new, creating a condition of "saying something" without "creating something."

But we confuse novelty with repetition and repetition with novelty because we misunderstand the past in relation to talking-listening-writing and the present in relation to the past, a misunderstanding that results in our inability to understand how an apparent non-redundancy is more repetitious than an apparent redundancy, or, in other words, how *nomos* is more repetitious than *kairos*. Thus, to write in the continuous moment requires recognizing that talking-listening-writing involves two opposing temporalities—discourse of the present and discourse of the past. When one speaks or writes, one does not *listen* but instead speaks and writes from memory. White explains: "In other words, the impulse to repeat, which ratifies the comfortable notion that knowledge is in principle finite, encourages us to speak not *to* the present occasion (the

locus of genuine novelty) but *from* (in imitation of) the purely ideal constructs of our memories” (17-18; original emph.). These ideal constructs have everything to do with convention and genre. Whenever writing teachers ask students to draw upon their “prior knowledge” that may take the form of an in-class writing assignment that says “freewrite for three minutes on what you know about the best we to arrange a persuasive paper,” students enact their memories in order to reproduce an ideal construction (in this case, the arrangement of a persuasive paper). But as White points out, such constructions assume that knowledge is *finite* and do nothing to change or add to knowledge (to invent alternative ways of arranging), an increase that can be brought about by experimentation and innovation.

Narrative was the ideal construct Stein found herself part of, another construction that has its roots in remembering, and so it is against narrative that Stein worked. Marianne DeKoven has convincingly shown that compared to stream-of-consciousness writers James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, and Dorothy Richardson, Stein was marginalized primarily because her method of “insistence” made it impossible to sustain a narrative, something that was required of the modernist novel. In other words, Stein was highly successful, and it was her success that led to her marginalization. “Remembering,” writes DeKoven, “invokes what Stein considers the nineteenth-century English linear mode of successivity; she calls it elsewhere ‘beginning middle and ending,’ and considers herself to have replaced it with the twentieth-century American mode of simultaneity, a thing not accreted through time but composed instantaneously of its various, interchangeable, equally important parts” (24). But the question must or

should be asked, if Stein is so against remembering, why does her writing *apparently* contain so much repetition? DeKoven explains that the paratactic strings of repetition that Stein calls “insistence,” “reinvents itself anew in each moment of narrative” and is “*unaware of its past and therefore free to repeat it*. Insistence is never verbatim repetition, rather it is a function of looking at the same thing in a different present moment, in which, if it is alive, the thing looked at has minutely changed” (25; my emphasis).

3.2 Genre and Media Contracts

Right here, especially here, we need to pause or slow down and begin. It is worth at this stage to add another element to our discussion. In our discussion of Stein, I have been illustrating how a kairo-illogical view towards writing is one that is perpetually open to the present moment. Stein’s method of insistence (apparent in her paratactic word-strings) is a method that repeats even while it claims not to repeat, yet this is a repetition with a difference. As DeKoven notes, Stein’s repetitions do not repeat themselves verbatim but are always instead variations. It is because Stein is not writing from remembering but is instead talking-writing from “being listening” that each expressed moment minutely changes from the previous expression. The turning point we need to note (or the element that must be added to this discussion) is that the apparatus or medium that Stein draws from to explain “insistence” is specifically *not* that of writing. Instead, her borrowing comes from *cinema*. In “Portraits and Repetition,” Stein writes: “Funnily enough the cinema has offered a solution of this thing. By a continuously moving picture of any one there is no memory of any other

thing and there is that thing existing" (176; cited in DeKoven 24). To write in the moment with insistence, Stein did not look towards conventional writing but recognized that the apparatus of cinema was working already in the direction that she proposed. As DeKoven notes, (in comparison to other modernists) Stein was (arguably) pushing against the boundaries of modernism more than her contemporaries, and in so doing, Stein was pushing against the linear and narrative epistemology associated with print. How does her work resemble cinema? Particularly in the material form of the cinematic strip. While a projected film appears to the human eye as a continuous unfolding of time, film that is not projected (the material form that the filmmaker works with) is a series of frames. Each frame on a strip is largely the same but slightly changed from the previous one. DeKoven explains that since "each frame is a new picture shot" in the present, "it is different from the one before because each present moment is different from the one before." At the same time, a strong similarity exists in relation to the one before since "when the camera has remained focused on the same thing, each frame largely repeats from the one before." DeKoven explains: "So, repetition, which seems to presuppose memory, can in fact negate it. In the Steinian continuous present, the shifting repetition of insistence is inevitable because you rediscover and reinvent in each moment what you know. If you knew you'd already known it you wouldn't have to say it again" (25). This method of insistence makes it very difficult if not impossible to sustain a story, so long as the previous "frame" is negated by the present instance, yet linking all the instances together to make a story rather than segmenting them to their own unique moments, drags in the history, memory, and burden of language and

thwarts the possibility of remaining open to each perpetual moment. A shift in perspective to media will show that perhaps the difficulty of Stein's acceptance (to this day, only one book length treatment of her magnum opus *The Making of Americans* has been written), is a matter of appropriating cinematic techniques and the plastic arts to an audience attached to the genre contracts belonging to the literary tradition. In other words, Stein works in the medium of writing but uses a technique for kairic writing that can be found well-illustrated in the material substrate of the film strip. While her method of insistence is novel, it results in a net loss so long as her audience is less attuned to *kairos* than they are *nomos*. Each reader enters into a genre contract, a set of genre expectations (expectations that a story has a beginning, middle, and end; that writing conventions are respected, etc.), but the audience also enters into a media contract, a set of expectations that the text will follow the conventions and epistemologies associated with both the appropriate storage and delivery method. (We do not expect to watch a film that is a two hour long scrolling novel we are supposed to read.) This latter point is what Marshal McLuhan means by the "aesthetic mode" in the following quote: "It is perhaps useful to consider that communication written, spoken, or gestured has its own aesthetic mode and that this mode is part of what is said. Any kind of communication has a great effect on what you decide to say if only because it selects the audience to whom you can say it" ("Technology and Political Change" 189). This point that an aesthetic mode is part of the delivery of the message is what McLuhan would later come to call "the medium is the message." Stein's work violates both the genre and the medium contracts. By looking and sounding very little like

typical genres, she clearly violates genre contracts. By using the modes of one medium in the medium of the other, she violates the medium contract. The net loss, as DeKoven suggests, may be Stein's marginalization among her contemporaries. By adopting techniques not part of the literary tradition and inventing her own method of simultaneity, on one hand Stein placed herself on the edges of modernism, but from our current historical perspective, her cinematic writing technique anticipates an epistemological shift towards the visual age and secondary orality usually associated with McLuhan, Walter Ong, and others.

3.3 Steinian Nomads

In addition, as Fredric Jameson noted in *Postmodernism, Or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, Stein (with Raymond Roussel and Marcel DuChamp) should be "considered outright postmodernists, *avant la lettre*" (*Postmodernism* 4). To be sure, a specific locale is Stein's anticipation of the postmodern turn to a "nomadology" that is associated with the work of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. Eric White explains Stein's method as one that attempts "to break out of the fixed priorities of memory or habit in order to unleash a processual dynamic of thought subversive of every point of arrest" (*Kaironomia* 19). White's explanation shows in the juxtaposition of "processual" and "arrest" that Stein is working simultaneously both with time and space. The ability to fuse the two elements together allows Stein to both attend to the present moment and to drop (by dropping memory) the habits that the past and history makes. Along with this, then, goes the center of individual identity, an identity that is

continuously being made by a language that repeats only because its attachment to the past has been severed. White writes:

For Stein, the notion of “the center” stands for those habits of attention, or remembering (as she says, “custom is the center”), that lead to repetition and confusion instead of at the same time talking and listening. She advocates a nomadic or wandering “center” that is not constrained within the limits of a habitual circuit. Were we to truly ‘act so that there is no use in a center,’ we would disperse our attention across the entire range of our impressions. Such a mobile center would be responsive to the fluctuating pulse of the present occasion. Stein’s “central” tenet, that “any occasion shows the best way,” thus intends a stance toward experience which would no longer operate in the shadow of memory. (19-20)

To invent in *kairos*—whether with Gorgias (as discussed in the last chapter) or with Stein—means to invent in the continuous moment, both of which are constantly an invention of the self. By being open to each perpetual moment, the self is in a continual process of being made, a sentiment echoed yet again in Stein’s “Composition as Explanation” where she writes: “Composition is the thing seen by every one living in the living they are doing, they are that composing of the composition that at the time they are living is the composition of the time in which they are living. It is that that makes living a thing they are doing” (523). What is made anew is self and language in a nomadic wandering.

3.4 Nomos

Most rhetorical accounts of *nomos* begin from the contrasting relationship between *physis* and *nomos*, between untamed wild nature and civilized man-made law and custom. Kerford writes that “The term *physis* is usually translated by ‘nature.’ It

was the term which the Ionian scientists came to use for the whole of reality, or for its most abiding material source or constituents. But it also came early to be used to refer to the constitution or set of characteristics of a particular thing, or class of things, especially a living creature or person, as in the expression ‘the nature of man.’” (in McPhail 185). By contrast, “The term *nomos* and the whole range of terms that are cognate with it in Greek are always prescriptive and normative and never merely descriptive—they give some kind of direction or command affecting behavior or activities of persons and things” (ibid.) Guthrie develops this by adding further that “The meaning of *physis* emerges from a study of the Presocratics. It can safely be translated as ‘nature,’ though when it occurs in conjunction with *nomos* the word “reality” will sometimes make the contrast more immediately clear. *Nomos* for the men of classical times is something that is *nomizetai*, is believed in, apportioned, distributed or dispensed. That is to say it presupposes an acting subject—believer, practitioner or apportioner—a mind from which the *nomos* emanates” (ibid.) *Nomos* is something that comes from man but its origin lies in *physis*; once it becomes associated with man, it becomes *law*.

In *Reading Nietzsche Rhetorically*, Douglas Thomas explains that this new role for *nomos* converges with the moment when the ancient sophists took to the courts to help settle land disputes. It is around this time, explains Thomas, that the famous Protagorean doctrine “man is the measure of all things” is uttered; the significance of this utterance lies in the abandoning of *nomos* as a primary relation to *physis* and the addition of *nomos* as a primary relation to man. *Nomos-as-law* is a matter of speaking,

of *diction*, of *juris-diction*. *Nomos* is a matter of *speaking* the law and by speaking it, making it. Thomas explains:

Protagoras's claim amounts to a claim of jurisdiction: the law is now spoken *by* us, not represented *through* us. To make such a claim is to locate (and speak) the law not as a matter of representation of *physis* but as a matter of *nomos*. The movement is from a jurisdiction of nature (a law that is *physis* only represented through human understanding) to a jurisdiction where the law is inseparable from the speaking of it. In Protagoras, as with all of the sophists, the law is created through its *jurisdiction*, to be able to speak the law is, in essence, to create the law. *Nomos* is the law only insofar as it is put into circulation (or spoken) in a place in which it has *jurisdiction* (e.g., the home, *oikos* or *domus*). This is precisely the question that is at stake in the battle between rhetoric and philosophy—What is the proper domain of the *nomos*? (54; original emph.)

The path Thomas traces begins with the entry of *nomos* into the human sphere, as something that is made rather than something that passes through (or, as *physis*, already *is*) us. Once *nomos* becomes associated with speech, the law is *dictated*, and the battle (in Thomas's version) is set between philosophy and rhetoric. The attack on the side of philosophy is specifically against the elevated powers of speech that belong to the sophists, powers that threaten the stability of the community. Since they can *make* *nomos* better than any other, they are deemed dangerous to the polis. As Thomas shows in his discussion of Plato's *Gorgias*, the tension of *nomos* in the battle between the ancient sophists and philosophers is largely a battle of who gets to make/speak the law (see 54-60).

But there is also another tension with *nomos* that is not over turf, but one that is over the status of *nomos* as law itself. In *The Question of Ethics: Nietzsche, Foucault*,

Heidegger, Charles Scott points to an important distinction that precedes the philosophy-rhetoric debate but remains as a constant state of tension within the word itself, one that is revealed in its cousin, *nomad*. Scott makes the distinction between two forms of the word, *nomós* and *nómos* and explains the differences in the following passage:

Nomós is associated with the nomad. It is associated with wandering, with random search for pasturage. The *nomádes* were pastoral, nomadic tribes. The word *nomás* meant division and distribution, such as the distribution of an inheritance, which at one time probably consisted primarily of land. The word could also mean possession or regular usage, and *nomós* could mean district, province, or sphere of command. The verb *nomízo* meant to use regularly, to own, to acknowledge. In its passive form it meant to be esteemed or held in honor. This remarkable association in the word of nomadic, pasture, division, possession, regularity, accustomed, and honored is, as we shall see echoed in *éthos*. In the latter word, there are the associations of accustomed, familiar, custom, foreignness, separation belonging, and different. In both words habitual practice—the primary meaning for *nómos*, which means both law and melody—struggles with nomadic, uncivilized separation. This is a fateful struggle. (143-44)

This fateful struggle that Scott describes appears not only in the figure of the nomad but also in the most basic of urges for creativity and invention. If, as Stein says, “custom is the center,” this center is continuously being opened by every new moment. Or as Victor Vitanza writes: “Not all knowledge is to be determined by *physis* or *nomos* but also by *kairos*, which as Eric C. White reminds us is a principle of “spontaneity and risk” (20). (Risk, we will ever return to!) (“Writing the Paradigm”).

Given this tension described by Scott, if we turn for a brief discussion of nomadic thought via Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (hereafter D&G) in *A Thousand Plateaus (ATP)*, we should not be surprised to find that the chapter (they call it a

“Treatise”) on “nomadology” is framed not in regard to animals or tribes but is instead framed in relation to what D&G call the “war machine.” If the tension between the two forms of nomos described by Scott are law and (keeping with the sound description) melody at one end and barbarianism and (I will add) noise on the other, the way that D&G negotiate this difference/tension is by splitting desire and power. By making this distinction between nomadic desire on the one hand and State power on the other, D&G give us two corresponding images of “war machines.” Conceptually these two machines are “formally distinct,” but actually they are mixed, containing and playing off the other (*ATP* 358).

They begin to construct these two different images with their explicitly stated “first axiom.” What D&G want us to get right away is that the war machine is “In every respect . . . of another species, another nature, another origin than the State apparatus” (351-2). The reason for this flows from D&G’s premise of machinic production of desire. A machine for D&G is not defined by its everyday (mechanical) meaning, but instead surpasses “any kind of mechanics” (*ATP* 511). Philip Goodchild presents a straightforward definition: “an assemblage of parts that works and produces” (in Marks 48). And John Marks completes this definition as well as anyone. Marks writes:

[In *ATP*], the image of the machine is opposed to that of the theatre. The individual and social body are constructed from a series of “desiring machines,” through which there are material flows. The unconscious itself is a desiring machine which “produces” desire rather than being a theatre where desire is contained and represented upon a stage. The term “desiring machine” is designed to disrupt the generally accepted idea that a machine is an instrument to be used by a subject. It is rather the case that the subject itself is a machine that produces desire. (49)

In addition, desiring machines, which work at “molecular” (in writing, sentences, phrases, words, even letters) levels are not organized according to their “molar” (in writing, articles, essays, and books) forms but machines or assemblages extend as they couple with other assemblages/machines. Take, for instance, Marshal McLuhan’s well-known thesis that technology is an extension of man. A common example is that the wheels of a car are the extensions of the legs. For D&G, the combination of legs and wheels would form a new machine. As Brian Massumi explains in the Forward to *ATP*, “Nomad thought replaces the closed equation of representation, $x = x = \text{not } y$ (I = I = not you) with an open equation: $\dots + y + z + a + \dots$ ($\dots + \text{arm} + \text{brick} + \text{window} = \dots$) (xiii). When the machine moves or works, it produces desire. Consequently, desire is constantly flowing, emitting, and entering into relationships with machines. Machines emerge and die as other machines enter into and out of relations with one another. Or, as Deleuze said in answer to a question about deconstruction: “I don’t really do textual commentary. For me, a text is nothing but a cog in a larger extra-textual practice” (“Nomadic” 260).

The reason that the origin of the war machine is “exterior” to the State is that desire precedes ideology (351). If we habitually think of cruelty and culture as the preconditions for war, that is because our thoughts habitually turn towards organized and civilized forms of war. But D&G want to remind us that war is first not just a machine of the State but that it is a *productive desiring machine*, and as such it is creative in nature—even in its destruction. In the following passage, D&G explain the difference:

It will be noted that war is not contained within this [State] apparatus. *Either* the State has at its disposal a violence that is not channeled through war—either it uses police officers and jailers in place of warriors, has no arms and no need of them, operates by immediate, magical capture, “seizes” and “binds,” preventing all combat—*or*, the State acquires an army, but in a way that presupposes a juridical integration of war and the organization of a military function. As for the war machine in itself, it seems to be irreducible to the State apparatus, to be outside its sovereignty and prior to its law: it comes from elsewhere. . . . Rather, [it] is like a pure and immeasurable multiplicity, the pack, an irruption of the ephemeral and the power of metamorphosis. . . . (352)

While this kind of language at the end of this quote has a sort of anarchic appeal, one that might lead some to hope for utopian solutions to real life problems, it is important to realize that this particular language should be understood on a molecular scale.⁴ D&G are speaking of the flow of vital energy, what Bergson called *élan vital*, and they refuse to limit that force to be appropriated by molarized forms such as individuals, organizations, or governments. War has desire. And perhaps one of the quickest places to find it is the school yard of a bunch of testosterone-raging school-age boys.

The point of comparison to Scott now is that the tension that Scott eludes to between *nómos* (habitual practice) and *nomós* (uncivilized detachment) is that by ascribing the origin of the war machine to the nomad, D&G effectively update but more importantly mobilize these tensors in a way that shows the former appropriating the desire of the later. This division between nomad and State is another expression of the division between the law and the uncivilized. But mapping the war machine onto the nomad adds a dimension to Scott’s description. Perk up your ears: As Deleuze says in “Nomadic Thought” (a paper he delivered in 1972 in Cerisy-la-Salle), “Genghis Khan is nothing to sneeze at” (260). By ascribing the power of the war machine to *nomós* or

nomads, D&G are able to show that the State (*nomos*) appropriates desire in the service of power. This analysis is no small maneuver for Deleuze and Guattari, but the appropriation of molecularized desire for the molarized form of the state goes beyond the state's intentions even while it works in its service.

In addition, like (but well beyond) Stein, D&G see a language that is nomadic as a language that has no memory. Language is pure desire, but it is not a language of *nomos* as custom. They write: "Language itself is nomadic: there is no mother tongue, only a power takeover by a dominant language within a political multiplicity. Language stabilizes around a parish, a bishopric, a capital. It forms a bulb. It evolves by subterranean stems and flows, along river valleys or train tracks; it spreads like a patch of oil" (7). This *exteriority* of language seems to be driven by a spatial rather than by a temporal metaphor, where language is able to develop, grow, and spread—to colonize and *be* colonized—one machine plugging into another. This language is the furthest thing from the language of the schools, academy, or professions. The similarity to Stein is unmistakable. Where Stein's insistence works in a way that through the present moment it resists any kind of organizing narrative, it just as importantly or more importantly ventures on through its own molecular directions, explicitly denying the possibility of being dominated by a conventional form, mode, or genre—including narrative in either written or cinematic forms. Stein's insistence is a rhizome, a "line of flight" or offshoot of writing that is nomadic without being attached to *nomos* as law. Rhizomatics doesn't dissect language. Instead, it analyzes "language only by *decentering* it onto other dimensions and registers." And then D&G write that "A

language is never closed upon itself, except as a function of impotence” (8). When we (the state) attempt to control language, we thwart its evolution, its possibilities. (George Bush and other like-minded individuals complain that illegal immigrants dilute American culture!) But as we did with Stein, we must recognize that the spatial metaphor is at once temporal. Is there any surprise that D&G would emphasize the importance of what Nietzsche called “active forgetting”? Without falling prey to negation, D&G say that nomadology is history’s “opposite” (23), for history, like memory has a primary connection to nomos and to being sedentary. They write: “History is always written from the sedentary point of view and in the name of a unitary State apparatus, *at least a possible one*, even when the topic is nomads” (23; my emphasis). This kind of writing that is burdened by history, the kind that Stein was trying to avoid, is what D&G call the “cultural book.” (We could just as well call it a “memory book,” “history book,” or “*nómos* book.”) Because it does not recognize the kairological opening, what Nietzsche called (referring to the eternal return) “the moment,” this kind of book is a copying, a tracing, an operation that both “traces itself” and traces the “previous book” by repeating through its remembering. Recognition, and a nomadic writing that is in tune with the present seeks not to make a tracing (by following memory, a tracing is a repetition of events, styles, and genres) but instead to make “a map.” D&G write, “Even the anti-cultural book [ATP] may still be burdened by too heavy a cultural load: but it will use it actively, for forgetting instead of remembering. . .” (24). Nomadic writing remembers in order so that it may forget.

3.5 An Interjection

Although it is beyond the scope of this study, a quite interesting investigation would undertake of study of Stein's work to crack open the relative success of her being able to effectively free her language from memory, and such a study would necessarily be judged on the extent to which her use of language functions and performs in such a way that it becomes a nomadic wandering center that is cut off from the burdens of representation. What should be asked now, and this is one version of the most major question confronting this dissertation, is can we be rid of memory so that it becomes possible to truly invent in the moment?

Another way of asking this question is to ask why does Eric C. White title his book on invention *Kaironomia* (*kairos* + *nomos*)? He gives us the reason in the following passage:

Modernism in the arts has often been said to represent a desire to invent not on the basis of received knowledge but in response to the irrational novelty of the moment. According to this view, the modernist would even abolish tradition in order truly to be present, forever engaged in the process of conferring meaning on the world. But the aspiration for modernity very soon discovers that speculative invention can never be freed once and for all from the burden of the past (White 64).

What are we to make of this problem? To begin to understand how we can never be free from the burden of history, we must or should nonetheless seek to understand the problem as rigorously as possible. To begin to understand what this problem means, we cannot stop with Stein and assume that kairological (kairo-illogical) invention permits the possibility of being rid of remembering. Or to put it has Christopher Macann does in another context, remembering (for Heidegger) is only possible on the basis of

forgetting: “What Heidegger intends by this seemingly strange conjoining of remembering and forgetting is the insight that, when we ‘remember’ the past, in the typical mode of ‘gone for ever’, we are ‘forgetting’ that we *are* our past, that we are haunted by our past, that our past lives on in our present” (102). Thus, the burden of the past cannot be separated from *kairos* and the will to invent. In addition, common sense, that is, *doxa*, tells us right away that there is no way to free oneself, to “overcome” oneself (in Nietzsche’s term), or to *transcend* one’s place or historical moment. But we cannot be reliant on mere opinion, *doxa*, common, or even good sense. Neither can we be reliant on Marxist leaning postmodern thought (such as James Berlin or Michel Foucault) that has forced us to look into the reflection of the present and to see our historical and cultural disciplines, prisons, ideologies, and burdens. Instead, we must undertake an investigation into the nature of the problem and to question even the question if necessary. Given the limits imposed by this dissertation, what I would like to know is how far can we go towards kairic writing? My proposal is to push as far as possible in the space I have here to the limits of this question, and by doing so, discover what we can think as the possible.⁵

3.6 The Question Concerning Invention

The best place to (re)start, then, is with Heidegger and the possibilities and limits he places on Dasein and its potential for being (which is involved with one’s relationship to past, present, and future). A major philosophical difference between Heidegger and Stein (for our purposes) is the recognition that by no means is Heidegger attempting any kind of denial that would separate Dasein from its temporal past (for

such a move would be work against Heidegger's overall project). If *kairos* and *nomos* should be fused together for White, these terms would be redescribed between Dasein and the human situation that Dasein already is. As Theodore Kisiel writes: "As it will turn out, the human situation that Dasein is, this It which gives, is a 'primal something' which proves to be far more basic than what the distinction of subject versus object conveys" (427). In fact, a few pages earlier, Kisiel writes that the best definition of Dasein is "human situation."

From the start we know that the structure of Being is Being-in-the-world, and for Kisiel (as well as most readers of Heidegger), the climax of the story of *Being and Time* is the kairological "moment of vision." One thing we can be sure of: moving to *kairos* with Heidegger is not simply a matter of being aware to each passing moment but is instead a passing through of *nomos*. When Heidegger said Dasein begins with Being-in-the-world (for my purposes), he is saying that Dasein is *nomos* or, in lighter terms, there is no distance between subject and culture. With impressive authority and control, Kisiel explains that Heidegger first noticed the question of being (which, as for Stein, is the same as the question concerning invention) as it was asked by the Eleatic Stranger (see 307), and went on to formulate the ontic-ontological question with the driving purpose of an opening to what Kisiel calls "the primacy of possibility." Kisiel writes:

The operative . . . word here, nondescript, usually unnoticed, often lost in translation, is *ausgezeichnet*, out-standing, ex-cellent: a question that stands out, excels, related to a questioning activity in a "remarkable 'back and forth relatedness' " in which the questing question is affected, struck, and so motivated by what is questioned! Dasein, "this entity

which each of us is ourselves and which includes quest(ion)ing as one of its possibilities of being” is thus found to have a relation to the being-question, “perhaps even one which stands out.” This very relationship belongs to the “most proper *sense* of the question of being.” An entity caught in the act of quest(ion)ing, surely a basic temporal phenomenon which will have to be fully elaborated in the course of the book. Alluded to only in the back-and-forth spiraling movement of an outstanding relation, temporality is there in the very sense (*Sinn*) of this relation of questioning, its relational sense, its sense of direction, directed “out toward” what it asks for (*Erfragtes*), the sense of being, which in turn governs and directs the quest from the start. (424; Kisiel’s translations)

Here is and has been *my* question: “What does our relationship with technology in the new media make possible for writers?” Like the question of being, there is no surprise that the question of invention “stands out” (as Kisiel-Heidegger say) since the question itself is concerned with what is possible (which is a question concerned with limits). But because the question of invention is intimately tied to the question of being, it is worth noting (briefly) that early invention studies in rhetoric and composition develops out of the conflict between discovery and creativity (in the 70s and 80s), an opposition described by Richard Young and Yameng Liu in their introduction to *Landmark Essays on Rhetorical Invention in Writing*. “To privilege discovery,” they write, “is to believe in a preexistent, objective determining rhetorical order whose grasp by the rhetor holds the key to the success of any symbolic interaction. To privilege creativity, on the other hand, is to emphasize a generative subjectivity as the decisive factor in initiating and sustaining the writing process” (xiii). Early invention lacked the sophistication, however, to notice that both positions privilege an epistemology where the subject is in the center who either turns inwards towards creativity or outwards towards discovery (also cited in Hawhee 16-18).

Anyone who asks (reasonably, in my opinion) “what does rhetorical invention have to do with being?” would be delighted to snack on (or chew over) Lynn Worsham’s essay, “The Question Concerning Invention: Hermeneutics and the Genesis of Writing.” Worsham sought to rectify the problem of the creation/discovery binary in invention studies in a way that pulls us straight into the question of being. In this noteworthy study, Worsham argued that invention itself is a question that could perpetually be answered, one that would lead to further openings concerning the “nature of thinking, the nature of creativity, and the meaning and uses of writing.” Invention in composition studies, primarily concerned with finding heuristics to ready-made genre categories, forestalls “any genuine questioning of its most intimate concerns” (198). But Worsham went on to explain that one common ground writing teachers shared was that because they were concerned intimately with the way their views on writing affected the quality of their lives, the question of invention needed to be asked again, “but in a more radical way, to the question of thinking and the meaning of being human” (202). Worsham explains what is known as Heidegger’s ontic-ontology: the question concerning being is not an esoteric, unfamiliar, idealized concept disconnected from familiar experiences but arose out of early Greek’s intimate concern with everyday, simple, habitual experience. The question of invention (and the genesis of questioning) must give us concern for that very reason—because the questioning of the everyday throws the mysterious meaning of Being into question. “This mysteriousness evoked wonder and thus brought human being into a thoughtful mode of being. It is radical thinking, then, which takes place in the presence of the question of

Being, that *opened up a new world*. . . . This experience of the question of Being brought the Greek world into being and in turn the Greek world brought Western culture into being as we know it” (202; my emphasis).

This new and thoughtful world of questioning corresponds with the beginnings of rhetoric and philosophy (and we should also add the beginnings of the technologies of writing). The driving purpose of these questions, the questions of invention and the questions of being (what *can* the human being become?), then, are not driven by an end, telos, or destination. The question of invention is not (as in the case of the NASA scientist, for instance) a question of how we can reach some destination or horizon (the next planet, the next star, the next galaxy), but the purpose is the questioning itself, to discover and create what we don’t know, to write what has not been written. Thus, the question of invention is not the question on any *thing* or on any *topic*, but the question is (as Kisiel notes) asked by the questing which motivates the question and the questing and the question in this “remarkable back and forth relatedness.”

3.7 Two Languages

Our (yours and my) questioning of a kairic invention recalls that (as I said in the previous chapter) being master of one’s own training and discourse to the extent to which a rhetor is able measure and determine the opportune time for an utterance (while it has its practical uses) is a radically diminished interpretation of *kairos*. Bernard Miller has undertaken the analysis of the kairological (kairo-illogical) moment in *Being and Time* to show its similarity to a Gorgian (and we might add a Steinian) *kairos*. In contrast, then, to James Kinneavy’s 1983 inaugural essay (discussed in chapter two)

stands Bernard Miller's 1987 essay, "Heidegger and the Gorgian *Kairos*." Miller's linking of the Gorgian *kairos* with Heidegger takes us a significant step towards a rigorous investigation into the relationship between *nomos* and *kairos*.

For Miller, the relationship between words and things is the key to understanding the Heideggerian *kairos*. The beginning point is to come to appreciate two distinct views of language. In the first view, language is usually considered in terms of the communications triangle, where language is seen as a transparent and corresponding representation between objects in the world or thoughts in the mind. To show this, one only needs to reference popular or "logocentric" conceptions of language. "In this view," Miller writes,

language is grounded in something beyond itself which language then represents, as man shapes and controls language through a culling of symbols to signify things in the world or ideas in the mind. In essence, language is completely a matter of "speaking out," an externalizing of something internal, a functioning of brains, ears, and vocal chords to transmit a message from a sender to a receiver, just as the process is diagrammed in models in speech-communication text books. This idea is also, to Heidegger, language as conceived in "average everydayness," the normal state of *Dasein* as it is absorbed in the "public realm." (178)

The second view of language sees language as having being itself, existing independently of subjectivity. This view has (by now) become familiar to many, though it is also frequently obviated because it is misunderstood as "abstract" and not concerned with "practical matters."

Miller writes:

In contrast, Heidegger's view of language inverts our ordinary, linguistic tendency to make the operation of speaking primary. Rather than

language being a reflection of man's rational nature, it is pervaded by Being, and therefore man's relationship to language is such that he dwells "poetically" in the world. [Quoting from *Introduction to Metaphysics*] Heidegger says, "Words and language are not wrappings in which things are packed for the commerce of those who write and speak. It is in words and language that things first come into being and are."
(179)

As Stein was aware, in discussions with very knowledgeable people, it becomes quite difficult to explain how the materiality of language is of our most important, intimate, and practical concerns.⁶ For Miller, the Gorgian *kairos* and the Heideggerian *kairos* are connected primarily by their understandings of language as the twofold (see chapter two). But when language is understood as correspondence between "things in the world or ideas in the mind" then Dasein, in the language of Heidegger, dwells in "average everydayness." Miller explains a more nuanced understanding when he says that "rather than language being a reflection of man's rational nature," language is pervaded by and inseparable from Being so that man dwells "poetically" in the world. How one understands language determines whether Dasein is a subject living ontically in the world, or is concernfully absorbed with Being.

Miller reasons that if it is true that language brings the world and things into being, then Heidegger's and Gorgias's views of language can be said to be similar. They both deny "all metaphysical foundations for language," even the basis of language "in reason" or in "man as the shaper and master of language" (179). "As with Gorgias," Miller writes, "we therefore witness the annihilation of logos as logos [logic]," and through this annihilation, "language becomes 'free' as a result, an autonomous external power, bound neither to reason not to external reality—and only to man to the extent

that it is through man that Being becomes manifest in Dasein” (179). As an “autonomous external power” that is not bound to the human subject, Gorgias’s irrational logos is Heidegger’s *zweifalt* and both are independent from the subject although the subject (or even the self) remains dependent upon language. When Heidegger says that language is the house of Being (though “house” is a domestic metaphor), it is necessary to recognize that this house is not the subject’s house. The subject and Being, while intimately connected, do not dwell together. Being is a house of language that is unhomely for Dasein. Or as I pointed out citing Scott earlier, a sizeable gulf lies between *nómos* (habitual practice) and *nomós* (uncivilized detachment).

Since language remains in free play (or what D&G call nomadic language) autonomically existing, the Call from that house is the voice of the irrational logos, the Call, as it were, of the “wild” (*nomós*). *Kairos* is the call of Being announcing itself through the logos. In a way reminiscent of our discussion of Stein, logos must be understood here first as listening, hearing, and being “concernfully absorbed.” Importantly, this concernful absorption begins with a decision, a choice made by Dasein to hear the Call that brings Dasein towards his “ownmost potentiality for Being.” Here, Dasein “pays heed” to the call in “anticipatory resoluteness.”

Nomadic language can be heard in the being silent and attentive to the call. The speech of the subject (i.e. everyday, mortal speech) develops in response to this call and proceeds in one of two ways. What’s most important here is the decision that you or I (as Daseins) make. Either we turn towards or away from the call. Typically, those of us

who are acculturated, turn away from the call of the wild and are content to warm our bones by the fire rather than traveling into the unknown. On the other hand, Dasein can also be *resolute*. It can make a de-cision that is a “unifying scission,” a unifying cut that cuts us from our umbilical cords (*nómos*) and safety nets that sustain us in the everyday world. This is a unifying cut because it moves us in the direction of the call. Thus, to Heidegger (as in Stein), hearing constitutes the primary and “authentic” way in which Dasein is *resolutely* open for this ownmost potentiality-for-being—as in hearing the voice of the friend whom every Dasein carries with it (Miller 179; *BT* 206).⁷ It is in this recognition, then, that we move to a more nuanced understanding of *kairos*, and Heidegger uses the German term *Augenblick* to illustrate the “moment of vision.”

3.8 Augenblick

Miller picks up on what is most revolutionary about Heidegger’s analysis of temporality: time is a structure of Dasein. Miller writes,

Being is never outside of time. Once again, it is immanent, given in phenomena, and in his ontological analysis, time is inseparable from the finitude of Dasein, and “primordial temporality”—the original unity of past, present, and future—structures Dasein’s existence. Heidegger says, as long as Dasein exists, “it is never past, but it always is indeed as already having *been*, in the sense of the ‘I-am-as-having-been’ Time, then, is not only given in critical events, but it is also a form of the self, a locus of concern and care persisting as an ‘extended’ present. (180)

This “extended present,” of course, is the temporal structure of intertwined and connected past, future, and present that makes Dasein. Miller writes, “And the future is not the abstract, conceptualized “not yet,” but it, too, is organic to Dasein Time, then, is not only given in critical events, but it is also a form of the self. . . .” (ibid.). It is

from this structure of temporality that we arrive at Miller's "Heideggerian conception of *kairos*." Miller writes:

To the anticipation which goes with resoluteness, there belongs a Present in accordance with which a resolution discloses the Situation. In resoluteness, the Present is not only brought back from distraction with objects of one's closest concern, but it gets held in authentic temporality and which is thus *authentic* itself, we call the "moment of vision."
(Miller 181; original *BT* 387)

Miller tells us that the way to understand the Heideggerian *Augenblick* or *kairos* is by—and this is the climatic sentence of Miller's essay—a "clearing and haven from the obscurity and distraction of everydayness" (181). But it is important to give the appropriate emphasis. When Heidegger discusses the "present" or the "moment," he is not discussing the "now" as it is a moment of time. The present is instead full of both the past and the future. When one turns towards the call in anticipatory resoluteness (I de-cide/resolve to hear the call of Being) it is not only a passing moment of concentration (the softball batter concentrating on the pitch), but this moment is *held* and the concentration involves one's ownmost possibility for Being oneself.

Heidegger writes:

The term *Augenblick*, as an ecstasis, must be understood in the active sense. It refers to the resolute remotion with which Dasein is carried away to whatever possibilities and circumstances are encountered, in the situation of concern, as a matter of concern. This very motion of transport which carries us off is *held* in resoluteness. The Moment is a phenomenon which *in principle cannot* be clarified out of the Now. It . . . is not that "in which" something comes to be, passes away, or is on hand. Nothing can happen "in the moment." But as authentic waiting-toward (*Gegen-warf*), the moment *first lets us encounter* what "in a time" can be as handy or on hand. (qtd. in Kisiel 438, Kisiel's emphasis and translation).

Kisiel's commentary is indispensable here:

A new and different sense of time concentrated on the moment which is at once my unique lifetime. How? By "at once" (equiprimordially) forerunning the possibility of my death and repeating the possibility of my birth (heredity, inheritance, heritage). The "forerunning-repeating moment" . . . is sheer possibility, Dasein's own "superpower, the power of its finite freedom," the "impotent superpower" of its fate. Resolution . . . is that by which Dasein "takes place" and is truly "there" in its particular situation, owned and whole, not everywhere and nowhere as in the distracted curiosity which flits from one "moment" of novelty to the next. (ibid.)

We do not even need to pay close attention to Heidegger, Miller, and Kisiel to see a familiar pattern emerging in this/our visiting with Heidegger. All we need to do is to recall White's explanation that *kairos* is inseparable from *nomos* to see the pattern. Indeed, if we were to pay close, scrutinizing attention to Heidegger and *augenblick*, we would come to the same conclusion as White. There is no *kairos* without *nomos*, and especially for Heidegger, *kairos* with all its noble intentions of making Dasein "whole" and "owned," *kairos* can be said to be *primarily* a matter of *nomos*. What *kairos* is up to in the final analysis is a matter of Dasein, in this rapturous moment, facing its future through its being-towards-death while (with its Janus head) looks at once at its past and its being-having-been. ("Dasein's Being," Heidegger writes, "is primarily historical") (*BT* 444). In the look towards its future and its past, what Dasein discovers is its possibility, which is a code word for its destiny (how far to inexorability?). Heidegger writes:

The self's resoluteness against the inconstancy of distraction is in itself a stretched steadiness—the steadiness in with which Dasein as fate 'incorporates' into its existence birth and death and their 'between', and holds them as thus 'incorporated', so that in such constancy Dasein is

indeed in a moment of vision for what is world-historical in its current Situation. . . . Resoluteness constitutes *loyalty* of existence to its own Self. . . . As fate, resoluteness is freedom to *give up* some definite resolution, and to give it up in accordance with the demands of some possible Situation or other. The steadiness of existence is not interrupted thereby but confirmed in the moment of vision. (BT 442-43).

The little sentence here where Heidegger says that a new situation may require *giving up* a promise is the (paltry) extent to which Heidegger is in actuality concerned with the new (which is only a later *nomos* [situation] replacing an earlier one.) Heidegger's concern, as is painfully clear, is with constancy, with a steadiness of existence, and even the kairo-illogical moment appears to be (using a term from D&G) reterritorialized (i.e. moving back, domesticated even) towards a kairo-*logical* one, a grand narrative of ontology. Indeed "authentic" Dasein revisits birth in its being-towards-death and incorporates and holds them in constancy.

I must ask one question: what has Heidegger forgotten? Some circles (particularly, Heideggerian ones) would celebrate and cheer: "Nothing! Heidegger covers it *all!*"

But from the perspective of the major question concerning this dissertation (how can a place or a time be found in order to invent), Heidegger's totality is the problem, or to be more precise, it is his turning *away* from everyday experience towards "authentic" Being that is the primary issue. This turning towards Being is a turning towards *human* being and Dasein in particular. What Dasein leaves behind in hearing the call is the so-called *inauthentic* experience, and I would argue that this experience deserves no less attention than Dasein (as I will discuss in the subsequent chapters but without

Heideggerian terminology). In addition, Heidegger's analysis of *kairos* reduces *kairos* to a remembering in order to level *kairos* in a way that it becomes equivalent to *nomos*. While we must say that Heidegger splits *nomos* into everydayness on the one hand and the Call on the other, Dasein hears the call only in order to impose a new order on Dasein, an order of "the steadiness of existence," one that is not "interrupted but confirmed in the moment of vision."

At this stage the structure that stands out is the steadiness of existence that is dependent upon a *kairos* that *does not interrupt*. I'll end this chapter with two long passages, the first from rhetorician Michelle Ballif, the second from Jacques Derrida's translator and collaborator, Geoffrey Bennington. First, (in contradistinction to Stein) something called "the steadiness of existence" can only be fabricated through memory, and it is this memory that recalls, for Heidegger, the memory of the Call and of our birth. What I have not mentioned till now is what the Call says when we hear it. But anyone who reads Heidegger closes her eyes and sees and hears the judge's gavel slamming down: "Guilty!" Not only does Heidegger tell us that we must remember (and hence, lose the possibility of novelty). He tells us that in order to be *whole*, in order to be *authentic*, we must *remember* our *guilt*!

"Subjectivity," Ballif writes, "is bought at the price of remembrance of one's guilt, just as etymologically truth is specifically that which is not forgotten." What is needed is to learn how to forget. Ballif writes:

In Greek . . . truth is *alētheia* (not-forgetting). *Lethe* is forgetting, a forgetting experienced in dreams, madness, unconsciousness, the irrational forces of the dark. The α -privativum renders truth a

remembrance, as in a not forgetting. In Plato's *Meno*, Socrates characterizes knowledge of the truth specifically as the evocation of a memory of truth, of the truth which we have merely forgotten. Our subjectivity requires that we remember, that we not forget ourselves, that we remain rational, coherent, speaking beings, that we remember and search for our origins, for our cause, for our paternity. It is the Oedipal impulse—indeed, the Oedipal imperative—of subjectivity: to search out our identity, to uncover our guilt. (111)

Unlike Stein, Heidegger's insistence is not a writing method that uses paratactic word-strings that are attuned to each passing moment to keep us in the continuous present. (Stein is not concerned with origins or paternity or subjectivity.) Instead, Heidegger insists (as he showed in the *Parmenides*) that memory (truth) be continuously wrested from the river of oblivion to give us "the steadiness of existence" that is concerned with the present only to the extent that the present itself reveals both the future and the past. We may not be surprised to discover that this particular structure of temporality is obsessed with unity. (At the end of this study, I will offer an alternative temporal structure that is more practical for writing in new media.) But what is especially noteworthy is that Heidegger's use of *kairos* as *augenblick* is that *very same mechanism* that does *not interrupt* this unity, this "steadiness of existence." ("The steadiness of existence is not interrupted thereby but confirmed in the moment of vision.") But this point that *augenblick* (*kairos*) does not *interrupt* the steadiness of existence should make us very suspicious. *Kairos*, as we saw in our discussion of Gorgias, is precisely an interruption, and Heidegger, who recognizes this, levels out the kairological cut in the spirit of authenticity. Geoffrey Bennington explains:

Before naming time or moment as opportune moment, opportunity, *kairos* suggests thinking of time as a cut, precisely, as the instant not as it

flows continuously from the future into the past through the present [in Heidegger's terms, being-towards death and repeating our births], but as it interrupts or breaks into that continuity with a cut, or an event in the strong sense of the word. Before being an opportunity or a right moment, *kairos* would be a *contretemps* in time, the unexpected that befalls, the discontinuous that makes its mark. Opportunity gets its opportunity in this interruptive cut. Let's say for short that the *kairos* is the coming of the other insofar as nothing can prepare for it, insofar as it surprises even the most careful preparation, and that in this sense, despite a whole (Pauline?) tradition that would have the *kairos* be the *right* moment, it never comes at the right moment, or it is part of the *a priori* structure of the *kairos* to be thus figures only *after the event*. Following the structure that could no doubt be generalized to the most everyday experience of time, there is an effort before and after the event to integrate the event into the course of works and days, thus blunting or denying the cut of the event as such. ("Superanus" 34)

There is much to speak about here (particularly Bennington's point that *kairos* never comes at the right moment but is only figured *after the event*. This temporal structure is what Graham Harman in reading Slavoj Žižek in *The Ticklish Subject* calls "retroactive causation." I'll come to this in due time.) but for now, I'll point out that Heidegger's effort to integrate the cut into the steadiness of existence comes at the price of missing an alternative temporal flow that Bennington hints at but that we will elaborate more fully towards the end of this dissertation. For now, five final words will have to do: to invent requires the cut.

CHAPTER 4
THE MIDDLE VOICE

I am afraid we are not rid of God because we still have faith in grammar.
—Nietzsche

In the second chapter of this dissertation, I opened up the question concerning invention by turning towards the question of *kairos*. In that analysis, I compared two fundamental approaches towards understanding how we could think of *kairos*, the so-called Platonic and Gorgian views. The first places the rhetor at the center of the rhetorical situation, ready to speak/write only after s/he has acquired the appropriate rhetorical training. The second places logos (language) at the center of the rhetorical situation where *kairos* is but the moment of the present that opens to the myriad possibilities of anything that can be said at a given moment. (In contrast to the Platonic *kairos*, in this version the rhetor is only one force among many others while language [and its possibilities] is seen as the dominant factor in the kairic moment.) In the third chapter, I was forced to admit that it is not possible to call upon or advocate a kairic writing for new media (or any other writing for that matter) without simultaneously recognizing that *kairos* (as the moment of possibility) could not be severed from nomos (or the historical and cultural “situatedness” of the human being). As for *kairos*, I have set about explaining that the Gorgian view holds to a kind of empiricism (or anti-solipsism in any case) that places the subject or human outside or on the edges of the

primary movement of the occasion for speaking/writing/thinking. Our condition of nomos, as we have used the term in relation to Heidegger and E.C. White (whose *Kaironomia* remains the most authoritative volume of the matter), applies directly to the human being (and by human being I specifically mean in this case that it is only the human that can be said to have a history). On the one hand, we have established a *kairos* or an event where human subjectivity has been deemphasized, yet on the other, by adding the term nomos via White and Heidegger, this nomos *only* (always already) applies to human beings! In other words (leaving the tricky problem of animals aside), only humans have 1) consciousness and 2) the ability to reflect, and 3) the ability to write. The immediate consequences are that only humans have the ability to record, archive, and store. Nomos (as suggested by Douglas Thomas in the previous chapter) is consistent with this development of writing. Thus, along this line of thinking, this *kairos* + nomos tells us that while invention and innovation is possible when we remove the human from the center of the rhetorical situation, the new *becomes impossible at once* because history and culture is constantly at work on the human. But this point leads me to ask a question of what should we tell Gertrude Stein. Should we say, “Don’t be naïve, Gertrude. There’s no difference between remembering and forgetting. Every time you think you’re forgetting, every time you think you’re writing in the ‘continuous present’ you’re actually writing the past, since it is the past that cannot *not* flow through you?” But clearly Stein would say that something here does not add up, for there is yet another nomos, the nomos that explores and wanders, a nomos that does not reside in one particular custom or place.¹ This (other) nomadic and wandering center is the kind

of nomos that is in accord with a Gorgian *kairos* since the nomos of law, custom, and history is too involved with the history and the place of the subject and self to be congruent with this alternative and non-subjectivized way of thinking/speaking/writing. To make this intellectual error is to confuse the heavy human with the fleeting moment. Only so long as *kairos* is considered and thought of as having a primary relation to *chronos* (the building of time) is *kairos* primarily affected by nomos (law, custom). This (common sense) form of time is what Deleuze in *Difference and Repetition* calls the “first synthesis of time” (79). But the Gorgian (and Steinian) *kairos* exposes something else—a kairic moment that does not belong to this primary form of time. And Deleuze will go on to say that “we cannot avoid the necessary conclusion—that there must be another form of time. . .” (ibid.). Eventually (that is, by the end of this dissertation), we’ll come to uncover and understand this other form of time, a form of time that will show us how the Gorgian *kairos* can be apprehended in the spirit of a new media writing.

While I mention this turn to give you an idea of what lies ahead, this time-form will do us little good if we don’t gain a better understanding of the relationship between *kairos* and nomos. What is most noteworthy in the combination between the terms of nomos + *kairos* is that their combination marks a relation that thrusts the temporal and spatial dimensions into each other, marking a fusion between a time (*kairos*) and place (nomos).

This middle place-time (nomos + *kairos*) was expressed in Sanskrit and ancient Greek *grammatically*, and it continues to be expressed today in what linguists call

“ergative languages,” where the Westernized notion of the subject as agent is not expressed as such in the grammar as it is in nominative-accusative languages (such as English). Instead, the relationship between subject (space) and predicate (time) is/was not unidirectional (like English), where the subject acts and the flow of movement proceeds from left to right. Instead, as the subject acts upon an object, the object acts upon the subject (as when two bodies come into contact with one another). This structure of linguistic expression is known as the middle voice, and it primarily designates a expression of agent and patient acting upon one another. The middle voice does not reverse the direction of the actions. To say “I pick up the pen” does not yield the absurdity that the pen picks me up but expresses (in a way that is difficult to express grammatically in modern English) that my contact with the pen changes me as well. While these consequences may not appear immediately, some forethought will reveal the obvious consequences that I am (maybe drastically) changed by the picking up of the pen or the tapping of keys on my computer. Without my relationships with the pen and the keys (as well as their extensions), this page you are reading would not be possible and all the other intellectual, educational, and professional consequences (that come from the production of this page and all the others in this dissertation) would not fall into place. The middle voice, as it is often used, speaks from this Gorgian *kairos* + *nomos* where the speaker is acted upon as s/he acts upon things and beings. Every teacher knows that teaching is a matter of interacting and responding to her students; the same goes for models and actors responding to cameras; speakers, comedians, and lawyers responding the audiences; and even athletes responding to paying fans. These

interactions, this “back and forth relatedness” (as Heidegger called it), are not extraordinary. What is extraordinary is that they only appear when we explicitly draw attention to them as *relationships* and that they are not expressible in everyday speaking. Yet there is nothing arcane or esoteric about the middle voice; grammar constructs the flow of information in a particular way, yet so long as our language does not express the two-way relationship that is the basic premise of interactions we have with other beings or objects in the lifeworld, these interactions and their consequences are implicitly ignored until we consciously bring them into view.

This chapter is divided into two sections. The first section takes up, in the closely-related field of historiography, the middle voice in a discussion among the well-known historians /historiographers Berel Lang, Hayden White, and Hans Kellner. The reason for the inclusion of this discussion is that the question of how to represent what Jean François Lyotard called the “unpresentable” historical event of the Holocaust did, in fact, create a *need* or a demand for a way of writing history that could not be accomplished using our available means of historical narrative. The second section illustrates how rhetoric and composition has (feebly, in my estimation) called for other rhetors to adopt a middle-voiced writing. These calls are woefully inadequate because they lack the very real and practical dimension of need. Without a need to change, without a problem that is too great to tolerate going unresolved, then no call for individuals to change the way they act/write/think will make any difference. Whenever someone says, “We need the middle voice!” what is forgotten is the basic ground that the middle voice has in its very structure that language acts on us as we act on it. In

other words, to call for a middle voiced writing favors an active grammatical construction and a free choice made by a free agent. It places the subject back into the center of the writing situation and presumes that s/he is freely able to choose language rather than recognizing that both language and humans enter into mutual relationships.

4.1 Historical Emplotment and the Problem of Representation

...nach Auschwitz ein Gedicht zu schreiben, ist barbarisch.
—Theodore Adorno

“After Auschwitz, to write poetry is barbaric.” In discussions of the Holocaust, Adorno’s famous dictum led to the question of whether imaginative writing sentimentalizes the horrors of Auschwitz. But, first, what do we mean when we say “Auschwitz”? Those who work in this impossible field have come to accept that Auschwitz is a metonym for the Holocaust, but they have also come to accept that neither “Auschwitz,” “Holocaust,” “Shoah,” nor any other term is capable of invoking anything even remotely related to the experiences of what actually happened. Critic Naomi Mandel explains: “When we say ‘Auschwitz,’ we do not mean the concentration camp in occupied Poland, or we do not merely mean that. . . . We are making a statement about our own relation to history and to an especially uncomfortable past. Just what that relation is, and what that past contains, rises bleakly to mind: a train station, cattle cars, bewildered naked people, some go to the right some go the left, gas, ovens, chimney, smoke” (203-04). What do we mean when we say “Auschwitz”? The metonym is a paradox. Auschwitz is meant to speak and refer to the unspeakable, the unthinkable that must be thought nonetheless.

When we speak, however, and call to mind the images of cattle cars and gas chambers, no doubt the words stir some kind of emotion within us, but ultimately they do little to bridge the gap between experiential and symbolic dimensions. Using words to describe Auschwitz does little more than to abstract. But the Holocaust, as historian Christopher R. Browning reminds us, “was not an abstraction. It was a real event in which more than five million Jews were murdered, most in a manner so violent and a scale so vast that historians and others trying to write about these events have experienced nothing in their personal lives that remotely compares.” Browning goes on to conclude that “historians of the Holocaust, in short, know nothing—in an experiential sense—about their subject” (27; also cited in H. White “Modernist Event” 31).

Against linguistic descriptions of the Holocaust, then, we might place the other, more immediate medium of the documentary film. If we have seen Alain Resnais’ *Nuit et Brouillard* (*Night and Fog*) (1955), then we have seen images that are truly unspeakable, nauseating, sickening, outrageous: images that cause surges of mourning and waves of choking melancholy.

But films aren’t necessarily any better at representing the Holocaust than written historical accounts. The problem with filmic representations, as film critic Phillip Lopate has explained, is that they reduce the legitimacy of the event through stylization. Lopate writes: “The rap against most Holocaust films is that they exploit the audience’s feelings of outrage and sorrow for commercial ends; and, by pretending to put us vicariously through such a staggeringly incomprehensible experience, they trivialize,

reducing it to a sentimental melodrama.”² Yet *Night and Fog* stands apart from typical visual and verbal representations; somehow, it avoids sentimental reductionism.

One way *Night and Fog* avoids maudlin aestheticization is by contrasting post-War shots of the concentration camps with documentary footage shot within the camps during the War. The former are shot in color, showing empty camps against blue skies, blooming trees, and freshly mowed grass. As the film’s narration says, there is nothing menacing about the camps any longer: “A crematorium can be made to look like a picture-postcard. Today, tourists have themselves photographed in front of them.” These benign images are juxtaposed against the malignant death camps—black and white footage, bleak living conditions, naked bodies, emaciated bodies, mass graves. The camera moves from our point of privilege to the memories of the camps and to the camps themselves. As I watch *Night and Fog*, I don’t have the feeling of being transported into another time (as I would watching a commercial production). Instead, I feel the past moving forward to meet the present. The camps become animated, animated with death, dying, abundant suffering. I don’t concoct the images I see with my own imagination; I don’t see them with the aid of a writer’s description; and I certainly don’t see recreations designed by a well-funded commercial production. These images are actual. These victims are real. I watch, and through my horror I manage to whisper, “That’s it. That’s what it was like.” Next to this film, Adorno’s chilling statement seems to make perfect sense to me. How can aesthetic pleasure be possible any longer? How can we think of poetry and Auschwitz in the same sentence?

But if I think that Resnais' film captures any kind of reality, I am naïve. Resnais himself didn't think that *Night and Fog* could speak for the victims and survivors. Instead of attempting to narrate a story of the death camps, to represent what he did not have first account of, Resnais asked novelist, poet, and survivor Jean Cayrol to write the screenplay narration. Cayrol's commentary that takes me through the film explains what went on in the camps even while it says that it is impossible to determine the experiential truth. If for a moment, I watch *Night and Fog* and think "This is *it*," I am disabused by that absurdity by the film itself, a film that negates its own possibility of representing the camps while it coldly narrates the atrocities. Cayrol's narration explains the film's recognition of its own futility:

No description, no picture can restore their true dimension: endless, uninterrupted fear. We would need the very mattress where scraps of food were hidden, the blanket that was fought over, the shouts and curses, the orders repeated in every tongue, the sudden appearance of the S.S., seized with a desire for a spot check or for a practical joke. Of this brick dormitory, of these threatened sleepers, we can only show you the shell, the shadow.

It is clear (as Lopate and others have said) that the film shows the *need* to remember and the impossibility of remembering. "In effect," Lopate writes, "*Night and Fog* is . . . an anti-documentary: we cannot 'document' this particular reality, it is too heinous, we would be defeated in advance." And then Lopate correctly knows to ask the question that must be asked even if it can't be answered, the impossible question that flows from the paradox of talking about the Holocaust: "What *can* we do?"

As I begin, not knowing what, to write,
the sun, from the clip of my pen,
turns on this page, such a streaked,

burst gold eye,

all I have, all I have ever wanted,
you to see this, to see *with* this,
in case it is dark where you live.

—William Heyen

The irony comes to light first. Researchers, historians, poets, filmmakers, novelists, you and I say: the Holocaust is unspeakable, yet the tomes and the essays and the poems and the films speak. And speak. And speak. Berel Lang, one of the most outspoken commentators on the *writing* of the Holocaust, comments on this irony: “We hear it referred to as unspeakable, and we usually hear afterward a fairly detailed description of what is unspeakable, that description intended, of course, to prove that the designation was unwarranted” (*Holocaust Representation* 18 [2000]). Lang’s words speak of *intention*. I may say that the Holocaust is unspeakable but I really *intend*—presumably because I speak about it—to negate its unspeakability. Lang’s way of conducting the problem to intentions and proofs is just a bolder version of the more subtle argument he put forward in *Act and Idea* (1990). Here Lang argued that when we say that language cannot represent the event of the Holocaust so long as we go on to speak about it, we draw the inference that language *does* and *can* represent the event in some way. Lang writes:

It will be recognized that the description of an event as incomprehensible or inexplicable is often itself a figure of speech; the aporia, an extreme instance of hyperbole, asserts just this—that words cannot convey or encompass a given subject. Since the grasp of language normally extends wherever experience does, to claim of an event by this means that it defies language and understanding is meant to attest to its extraordinary nature, and this purpose has been evident in many references to the incomprehensibility of the Nazi genocide. But these claims themselves often appear as part of accounts that go on to speak in detail about aspects of the Nazi genocide. This is evidence, apparently, of the figurative purpose of such statements; at least *something* in their subject, we infer, is comprehensible and available for representation. (350)

Something must be representable, communicable; otherwise (goes the argument) no discourse would occur. *Conceptually* speaking, then, there is no difference for Lang between figurative and historical representations. Since the Nazi genocide is incomprehensible, “*all* representation of those events, by the historian no less the novelist, will fail” (349). The charge that the Holocaust cannot be spoken about *in any way* is no less a failure of a writer’s ability (or intentions) than it is a failure of the medium of writing. Rather, “it is the opacity of the subject itself that is asserted, its inaccessibility either to reason or imagination . . . the failure of representation is due not to the relation between a particular form of discourse and its subject but to the nature of the subject, which would be common to all . . . forms,” writes Lang (*ibid.*). Lang understands and appreciates that there is no significant conceptual distinction between figurative and historical forms in relation to the sublimity of the subject itself; the distinction that must be drawn is a moral one, and it is upon this moral stance that figurative representations of the Nazi genocide fail.

For Lang, the moral dilemma of “imaginative writing” manifests itself in a variety of ways, the popularity and “currency” of “Holocaust literature” (351), the creation of imagined worlds (ibid.), the “bond” between reader and these worlds (351-52), the (alleged) “sense of responsibility” the novelist instills above and beyond the historian or theologian (352), the continuity and motivation of characters, and, finally, the rational structures (such as cause and effect) associated with building such continuities (ibid.). All of these qualities (the greatest strengths and cause for the popularity of the literary form) do not, says Lang, “ensure that the grounds of the attraction are themselves always warranted” (ibid.). These narrative qualities lend a specificity of agency, individuality, and subjectivity to Auschwitz, an event, argues Lang, that took place on such a large scale that it simply cannot be individualized or localized. Thus the debate is not the argument that we would typically expect—that literary representations falsify the historical record. Instead, the moral dilemma is that literary accounts present a specificity that hinges on the agency and subjectivity of the individual, but genocide denies explicitly this; it explicitly denies individual freedom of any kind (352-53). Lang writes, “It is precisely the individual consciousness that is denied in the act or idea of genocide—and the imposition of a representation of agency on that subject, involving also the persona of the author, conduces to a distortion that is both conceptual and moral. . . . imaginative literature presupposes individuality and subjectivity in the representation of its characters and their actions, and that to represent certain literary subjects in those terms is a falsification” (ibid.). The form itself expresses a level of personalization and intimacy, but the Holocaust did not take place

at a micro level. The killing of one Jew or even a hundred or even a thousand or even ten thousand is not equivalent to the killing of five million Jews. Without even considering arguments of language and representation, the mathematical scope of this sublime event permits neither the telling of those five million stories or (even if it were possible to tell them) our ability to understand them.

It would then seem that for Lang only historical accounts—because they concern themselves with the genocide at generalizable levels—would be able to speak about the Holocaust. But, as Hayden White pointed out in *The Content of Form* and elsewhere, insofar as historical writing is a matter of emplotment and narrative, it is open to the same criticisms as figurative representations. For this reason, what goes against Holocaust figurations goes against Holocaust histories as well. White explains that by implication a history as a *story* “must be said to have a plot, and if every emplotment is a kind of figuration, then it follows that every narrative account of the Holocaust, whatever its mode of emplotment stands condemned on the same grounds that any merely literary representation must be condemned” (“Historical Emplotment” 47).

Someone might say that these different accounts, at one pole a literary account that creates fictional characters to tell a story and at the other a historical narrative that attempts as closely as possible to give an objective account of facts, cannot be conflated and must remain distinct, that the line that White crosses between the two using the emplotment trope is too subtle to render historical discourse equal to and, consequently, equally “condemnable” as a literary account; in short, the two genres must remain

discrete because they *are*. Lang himself draws a similar distinction by emphasizing that the difference between the two forms is grounded on one being dependent on literary elements and the other being dependent on the factual historical record. (Lang is concerned with revisionary denials of the Final Solution, so the factual record is of utmost importance to him.) But even if this may be the case, Lang still does not succumb to a naïve realism reliant on transparent and idealized accurate historical presentation, for he recognizes that on the other end of the equation, speaking of universals creates the inverse problem of figurative descriptions. Where the latter cannot discuss the breadth of the Nazi genocide, the former, in its attempt to universalize, is emptied of content. Lang writes, “That theoretical or universal assertions that can be abstracted from features of the Nazi genocide is not inconsistent with the conclusion that such assertions remain morally inadequate to that subject; they are as remote as the physiological composition of a human being is from his personality or moral character” (356). Without a doubt, Lang believes there is an (evil) essence to the Holocaust, and his analogy between human physiology and a commonplace such as “moral character” indicates that theoretical explanations of Auschwitz fail as much as any description. They capture nothing of this essence. Lang would be the first to recognize that on one side there is the wall and on the other the sword; the two are closed upon each other through the act of speech.

Indeed, for Lang, the most ethical position concerning the representation of the Holocaust is, first and foremost, the position of silence. Neither figurative or historical representations (as said earlier) adequately represent the Holocaust, and, this being the

case, Lang asks that we consider the effects of representations given the alternative option of not speaking. Lang writes:

The judgment of literary representation depends, moreover, not only on its treatment of its subject, but on the alternatives from among which that one “act” was chosen and which might, in the critic’s view, have included another one that was preferable. The most radical alternative to any particular representation of the Nazi genocide is not a different or contradictory one—but the possibility of not having written at all; that is, the writer’s decision for silence. And this then provides a minimal but decisive standard by which all writing about the Nazi genocide can and ought to be judged, a standard that poses itself in the form of a question: Would silence not have been preferable, more valuable, than what was written? No writer could dispute the point of this question: in it, the stakes of writing are made proportionate to the weight of its subject. (357)

Lang’s hush recognizes that when the subject is Auschwitz, the sound of speech is drowned by the five million silences of the dead, for as Elie Wiesel says, nothing can be said in the name of the dead. Wiesel writes: “To insist on speaking in the name of the dead—and to say: these are their motivations, these the considerations that weakened their wills, to speak in their name—this is precisely to humiliate them. The dead have earned something other than this posthumous humiliation . . . Let us leave them alone” (68-69).

Jean François Lyotard also recognizes the limitless possibility of silence but arrives there by asking a different sort of question. He asks that we imagine a natural disaster that wipes out recording technologies. Lyotard asks we imagine “that an earthquake destroys not only lives, buildings and objects but also the instruments used to measure earthquakes, directly and indirectly. The impossibility of quantitatively measuring it does not prohibit, but rather inspires in the minds of the survivors the idea

of a very great seismic force” (*Differend* 56). In light of such a hypothetical earthquake, scholars and journalists have no possibility of measuring or representing the extent of the damage. The earthquake destroys not only seismographic instruments but “indirect” instruments or technologies. No computers, films, cameras, tape recorders, microphones, speakers, newspaper presses, and hence no camera crews, reports, articles, essays, disputes, nor commentaries from Bill O’Reilly. Lyotard writes, “the scholar [and journalist] claims to know nothing about it, but the common person has a *complete feeling*, the one aroused by the *negative presentation* of the indeterminate. The silence that the crime of Auschwitz imposes upon the historian is a sign for the common person” (56; emphasis mine). Lyotard describes the persistence of memory and the inability to forget—the *feeling* that arises in the survivor, the words deliberately held back from the lips at the last moment because it would be better not to say them.

There are inherent dangers, of course, in holding back one’s words and listening to this Great Silence. Not the least of which is the question of whether future generations will hear it. For the second, third, and later waves of Holocaust writers, the risk is that this silence will result in a forgetting rather than a remembering.³ To prevent that possibility while still recognizing the limitations of representations, Lang answers by finding a mode that avoids both imaginative writing and the emplotment of historical discourse. A writing that recognizes the limits of both would be a writing of historical chronicles (fragments, small narratives).⁴ Since historical narrative trivializes the truth, only chronicled accounts of the facts come as close as possible to fairly representing the silence of feeling while at the same time performing the historian’s duty of recording

and storing collective memory. White is correct to warn us against assuming that Lang's chronicle is primarily a matter of using language to concretely and transparently represent events, and writes that it is false to assume that the chronicle means "that historians can or should try to occupy the position of the naïve realist or mere seeker after information. The matter is more complex than that" (47). It is more complex because Lang "indicates that what is needed for anyone writing about the Holocaust is an attitude, position, or posture which is neither subjective nor objective, neither that of the social scientist with a methodology and a theory nor that of the poet intent upon expressing a 'personal' reaction" (ibid.). The chronicle is an example of this attitude and posture, and as White describes it, this notion stems from Lang's invocation of Roland Barthes explanation of "intransitive writing," a writing that Barthes describes in terms of the "middle voice" in his essay "To Write: An Intransitive Verb."

Barthes' essay, presented at the famed John Hopkins Structuralism conference in 1966 (later published in Richard Macksey and Eugenio Donato's *The Structuralist Controversy*), is the birthplace of discussions that seek to rethink and redescribe the typical active and passive logical and grammatical constructions of our linguistic thought patterns. Here, Barthes uses the middle voice to focus on the relationships that a writer has with the text, the reader, him/her self, and action. The differences between the active, passive, and the (ancient Greek) middle voice, explains Barthes, vary according to the relationship that the writer has to the action of writing. In both the passive and active voices, the subject of the verb is exterior to the action. In the active voice, the action is initiated by the subject, but the action itself is not the subject. The

same, in reverse, holds for the passive construction. In the middle voice, however, the subject is interior to the action, where its active starting point or passive receiving point is thwarted by a narrative identity that is made through and is inseparable from the act itself. Barthes explains that

in the middle verb *to write* the distance between the writer and the language diminishes asymptotically. We could even say that it is subjective writings, like romantic writing, which are active, because in them the agent is not interior but *anterior* to the process of writing. The one who writes here does not write for himself, but, as if by proxy, for a person who is exterior and antecedent (even if they both have the same name). In the modern verb of middle voice *to write*, however, the subject is immediately contemporary with the writing, being affected by it. (“To Write” 143)

Rather than being exterior to the action as one who does something (active voice) or exterior to the action as one who receives the action (passive voice), the writer in the middle voice, is illustrated by “the case of the Proustian narrator” who “exists only in writing” (143).

Barthes explains that (re)discovering the middle voice is not a matter of quarrying an ancient mode of expression, but that modern literature has become “middle-voiced” of its own accord. He writes, “In our literature, it seems to me, the verb is changing status, if not form, and the verb *to write* is becoming a middle verb” insofar as “language follow[s] literature—which, for once perhaps, has the lead” (143). If the grammatical construction of the middle voice is lost to literate cultures, it finds renewed expression in modernist literature of the kind Barthes associates with Proust. Berel Lang mentions Aharon Appelfeld. Hayden White’s chosen exemplar is Virginia Woolf. Hans Kellner’s is Art Spiegelman. We could name others.

Because the chronicle explicitly chooses not to narrate historical events but only to list them, it welcomes readerly intervention by inviting the reader to insert her own stories in relation to the presented fragments. Thus, the chronicle is, to borrow Barthes' terms, a *writerly text*, one in which the reader becomes writer in the process of reading. Rather than choosing to connect the events through emplotment, the chronicle respects the silences between the gaps, silences that belong better to the survivor than to the historian herself. No doubt the choice of which events to include also makes, if not a narrative, than a frame and a singularity, an implicit limit of what may or may not fit between the spaces. This singularity is inherent in the cutting act of speech itself (as opposed to listening to the multiplicity of Silence), and is especially provocative in relation to Auschwitz, an event (to use Lang's term) that is primarily "opaque." This point about the historical writing in the middle voice leads one to ask what a Holocaust literature might look like if it were to take the face of the middle voice? If the chronicle is a middle voiced writing suitable and preferable to a historical narrative of Auschwitz, then a Holocaust literature that adopts the middle-voiced position would be a writing that constructs the identity of the author in the action of the writing.

As Hans Kellner has noted, in the discussion that followed Barthes' presentation, Jean-Pierre Vernant "posed (and answered) the question why the middle voice had in effect died out in most Western languages. Vernant's answer had to do with responsibility and the developing of the Greek sense of self (or subjecthood, as one says today)" (134). Kellner cites Vernant:

as expressed in Greek or ancient Indo-European there is no idea of the agent being the *source* of his action. Or, if I may translate that, as a historian of Greek civilization, there is no category of the *will* in ancient Greece. But what we see in the Western world, through language, the evolution of law, the creation of a vocabulary of the will, is precisely the idea of the human subject as agent, the source of actions, creating them, assuming them, carrying responsibility for them. (in Kellner 134; original 152)

At the time of John Hopkins conference, academics were just beginning to openly question that status of subjecthood and subjectivity, so Vernant's comments cross a huge time span, comments that bridge a gap between the pre- and postmodern. Kellner reads this point succinctly. Kellner writes: "So I conclude that the middle voice, once a relic from before the birth of the subject, is what may be spoken again after the death of the subject, the death of the author, and so forth, these "deaths" being understood as the figured signs of an awareness of the historicity of discourse and the situated nature of any speech act" (134). Kellner is aware of the sensationalization of the pronouncements of deaths and ends that seem to spur on academic inquiry, so he is keen to qualify the death of the subject as being a manner of speaking in particular historical epistemes. Pre-individualization, as a manner of thinking where subject and world were not distinct, finds, if not grammatically, then figurally in the middle voice of modernist literature pointed out by Barthes where in literature the subject is created in the act of writing and in the text, similar to the creation of the human being through interaction in the world. What would such a writing look like? Interweaving Lang's thoughts with his own, White develops a fuller explanation of intransitive writing:

intransitive writing 'denies the distances among the writer, text, what is written about and, finally, the reader.' In intransitive writing 'an author

does not write to provide access to something independent of both author and reader, but ‘writes himself’ [sic] . . . In the traditional account [of writing], the writer is concerned as first looking at an object with eyes already expectant, patterned, and then, having seen, as representing it in his own writing. For the writer who writes-himself, writing becomes itself the means of vision or comprehension, not a mirror of something independent, but an act and commitment—a doing or making rather than a reflection or description.’ (in White 47-48; Lang *Act* xii)

One of White’s strongest supporters, Kellner is aware of the difficulty of this maneuver.

One does not simply *choose* to write in the middle; neither a *choice* nor an *acceptance* expresses the complexity, the loops, feedbacks, or revisions of the give and take of the middle-voiced position. One cannot simply say that the middle voice *fits* because we have pronounced the death of the subject. After his fine description of the middle voice, Kellner foreshadows the points made by others (such as Hawhee and Vivian to which we will turn) that insofar as social construction has had a say, every utterance has become recognized as being potentially middle voiced. Certainly, at the time of Kellner’s writing, his point was well worth pointing out, specifically, that the time had come where any action is recognized as socially and culturally mediated. But this recognition, as a condition of a particular epistemic production (no matter how true), matters only to the initiated. To have a significant impact on the status of writing, to express the inexpressible of Auschwitz, a middle-voiced writing is one—like *Night and Fog*—that recognizes its own futility, that recognizes that its truths are lies and shadows. As his representative anecdote, Kellner chooses Art Spiegelman’s *Maus* and goes a significant step in describing a middle voiced literary interpretation. Here is Kellner’s explanation of *Maus*:

I suggest that [*Maus*] is an instructive example of the middle-voiced stance. . . . Spiegelman is both the author of his work and a character in it. The subject is both the Holocaust and the process of writing about it; within the text, there is no distinguishing between the two because each intrudes upon the other constantly. Spiegelman, one might say, is neither active nor passive. He does not create his tale (and yet he does), but it does not happen to him (and yet it does). He is part of the event of his creation, which changes him. His evidence, his father, is difficult; their relationship is not at all objective or stable. Memory and its vagaries plays a role at every turn. The story is Spiegelman's and it is not. It is his father's and it is not. The willful authority of these figures is present in the narrative, but it is always questioned and undermined. Finally, as I read it, the story of *Maus* and its sequel becomes no one's story, but without asserting a falsifiable claim to objective realism. (134-35)

As it becomes no one's story, *Maus*, like Resnais' *Night and Fog*, attends to the Silence and impossibility of telling the story of Auschwitz. But as part of the second generation of Holocaust survivors, Spiegelman knows that his father's story must nevertheless be told (even if telling it is an impossibility). In the opening pages of the first volume, we read/see:

Artie: I still want to draw that book about you. The one I used to talk to you about. About your life in Poland, and the war.

Vladek: It would take *many* books, my life, and no one wants to hear such stories.

Artie: I want to hear it. Start with Mom . . . tell me how you met.

Vladek: Better you should spend your time to make drawings what will bring you some money. . . (I, 12)

Also like *Night and Fog*, the structure of *Maus* moves back and forth between the present and past. We begin with Artie wanting to interview his father. Vladek begins to remember, and the past rushes up to seep into the present.⁵ After a while of story telling and painful memory, exhaustion sets in and Spiegelman and Vladek take a break. We then hear Spiegelman's story in the present where he reflects on Vladek's experiences,

presents the difficulty of getting along with his father, remembers his mother's suicide, contemplates what life as a father will be like, and, among other things, offers the reader comedic relief. As James Young writes, "In *Maus*, not only are past and present linked, but they constantly intrude and occasionally even collapse into each other" (682). In the two narratives, the past and present hinge on the continuity of Spiegelman's drawings, visual elements missing from any purely verbal description that soothe the temporal divide between past and present. For instance, over and over again, whenever Artie and Vladek are about to begin Vladek's testimonial, Vladek and Artie are depicted in the present when Spiegelman visited his father in Rego Park a few years before his father's death. As Vladek speaks and Artie interjects, the dialogue eventually gives way to Vladek's memories. This letting go of the present is visually presented by drawings that contain the memory of the past, yet Vladek and Artie remain everpresent (rather than evanescent) through the verbal representation of memory. We *see* a young Vladek struggling to survive but we *hear* a *survivor* telling that story. This movement of visually fading from present to past is continuously linked to the present through Vladek's narration and Artie's occasional clarifying questions (the site of the interview). For instance, when Vladek begins in volume *I*, he mentions an apartment that he had in Czestochowa. The apartment is mentioned in a panel showing Vladek and a young woman (Lucie, not Artie's mother, Anja) at a dance. The panel shows a silhouette of Vladek and Lucie dancing with each other with other dancing couples filling in the background. Breaking through this visual space, however, is Artie's comment that he'd like to see the apartment sometime, and Vladek replies that maybe

sometime they will go see it (13). We *see* the past, but we *hear* the present. This device allows us to see Vladek's memories while hearing not only the present description of them (the dance) but also an extra commentary that pulls the present into the past even while the past rushes over the present, forging visual and audial bonds for the reader between the two. Critics have argued over whether these two strands should be identified and defined by either continuity or fundamental break, that Spiegelman either fails or succeeds in bridging the present with the past.⁶ Regardless of Spiegelman's success (which in this instance is more a matter of giving critics something to talk about) the past and present are held in tension and expressed through each other.

Yet there is still another narrative to consider, and, in fact, the intrusion of the narratives into each other just mentioned implicitly show that they are not distinct. While the primary story is told through Vladek's memories and the secondary story is told through Artie's recording of Vladek's testimonial (as though a camera was taking us to the scene of the interview), the third narrative explicitly intervenes between the two by showing Spiegelman's awareness of both and the difficulty of telling these stories. To get the story, Spiegelman has to draw, write, and make choices of what and what not to include. (Recall Kellner: "It is Spiegelman's and it is not. It is his father's and it is not."). This third narrative includes Spiegelman's reflection on the process of writing *Maus* and is most evident at the beginning of the second chapter of the second volume, "Auschwitz (Time Flies)."



Figure 4.1. *Maus*. Source: Spiegelman II 41.

Figure 4.1 is the first page of this second chapter. As Erin McGlothlin explains, two cues allow the reader to identify this third narrative. The first is the use of lowercase lettering. The second is the depiction of humans wearing animal masks rather than keeping the consistency of characters embodying anthropomorphic characters.

McGlothlin explains this significance:

The employment of the mouse mask over the human head points to the text's self-conscious reflection on its own production, on the representational choices it has made from a spectrum of aesthetic possibilities. Spiegelman's choice of casting his father's narrative as an animal tale, as a fabulous story in which mice are hunted by cats who are in turn hunted by dogs, while pigs selfishly protect their own interests, is thus exposed as an arbitrary (and potentially dangerous) method of framing a story. Rather than allowing the reader to immerse herself comfortably in the mouse-and-cat universe, Art's wearing of the mask, which from the front looks authentic and only from the side and back is revealed as a mask with strings that attach it to a human head, ejects the reader from the complacency of the animal metaphor and points to both its artifice and its effectiveness as a normalized aesthetic device. In addition, Art's role as the author of the Artie and Vladek narratives is made explicit here (he's shown at the drawing table listening to tapes of his father and himself), but the wearing of the mask, which places Art both inside and outside of the representational framework that governs the rest of *Maus*, prevents him from assuming a quasi-transcendent, autonomous authorial identity. Art is thus depicted as a character in much the same way as Vladek and Artie, and he too struggles with the same overwhelming forces of history and memory. But his relationship to the past takes on an additional dimension, for he must contend with both his own problems of imagining and shaping his father's story and the reception of the product of his imagination. (183-84)

McGlothlin hits the nail on the head. Spiegelman creates a third character, not Artie who is depicted in the story struggling with his father's telling of the past (and their tense relationship) but Art, presumably Spiegelman himself (but not that either, for

Spiegelman is not wearing a mask), who looks directly at the reader, reveals his mask if not the face underneath, and reveals the tension and depression (as figure 4.1 shows) of telling his father's story. In figure 4.1 and the subsequent few pages, all of the narratives come clearly together. Art is not only the writer reflecting on his father's story, he is also the writer reflecting on the story of his father. Art is not only the writer reflecting on how to write the book, he is also reflecting on how the book was received. Through all of this, he is also writing on how his own life was written (his mother's suicide; his daughter's birth). Most explicitly, Spiegelman is literally writing and drawing himself writing and drawing himself. When we read the first panel of figure 4.1, we see Art drawing at his desk, smoking and wearing the mask. We assume that he is in his studio, but the flies suggest something is amiss. As we proceed, we arrive at the final panel and feel Art's horror and depression—communicated by a pile of dead bodies at Art's feet—of living with the difficulty of writing *Maus*. But, then, there is also the window, outside of which is a guard tower and barbed fence. Has the past interrupted the present or has the present moved into the past? When McGlothlin says that Art “is both inside and outside of the representational framework,” in this third narrative, this does not mean that at one point Art is inside at another point outside, but that he is simultaneously and paradoxically in and out both framework and time.

According to traditional modes that would seek realistic representations, Spiegelman's *Maus* complicates what would be called both representation and reality. According to White, this kind of “middle voiced-ness” does not show that “history is no longer represented realistically, but rather that the conceptions of both history and

realism have changed” (“Historical Emplotment” 51). If I ask whether Spiegelman is representing the Holocaust, I do not say “yes” or “no.” I know the answer beforehand. The Holocaust, no less than any other historical event, cannot be represented. But it is just this impossibility that is always already the condition of representation, and while Spiegelman cannot represent the Holocaust or even his father’s story (or even his own), he can put us into an even more “realistic” account by refusing to take a posture that would suggest that he wasn’t part of the story that was being written. By offering an extra dimension of narrative where Spiegelman draws himself being impacted by the events of telling the story, he is able to take a middle-voiced stance that gives us an insight into both the representation and its problems of articulation. Perhaps it took something as devastating as the Holocaust to teach us that a different style was needed, a style that recognized beforehand its own futility.

4.2 The Middle Voice in Rhetoric: Hawhee, Vivian, and Vitanza

In Rhetoric and Composition, few have offered readings or arguments in support of the middle voice. Those who have discussed it at any length include Debra Hawhee, Bradford Vivian, Victor Vitanza, Diane Davis, Michelle Ballif, and Thomas Rickert. For the purposes of the following discussion, I have selected the voices of Hawhee, Vivian, and Vitanza. I have selected these three for two reasons: they have discussed the middle voice more than the others and that putting the three together yields the most interesting cross-section of perspectives of the middle voice.

In “Kairotic Encounters,” Hawhee reminds her readers that for the past twenty years “scholars in rhetoric and composition have begun to interrogate the notion of a

discrete, sovereign rhetor” (16). But giving up the belief in the individualized self is what has been most difficult for those working within composition studies. In fact, Hawhee quotes Lester Faigley who says that this is the area of postmodern theory “where composition studies has proven least receptive” (ibid). Consequently, Hawhee uses the middle voice to put forward a concept of subjectivity that situates the rhetor at the kairic moment of discourse, fluidly located between self and world. This kairic moment recognizes that discourse always begins at the middle place between the two, and that even the concept of a “beginning” is no more than a convenient construct of what goes first in an order (17). Thus, any kairic middle that stands in the beginning is a cutting into all of what could be said. Hawhee goes on to present the image of the god *Kairos*, depicted holding a scale with one hand and balancing it with a large razor blade in the other. Hawhee explains that the scales are for measuring, the razor for cutting what has been measured.

The god himself, Hawhee notes, stands with an athletic posture, a posture that emphasizes that he signifies a readiness towards movement and action, ready to trounce upon any presented opportunity. The seat of rhetorical invention exists neither in the self nor in the world but in the interaction between the two. Hawhee writes: “The movements and betweenness of *kairos* necessitate a move away from a privileging of design or preformulated principles. . . . Kairotic impulses can therefore be habituated or intuitive—even bodily—and are not limited to a seat of reason or conscious adherence to a set of precepts” (24-25). Hence, the athletic posture of the god is appropriate, for it indicates a subjectivity that recognizes that its main modality is improvisational. “The

god *kairos* stands as a figure of intervention insofar as *kairos* mediates—or goes ‘between’—the outside of the ‘self,” i.e., the nodes where the ‘self’ encounters the world, and the discourse or the ‘other’ that the self encounters” (25).

Like Hawhee, Bradford Vivian in *Being Made Strange* is also interested in moving beyond binary constructions and an understanding of the human subject as autonomous, but because his, as her, investigation does not challenge the literal, grammatical, and syntactical level of what it means to write and string words together in sentences, Vivian’s rhetoric remains practically though perhaps not conceptually within the same horizon from which he is attempting to move beyond. As Walter Jost has said, Vivian’s book is largely a repeat of the postmodern hits of the eighties and nineties as they have been applied to rhetoric,⁷ so extra detail is not needed here.

Vivian’s major thesis is that rhetoric’s failure to recognize the limits of representation keeps it “in a participatory relationship with a prejudiced understanding of speech, reason, and human being, regardless of its frequently heralded value and utility to democratic life” (24). Like Hawhee, Vivian hopes to accomplish an understanding of subjectivity that is neither humanistic nor socially constructed, but developed (through writing) in the middle between the two. Subjectivity in the middle voice (and reminiscent of my discussion of Barthes) is not constructed in the acts of speaking or listening. It is constructed in the act of writing, and through writing, a writer and a subject becomes an *ethos*. But Vivian’s middle voice is not literal. He is not thinking in terms of forms of expression that work in the middle ground, that work like Derrida’s *Glas*, N. Katherine Hayles’ *Writing Machines*, Erik Loyer’s *Chroma*, Greg

Ulmer's mystery, Mark Amerika's *Grammatron*, Art Spiegelman's *Maus*, or any other performances that change through practice what it means to read and write. As a metaphor for repressed excess, the middle voice for Vivian remains a conceptual, even an imaginative, goal. Vivian wants his readers to recognize the repressed excess of the middle voice but to continue to employ the print logic of writing that structures thinking according to the active/passive voices. In this sense, we must hold the middle voice of writing as a theoretical construct, recognize its values for a more liberal democracy (see Part III "Rhetoric and the Politics of Self and Other"), but cannot help but tacitly reject it as words, thoughts, and things are placed into patterns and organizations designed towards that repression. The middle voice thus productively becomes a metaphor for *thinking* beyond representation, dialectics, and modern notions of the subject, but unproductively remains within them so long as that thinking is tied to a logical and linear blueprint. In short, the directions to follow are impossible to carry out: hold to the theoretical and metaphorical concept of the middle voice while simultaneously holding the *line*.

4.3 Vitanza on Kairos

In contrast to Hawhee and Vivian is Victor Vitanza's discussion of *kairos*, and while he develops his thinking along different lines, when one reads Vitanza, one recognizes that his writing moves kairotically in the middle, performing the distribution of radical difference, changing through the act of writing what it means to read and write. Rather than summarizing Vitanza, I've chosen here to let his *style* speak for itself.

The following comes from Vitanza's discussion of the middle voice in *Negation, Subjectivity, and the History of Rhetoric*:

I want to suggest how the will to power would be both the middle voice and kairos, that is, the dispersive power. In a proto-Lacanian, but contrary way (after all, the tactic is 'self-overcoming'), Nietzsche takes us as infants to and, once again, through 'the mirror stage'; he denegates what Lacan has called the Symbolic (the cultural codes, laws, nomoi, such as Parmenidean, Platonic, Aristotelian contraries of male/female, active/passive). Holding us to the mirror, Nietzsche (neither mother or father) says:

And do you know that 'the world' is to me? Shall I show it to you in my mirror? This world: a monster of energy without beginning, without end. . . a sea of forces flowing and rushing together, eternally changing, eternally flooding back . . . blessing itself as that which must recur eternally, as a becoming that knows no satiety, no disgust, no weariness: this is my Dionysian world of eternally self-creating, the eternally self-destroying . . . my "beyond good and evil," without goal, unless the joy of the circle is itself a goal.

What better description of kairos! My view of kairos is not Platonic or Aristotelian; is not a traditional view (see Kinneavy 1986). I am not referring here to kairos as the theological notion of a "moment of crisis" or a "time filled with significance" (Kermode 1967, 46-49) but more so as many competing, contradictory voices. (The middle voice = dispersion.) It is what I have been processually speaking of from my

earlier discussion of the non-Kantian sublime to an aesthetics of excess. Kairos here is the nonpositive affirmative sublime. Which makes for Favorinus, the mad text of Marx, and Others—The sovereign subjects.

Kairos is often linked with to prepon (the fitting), which as George Kennedy points out, “was to become one of the ‘virtues’ of style” (1963, 67). What would be fitting would be well defined by way of the Attic style. What I am attempting to do, if not yet obvious, is to turn this virtue of style into wild (savage) virtuosity, just as Gorgias—a further reintensified Gorgias—through the so-called Asiatic-cum-schizo style, will have attempted. (Vitanza Negation 289-90)

Vitanza’s “wild (savage) virtuosity” through style does in writing what Vivian’s, Hawhee’s and most other commentators cannot do so long as they stick to styles that write tamely. Vitanza recognizes that the middle voice and *kairos*, so long as they are “irrational” and part of the history of rhetoric serve as a “super nova. Express!” to radically alter the literal and physical writing act (243). For Hawhee, we use the middle voice to think of “invention-in-the-middle,” to get a description of what the middle voice might mean and how it works as a locus to rethink subjectivity as starting not from the individualized self but between self and world. With Vivian, the middle serves as a metaphor for repressed excess that too simply can be reinscribed along the same lines of the philosophy/rhetoric debate made famous by people as diverse as Richard Lanham and Stanley Fish.⁸ Vivian wants the pre-Socratics and sophists, as do Lanham and Fish, to remain as the repressed other (they are the middle), but neither he nor

Hawhee offer a way of grappling with the middle aside from using rational discourse. No matter how many attempts and calls are made to think otherwise, so long as the writing machine functions according to grammar and structure, ignores paradox, follows the principles of non-contradiction and so on, the middle voice will be a ship in the distance for marooned islanders.

In the next chapter, I will pursue this discussion of the middle voice. In order to begin our gradual turn to matters of digital writing, it will be necessary to read the middle voice through a psychoanalytical lens.

CHAPTER 5

THE GENESIS OF THE DRIVES AND A CHILD IS BEING BEATEN

This second phase is the most important and the most momentous of all. But we may say that in a certain sense it never had a real existence. It is never remembered, it has never succeeded in becoming conscious. It is a construction of analysis, but it is no less a necessity on that account.

—Sigmund Freud

The best way into this epigraph by Freud is to recall Geoffrey Bennington's words that I closed with at the end of chapter three. Bennington writes: "despite a whole . . . tradition that would have the *kairos* be the *right* moment, it never comes at the right moment, or it is part of the *a priori* structure of the *kairos* to be thus figures only *after the event*. Following the structure that could no doubt be generalized to the most everyday experience of time, there is an effort before and after the event to integrate the event into the course of weeks and days, thus blunting or denying the cut of the event as such" ("Superanus" 34). My primary interest for this chapter is to develop a working understanding of this so-called "*a priori* structure of *kairos*" that is figured "only after the event."

Let me take a moment to explain why. So far in this investigation we have seen three examples of the middle voice in our discussions of Stein, Spiegelman, and Vitanza. By now, the issues involved with middle voice, *kairos*, *nomos*, memory, forgetting, and representation as they relate to rhetorical invention and human

subjectivity should have begun to make their mark on the reader. Now, it has come time to begin asking how the middle voice helps us think about rhetorical invention for new media. To get there, we will need to pass in the next two chapters through Freudian, Lacanian, and Žižekian territories.

This notion that Bennington refers to that says that *kairos* is only figured after the event and that *kairos* never comes at the right moment (or it only appears to do so in retrospect) is a quite important concept for a new media writing. I will come to argue that in order to have a productive relationship with the rhetoric of new media, it is important, even crucial, to begin to recognize and take advantage of the alternative temporalities that are opened by rhetoric and composition's recognition of the importance of the discursive modalities aside from writing in the strict sense. A beginning for a temporal opening has already been located in *kairos*, but so long as *kairos* is absorbed by *nomos* (as in the case of Heidegger, especially), then the "cut" of *kairos*, as Bennington says, is "blunted" or "denied." Nonlinear modes (sound, video, rich applications) offer the best possibility for writing in a way that is not bound to the *nomos* of linear writing, that keep the "cut" of the event sharp and forceful. These writings that would have an affect similar to the exemplars of Stein, Spiegelman, and Vitanza; writings that remained perpetually open to the kairic moment do not get absorbed by the *nomos* of the writing apparatus.

To understand the structure of this temporality, why the event only comes to be the event in retrospect, and why we cannot say with certainty that the event *exists*, it is

necessary to spend some time reading and working through some key psychoanalytical insights.

5.1 Genesis of the Drives through the Middle Phase

5.1.1 The Reflexive is (Not) the Middle Voice

In *Kaironomia*, Eric Charles White describes how Freud, in his 1915 essay "Instincts and Their Vicissitudes" was looking to provide a formulation of sadomasochism according to three grammatical categories of the passive, active, and reflexive voices. White's discussion proceeds by explaining that Freud proposed that sadism be seen as mastery, as an essentially "transitive relationship to the world" that corresponds to the active voice. Masochism, a desire to be dominated by the world, in turn, corresponds with the passive voice. The reflexive voice corresponds with a subject whose ego enters the level of libidinal desire and attempts to control his desires in order to pursue a "program of self-mastery" (White 47). Consequently, we get three subject positions that correspond to a simple grammar of desire that looks like this:

Sadism : active :: Masochism : passive :: Self mastery : reflexive

In *Life and Death in Psychoanalysis*, Jean Laplanche interrogates Freud's writings on sadomasochism to unfold the complexities of this sexual phenomenon and how they relate to Freud's discussion of the theory of drives in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (as well as in other works). Of considerable value is that Laplanche adds a fourth element to the structure of active, passive, and reflexive by noting a division within the reflexive dimension of sadomasochism by differentiating between the subject who dominates

himself (reflexive) and the subject who remains in a state of tension between self and world (middle). This distinction allows one to see why the reflexive, a form that is common enough to our own ears, should be understood as distinct from the middle.¹ By drawing upon Freud-Laplanche, I intend to present those necessary elements of the so-called structure of sadomasochism in order to bring into relief the difference between the middle and reflexive voices.

The difference between the reflexive and the middle voice is the difference of self-mastery as a form of sadism over the self versus the difference of an *internalization* of the tendencies to act both sadistically and masochistically. Once the subject becomes the masochistic object of his own sadistic aggression, he makes the turn to the reflexive action. The work now is a matter of explaining this function. I should note at the outset that there will be a particular density to the following discussion, a density that may mistakenly come across to some as being unnecessary. Believe me, I wish this were the case, for then I could simplify it for the reader. While I have attempted to be as clear as possible in the following discussion, I also consider it my obligation to offer a robust analysis. Granted, these two goals are not mutually exclusive, but as any seasoned Freudian reader knows, it is necessary to be attuned to the subtleties of his discourse. We are reading with Freud, after all.

5.1.2 Nirvana

The pleasure principle is commonly thought as the tendency to reduce feelings of unpleasure while increasing feelings of happiness, but it was not Freud's thought. Freud believed that pleasure had much more to do with decreasing feelings of

unpleasure than increasing pleasurable feelings. It is with this notion that Freud opens *Beyond*, and in *Civilization and Its Discontents*, Freud explains that pleasurable feelings are fleeting over time, so that "when any situation that is desired by the pleasure principle is prolonged, it only produces a feeling of *mild* contentment" (*Civilization* 23; my emphasis). Happiness is possible only as "an episodic phenomenon" (*ibid.*).

More important than pleasure is reducing unpleasure. Too much pleasure carries with it its own punishment and easily turns into its opposite. The reality principle works in the service of the pleasure principle by deferring gratification and reducing the stimuli of desire. Thus, obtaining pleasure by the reduction of excitation follows the trend towards Nirvana, what Freud also variously calls zero, inertia, and death, where the goal of the organism is to eliminate energy. In "The Origins of Psychoanalysis," Freud writes: "Since we have certain knowledge of a trend in psychical life towards *avoiding unpleasure*, we are tempted to identify that trend with the primary trend towards inertia. In that case *unpleasure* would coincide with a rise in the level of quantity or with a quantitative increase of pressure. . . . *Pleasure* would be the sensation of discharge" (173).

5.1.3 Life and Death drives

5.1.3.1 Constancy

This tendency towards zero manifests itself differently according to the life and death drives. For the former, inertia appears, following from G.T. Fechner's formulation, as *constancy*. Energy in the living organism can never cease to arise spontaneously. This manifestation of the drive for life is countered by the Nirvana

principle, where the organism desires pleasure through the reduction of energy. In between the two is the so-called "law of constancy." Constancy tends towards reducing excitation and establishing a constant flow of vital force, a flow that the presence of life *must*--because life is present--quantitatively hold above zero. Thus, the principle of constancy (as it applies to the life drive) is to be seen in contrast but also as a second order to the principle of zero, as seen in Figure 5.1.

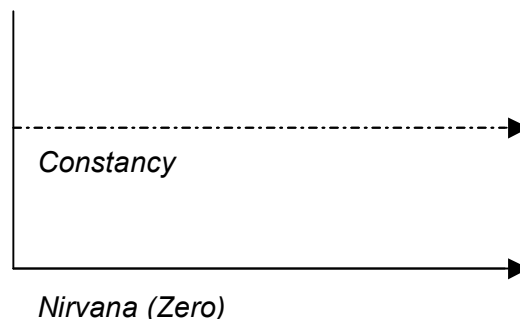


Fig. 5.1. Nirvana = Death.
Constancy tends towards death but is balanced by the energy of life.

On account of the "necessity of life," constancy is thus introduced as an "adaptation" to the governing, primary process of the tendency towards zero. Freud explains:

The neuronic system is consequently obliged to abandon its original trend towards inertia (that is, towards a reduction of its level of tension to zero). It must learn to tolerate a store of quantity sufficient to meet the demands for specific action. In so far as it does so, however, the same trend still persists in the modified form of a tendency to keep the quantity down, at least, so far as possible and avoid any increase in it (that is, to keep its level of tension constant).

In fact, Freud remarks that the nervous system attempts to reduce stimuli to the lowest possible level and says that it is an "apparatus which would even, if it were feasible,

maintain itself in an altogether unstimulated condition" ("Instincts" *SE* 14: 20; also in E.C. White 48).

Not only does desire *within* the organism seek its own annihilation but the *organism itself* desires a return to inorganic matter. E.C. White remarks upon the similarity between the death instinct and the law of constancy: "Obedient to a suicidal impulse, every desire intends its own death. What Freud will later refer to as the 'death instinct' is in fact nothing other than the desire to reestablish a condition fantasized as anterior to the disorienting excitement produced in the organism when it comes in contact with its surroundings" (48). In other words, all drives manifest a tendency towards inertia. Death is the ultimate goal, the direction towards which all trajectories move. Or, to quote Lacan's Heraclitean formulation, "To the bow [of archery] is given the name of life and its work is death" (*Four* 177).

5.1.3.2 The "Deal" between Life and Death

Of particular interest is the way that the death drive manifests itself in the living, persisting, as Freud says, in the modified form of constancy. Laplanche describes this operation of constancy as Freud's "carrying over of zero into life" with the intention of attempting to "*deduce* the living from it" (117 original emphasis; see *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*).

In "The Two Classes of Instincts," Freud recapitulates his argument from *Beyond* and shows how the struggle between death and life is both conflict and compromise.

We put forward the hypothesis of a death instinct, the task of which is to lead organic life back into the inanimate state; on the other hand, we supposed that Eros, by bringing about a more and more far-reaching combination of the particles into which living substance is dispersed, aims at complicating life and at the same time, of course, at preserving it. Acting in this way, both the instincts would be conservative in the strictest sense of the word, since both would be endeavoring to re-establish a state of things that was disturbed by the emergence of life. The emergence of life would thus be the cause of the continuance of life and also at the same time of the striving towards death; and life itself would be a conflict and compromise between the two trends. (*SE* 19:40-41)

In life, there exists a duel between life and death, but while working against each other they also work in coordination, such as in the physiological processes of anabolism and catabolism.

5.1.3.3 Aggression as a Manifestation of Death

For Freud, the way that death manifests itself in the living is in the form of aggression, and Laplanche correctly remarks that throughout Freud's works, aggression appears in various forms and places, in the Oedipal complex, in transference, in obsessional neurosis, in sadomasochistic perversion (85). In fact, at one point, Freud writes that *sadism* is the representative of the death drive.²

5.1.3.4 Channeling Aggression

But to strike the deal between life and death in the form of constancy, active aggression (the manifestation of the death drive) must be regulated so the organism can survive. Thus, "the libido has the task," Freud writes, of making the death drive "innocuous." To do this, the libido does two things: it channels one portion of the drive "outwards . . . towards objects in the external world," and places another portion of the

drive "in the service of the sexual function, where it has an important part to play." This second role is what Freud calls "sadism proper" (*SE* 19: 163).

But what is misleading here and potentially confusing is that Freud suggests that the nonsexual plane is oriented outwards (towards objects) and the sexual plane is oriented inwards (towards individual sexualization). This suggests a very tidy, clear-cut division of the way the death drive is channeled, as though a hard line were drawn between the sexual and nonsexual planes, a line that would suggest that when we speak about one we have entered a private room locked out from the other. To read Freud's discussions of the drives in this way would be far from the mark. Rather, there is a very intimate relationship between the sexual and nonsexual planes, so when Freud says "sadism proper," he means sadism in its sexual sense, but when he says simply "sadism" or "sadistic," he is not necessarily referring to sexual sadism but often to an aggression that is nonsexual (yet, as we will see, has ties to the sexual plane).

As Laplanche points out, the problem that leads to confusion is that Freud explicitly posits a distinction between the sexual and nonsexual phases "in every text in which he studies sadomasochism" but does not stabilize this opposition by "an absolute terminological distinction" (87). On some occasions, he allows the language between the two to slip, and on other occasions, he is obligated to make more rigorous distinctions by using turns of phrase such as "sadism properly speaking" or "masochism properly speaking" when referring to the field of sexuality (*ibid.*).

No doubt, a significant cause for this confusion results from the condition that speaking about the drives is very difficult, a difficulty inherent in the composition and

manifestation of the two “classes” of the drives (life and death). Not only do the two classes of drives struggle against each other; they also simultaneously support each other (as in the cases of anabolism and catabolism). Thus, the drives never manifest themselves in the living organism as pure. They are always already a mixture. Freud writes: "So far as the psycho-analytic field of ideas is concerned, we can only assume that a very extensive fusion and amalgamation, in varying proportions, of the two classes of instincts takes place, so that we never have to deal with pure life instincts of death instincts but only with mixtures of them in different amounts" ("EPM" *SE* 19: 164). Because of this mixture, it is quite difficult to isolate the life and death drives, so it follows that it is quite difficult to isolate their manifestations in either the sexual or non-sexual planes.³

Indeed, rather than attempting to separate the drives from each other, it is more helpful to see how the sexual and non-sexual drives *support* each other. Freud’s discussion of the middle voice is primarily oriented towards describing how the death drive manifests itself in the living organism through aggression and sadism. A good way to understand how this works is to regard how the field of sexuality is supported or “propped” by the non-sexual life drive. In *Three Essays Concerning Sexuality*, Freud explains the relationship between sexuality and feeding in the infant. Freud writes:

It is clear that the behaviour of a child who indulges in thumb-sucking is determined by a search for some pleasure which had already been experienced and is now remembered. In the simplest case he proceeds to find this satisfaction by sucking rhythmically at some part of the skin or mucous membrane. It is also easy to guess the occasions on which the child had his first experiences of the pleasure which he is now striving to renew. It was the child's first and most vital activity, his sucking at his

mother's breast, or substitutes for it, that must have familiarized him with this pleasure. The child's lips, in our view, behave like an erotogenic zone, and no doubt stimulation by the warm flow of milk is the cause of the pleasurable sensation. The satisfaction of the erotogenic zone is associated, the first instance, with the satisfaction of the need for nourishment. To begin with, sexual activity attaches itself to functions serving the purpose of self-preservation and does not become independent of them until later. (*SE* 7: 181-82)

The relationship between self-preservation and sexual activity, although mixed together, designates how one need supports the other. As Laplanche explains, propping, in German, *Anlehnung*--meaning, literally, "to find support" in something else, is usually understood in the psychoanalytical tradition as a subject leaning against an object such as a child finding support in the mother, but this understanding of the term misses the more rigorous meaning where it is not a matter of subject and object but is instead a leaning *of the drive*. Laplanche writes:

The phenomenon Freud describes is a leaning *of the drive*, the fact that emergent sexuality attaches itself to and is propped upon another process which is both similar and profoundly divergent: the sexual drive is propped upon a nonsexual, vital function, or, as Freud formulates it in terms which defy all additional commentary, upon a "bodily function essential to life" (16).

The relationship between the vital function and the sexual function are clearly apprehended and easily explainable in the oral drive, where the goal of satisfying hunger by sucking the breast simultaneously becomes the process of sexual stimulation by the lips, tongue, nipple, and flow of milk. The non-sexual vital drive props or supports the sexual drive to the extent that it "is barely possible to distinguish the difference" (Laplanche 17).

5.1.4 “Instincts” and their Vicissitudes

Establishing the relationship between the non-sexual and sexual phases will allow us to better appreciate Freud’s explanation of the changes of the drives in his 1915 essay “Instincts and Their Vicissitudes.”⁴ To illustrate the changes, Freud chooses two pairs of opposites: sadism-masochism and voyeurism (scopophilia)-exhibitionism. To illustrate these changes, Freud puts forth the following formula that is visually represented in figure 5.2.

- (a) Sadism consists in the exercise of violence or power upon some other person as object.
- (b) This object is given up and replaced by the subject's self. With the turning round upon the self the change from an active to a passive instinctual aim is also effected.
- (c) An extraneous person is once more sought as object; this person, in consequence of the alteration which has taken place in the instinctual aim, has to take over the role of subject. (*SE* 14: 127)⁵

Since the purpose of the essay is to explain the changes of the drives, Freud presents a chronological schema. Sadism is the representative of the death drive, and it occupies the first position. There is then the middle position and a transformation from sadism to masochism where the self as sadist and masochist occupies both positions simultaneously. In the third position, the self becomes object, and seeks someone or something to play the role of sadist.

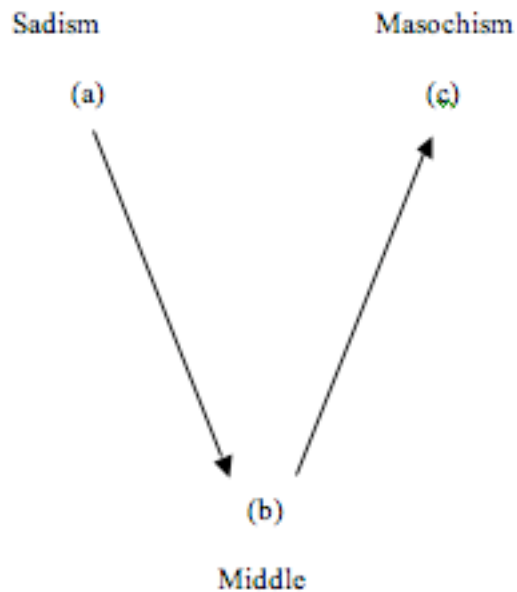


Fig. 5.2 Turning Around.

All of the change of the drive occurs at stage (b) in two principle movements. First, the object of aggression is abandoned and in place of that object, the subject substitutes itself. Sadistic pleasure over another now becomes sadistic pleasure over one's self. Next, the subject "turns round on itself" and pleasure comes not from inflicting pain but from receiving it. This condition leads for the need of another substitution, this time to find an object to play the role of subject.

Ostensibly, point (a), the sadistic position, is of utmost importance, since Freud seems to attribute the development of masochism from sadism where sadism is the manifestation of the death drive. Freud explicitly states that the existence of a "more direct masochistic satisfaction is highly doubtful" and that "a primary masochism, not derived from sadism in the manner I have described, seems not be met with" (*SE* 14:

128). However, in a footnote appended to this last statement added in 1924, Freud states that in "EPM," he expresses an opposite view, that a primary masochism *is* at work.

There is more here than meets the eye. We will be able to accept neither of these formulations. Before moving to "EPM," it's necessary to draw attention to the following passage from "ITV." In this passage, Freud offers an explanation for the primacy of sadism.

Our view of sadism is further prejudiced by the circumstance that this instinct . . . seems to strive towards the accomplishment of a quite special aim--not only to humiliate and master, but, in addition, to inflict pains. Psycho-analysis would appear to show that the infliction of pain plays no part among the original purposive actions of the instinct. A sadistic child takes no account of whether or not he inflicts pains, nor does he intend to do so. But when the transformation into masochism has taken place, the pains are very well fitted to provide a passive masochistic aim; for we have every reason to believe that sensations of pain, like other unpleasurable sensations, trench upon sexual excitation and produce a pleasurable condition, for the sake of which the subject will even willingly experience the unpleasure of pain. When once feeling pains has become a masochistic aim, the sadistic aim of *causing* pains can arise also, retrogressively; for while these pains are being inflicted on other people, they are enjoyed masochistically by the subject through his identification of himself with the suffering object. In both cases, of course, it is not the pain itself which is enjoyed, but the accompanying sexual excitation--so that this can be done especially conveniently from the sadistic position. The enjoyment of pain would thus be an aim which was originally masochistic, but which can only become an instinctual aim is someone who was originally sadistic. (*SE* 14: 128-29)

Clearly, fantasy is at work in both positions so that enjoyment can be taken metonymically through association with the inverse position. However, what is most important in this passage is the absence of pain at point (a). Since pain is a signifier for sexual pleasure, the absence of pain in the original position indicates that when Freud names that original position "sadism," something else than sexual sadism is at work. In

addition, the label "sadistic child" must be understood in terms that address this lack.

Laplanche shows a productive way of reading Freud here:

Here, we are obliged to substitute, for the "sadistic child," the "aggressive child." For the child is alleged to destroy what he finds in his path, without that destruction in itself being what is intended, nor for that matter the subjectivity of the other (i.e., his pain), and even less [or not at all] the pleasure discovered in the other's pain. It is of little concern to us, moreover, whether this description of the child, as a simple force of nature, seeking to accomplish its aims and breaking everything in its way, is the description of an actual--however fleeting--stage, or the positing of an ideal moment: in any event, what is presented is an ideal genesis. (90)

Laplanche's ending point that we have little interest in Freud's narrative of development is worth noting, and leads to the question of how to understand Laplanche's statement "ideal genesis." By *ideal* nothing other is meant than pure or original; by genesis, a manifestation of the death drive that is a sexual innocence connected with death, a violence without sex, a violence that will be seen as creative.

Where in "ITV," Freud argues for the primacy of sadism, in "EPM," he appears to set forth a primary masochism, but in the following passage, we find a similar ambiguity between sex and death. At the point where Freud seems to postulate at primary masochism, he first describes the death instinct:

In (multicellular) organisms the libido meets the instinct of death, or destruction, which is dominant in them and which seeks to disintegrate the cellular organism and to conduct each separate unicellular organism . . . into a state of inorganic stability.

He then explains the diffusion of the death instinct into separate steps. The first step is hetero-aggression:

The libido has the task of making the destroying instinct innocuous, and it fulfils the task by diverting that instinct to a great extent outwards—

soon with the help of a special organic system, the muscular apparatus. The instinct is then called the destructive instinct, the instinct for mastery, or the will to power.

The second step is sexual and also a second aggression:

A portion of the instinct is placed directly in the service of the sexual function, where it has an important part to play. This is sadism proper.

The third step is masochism:

Another portion does not share in this transposition outwards; it remains inside the organism and, with the help of accompanying sexual excitation described above, becomes libidinally bound there. It is in this portion that we have to recognize the original, erotogenic masochism. (*SE* 19:163-64)

The question we are faced with is how to organize these movements. In "ITV," Freud explained that masochism derives from sadism and it is here that he posits a primary masochism. On first look, it would appear that Freud reverses his thought but that would be too severe an under-reading.

Freud also posits in "ITV" the relationship between voyeurism and exhibitionism indicates a difference of the vicissitudes of these drives with sadomasochistic drives. The changes in the drives proceed in the same manner as in Figure 5.3. These are (a) active looking, (b) giving up the object being looked at and substituting a part of one's own body along with a turning round and transformation to passivity, and (c) finding a new object of the drive to play the role of the subject of the act. While this structure of the vicissitudes remains the same, an important difference is at stake. Freud writes:

Here, too, it can hardly be doubted that the active aim appears before the passive, that looking precedes being looked at. But there is an important

divergence from what happens in the case of sadism, in that we can recognize in the case of the scopophilic instinct a yet earlier stage than that described as (a). (*SE* 14: 130)

The beginning of the activity with voyeurism (active form) does not begin with an active seeking of a sexual object as it does in the sadism-masochism pair; it is auto-erotic. The active search follows a primary reflexive, middle phase. The object is first part of one's own body. Only afterwards, "led by a process of comparison" is this object exchanged for an "analogous part of someone else's body--stage (a)" (*SE* 14: 130).

Freud writes: "This preliminary stage is interesting because it is the source of *both* the situations represented in the resulting pair of opposites [active and passive]" (*ibid.*; original emphasis). Scopophilia-exhibitionism, then follows a different pattern than what we postulated in Figure 5.2. The active form comes before the middle and the passive, but there is a primary reflexive stage that is the source for both the active and the passive forms. Laplanche's diagram in Figure 5.3 updates our previous version and shows this configuration at work.

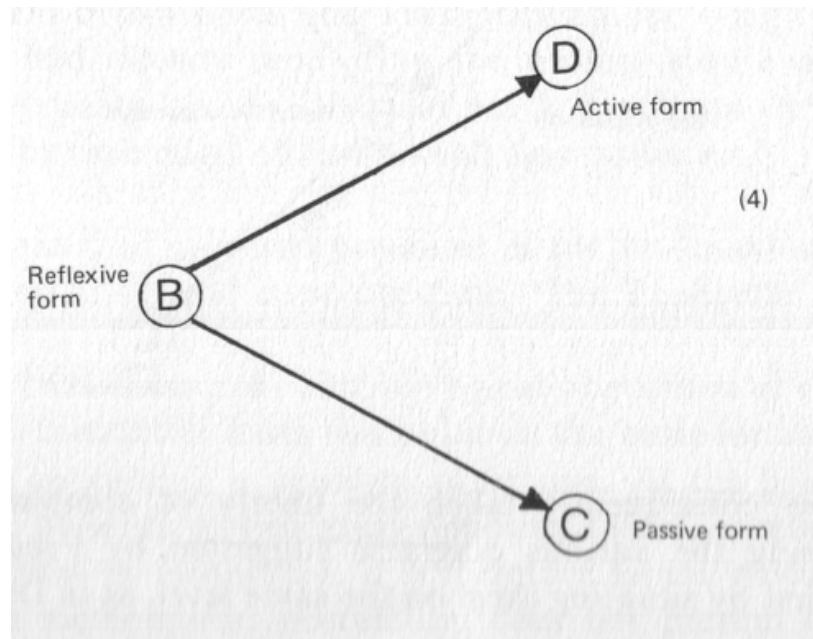


Figure 5.3. Reflexive Masochism. Source: Laplanche 93.

Concerning whether a similar preliminary stage is at work in sadism, Freud is ambiguous. He says at first that it is absent but then says "it might not be altogether unreasonable" and such a construction could be made on the level of self domination or mastery, beginning with the physiological process of the "the child's efforts to gain control over his own limbs" (*SE* 14: 130).

But it is at this stage that we would draw a distinction between the reflexive as a form of self-mastery and the middle. Eric C. White reads self-mastery in the sadism-masochism axis as a temporary moment that has more to do with easing the subject from the aggravation of stimuli than it does with the possible genesis of the new forms of passive and active. For White, the major distinction to be made between the reflexive and the middle is just this difference, that on the one hand, the reflexive position, where

one does something to oneself, carries no suggestion of the possibility of the genesis of desire whereas the middle opens with and towards desire and the substitutions of new objects. It is at stage (b) in the sadism-masochism scheme where the subject is the object of one's aggression, is where, for White, "mastery of the world would equivalent to self-mastery." It is only at this stage where a "lasting condition of autonomy and stability [from the influence of desire] can be achieved" (50). White writes:

According to Freud, the intermediate step in his derivation of sadomasochism--grammatically, the "reflexive middle voice"--comprises such a coincidence. Embodying the dual character of the death instinct, at once active and passive, the reflexive middle voice can be characterized as a culminating strategy for the immobilization of desire. It provides the means, as it were, for finally freeing the self from the "shock of the new," from the burden of inventing an original response to the world on the spur of the moment. By seizing hold of itself as definitive object of desire, the subject would at last be able to freeze the meaning of the world in a moment of lasting comprehension, and so remove the possibility of further desiring movement. (ibid.)

It will be recalled that Freud's description of the reflexive middle contains several movements, not simply the self substituting its self as object (as in the case of sadomasochism.) Immediately after the active position and immediately prior to the masochistic position, several things occur: 1) the object is abandoned, 2) the self substitutes itself as object, 3) the subject turns round on itself. This turning round is a reversal in the direction of the drive, and 4) the self as object is abandoned and new object is sought. Within these four movements, the only one that can be properly called reflexive is the second, where the self substitutes itself as object. It is for this reason that White says that the "middle voice can be understood as a possibility of movement among active, passive, and reflexive forms. To put it another way, as active and passive

are contained within the reflexive, so the reflexive would comprise a relative moment within the middle" (52). Interestingly, however, pleasure, at the reflexive stage, is still obtained from the sadistic position, although the action is itself properly reflexive. The turning round, where the pleasure is enjoyed through associating pleasurable feelings from the opposite position, keeps both stages in a state of *fantasmatic internalization*, or what Laplanche calls a state of "coalescence." Laplanche notes that the confusion of the reflexive and middle is also a confusion of two distinct grammatical categories:

The reflexive form distinguishes more clearly the subject and the object of the action, allowing the fantasized exchanges of position to take place. [when the sadist identifies with the intensity of the masochist's suffering, and the masochist fantasmatically appropriates the sadist's illusion of control.] In the 'middle' form, the terms of the fantasy remain in something of a state of coalescence.
(Laplanche 143; E.C. White 51; White's interpolation)

Having "passed through" the reflexive stage, pleasure is obtainable from both the passive and active positions and the reflexive can be re-experienced from either position. Hence, the reflexive allows for exchanges to take place between passive and active and functions as a dialectical catalyst. The middle, on the other hand, can be distinguished not only by holding both possibilities open but by psychic fantasmaticization. Laplanche uses the term "interiority" to indicate the psychic apprehension of the suffering object that is *introjected, fantasized, remade inside oneself, and causes one to punish oneself* (97). It is on the level of psychic interiority that allows the introjection of the object and the "generator of autoerotic excitation" (ibid.).

This generator begins with fantasizing the experience of the other. As such, the middle is something quite different from an attempt at self mastery and homeostasis (i.e. gaining control of one's limbs), a condition that is pure impossibility. White writes: "Freud suggests, however, that even this strategy for putting an end to the movement of desire represents, finally, a futile gesture. The subject's efforts at self enclosure inevitably will be disrupted, he says, because instinctual stimuli 'maintain an incessant and unavoidable afflux of stimulation' (50; Freud *SE* 14: 120).

In other words, the satisfaction of the drive, as indicated simply by the fact that drives undergo vicissitudes (as opposed to remaining pure instincts), is always already temporary as new stimulations from the unconscious arise.

Returning to the voyeurism-exhibitionism pair, we see a better example of the middle, fantasmatic stage at work moreso than the reflexive, self-mastery stage at the preliminary scene. The act of looking at a part of one's own body does not indicate a position of self mastery as does a physiological process but instead indicates an opening towards a new stimulus, of either looking at or being seen. The question of whether there is an analogously primal middle stage in the sadism-masochism pair fails to notice that this is a false question. In fact, the question of origins, of whether sadism comes first and the middle stage follows from it or whether the middle stage comes first and the active and passive phases thereby follow, is not an essential concern. What is of concern, however, is the *power* involved in the Freudian scheme of the middle voice as a veritable generator for the field of sexuality.

It will be remembered that the question facing us after briefly discussing "EPM," was how to organize the various vicissitudes after Freud's description that the death drive followed the three movements of 1) non-sexual hetero-aggression, 2) sadism, and 3) erotogenic (primary) masochism. It was at this stage where Freud posited a primary masochism that seemed to contradict his "ITV" statement that "a primary masochism seems not to have been me with." The Laplanchean thread in this argument has been suggesting all along, however, that there is no reason to contrast primary sadism with primary masochism.

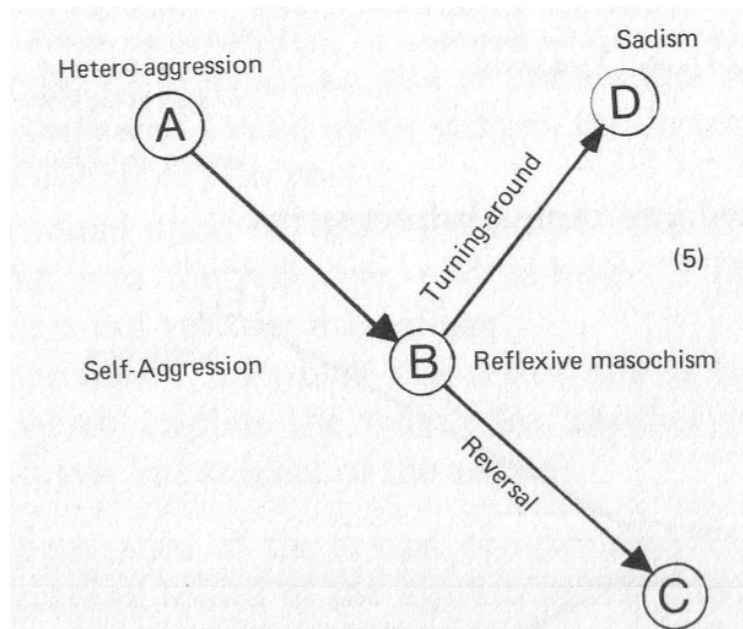


Figure 5.4. Propping. Source: Laplanche 94.

This opposition should not be made because the death drive intervenes at this stage to make a mockery of any such construction. While we have no indication of the role of the death drive in the voyeurism-exhibitionism pair, sadomasochism is the

closest *sexual* representative to this drive. The diffusion of this drive is actively oriented towards objects in the world that is *non-sexual*, hetero-aggression. In addition, there is no reason to oppose the middle phase to the aggressive phase so long as we see that they work together to create the field of sexuality.

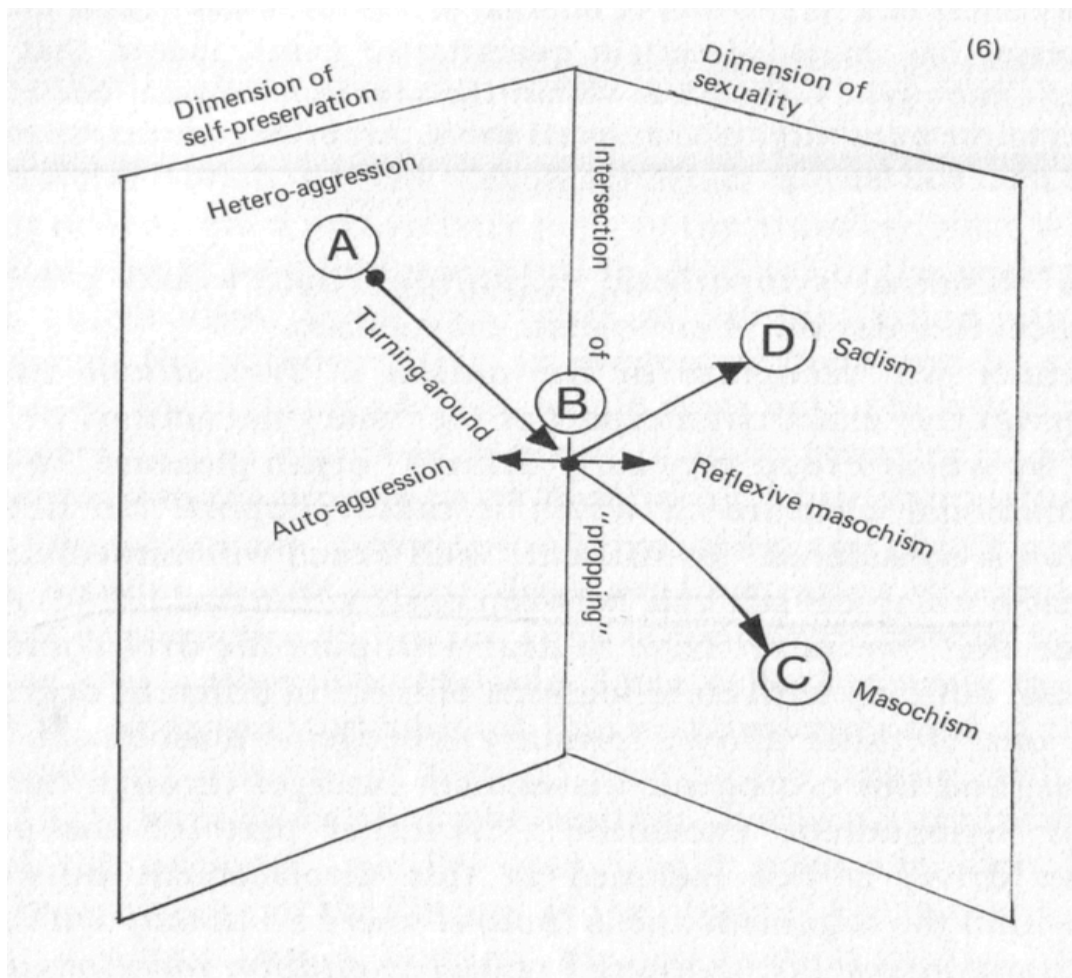


Figure 5.5. Sexual Field. Source: Laplanche 95.

This discussion has established the important point that the middle voice should not be confused with the reflexive position, at least according to the understanding that the reflexive is a matter of the self establishing domination over oneself. Yet the reflexive need not be purely a matter of domination. Almost any action that is typically associated with the reflexive function closes off not only the subject's relationship to the other but also closes off the possibility of the self seeing itself as other. If I warm myself, I am both subject of the action and recipient of the action. In the act of "turning round," however, I see myself from another position. I occupy the position I am in and simultaneously occupy the position of the other. It is quite a different matter to warm oneself (reflexive) than it is to *see* oneself warming oneself (middle), and that position is itself still a step removed Paul Valéry's statement so intriguing to Lacan in Seminar XI: "I saw myself seeing myself" (*Four* 74).

Freud makes a distinction between sado-masochism and voyeurism-exhibitionism in "ITV" and is ambiguous as to whether sado-masochism can also be constructed from the middle phase. Laplanche provides us with a framework, grounded on the thesis of *propping*, that determines that the sexual drives emerge from the middle phase's transposition and diffusion of the hetero-aggressive drive and simultaneous creation of the field of sexuality. Concerning Figures 5.4 and 5.5, Laplanche writes: "All of this might be expressed by saying that the transition from A to B is located in the *genesis* of sexuality, whereas the subsequent transformations, starting from B, represent the *vicissitudes* of sexuality" (94; original emphasis). It should be clear that

the middle voice, from Laplanche's perspective, does nothing less than generate sexuality.

The line of argumentation we have been following has one serious limitation, however. The strongest point that has been made has been reliant on the thesis of propping that allowed for us to see the generative power of the middle phase, but in so doing, we have situated the middle phase in Freud's theory of biological development and removed it from the field of language. In the next section, we will continue the discussion of the middle voice but incorporate a perspective that will allow us to see that, strictly speaking, the middle voice is a fantasmatic construction, and, as such, is intimately linked to the Lacanian Real.

5.2 A Child is Being Beaten

The discussion of sadism and masochism has a clinical parallel in Freud's "A Child is Being Beaten." Laplanche uses the discussion in order to determine the generative power of the middle voice. More specifically, Laplanche's main concern is whether the middle voice or its analogue "the subject's turning round" can be seen as the necessary stage for the genesis of sexuality. In fact, in Laplanche's final chapter, he will concern himself with whether the middle voice holds the power for the genesis of the death drive. I can not deny that I find Laplanche's discussions highly suggestive of the generative possibilities of the middle voice, and I am delighted that he has read Freud along these lines.

In order to make such a turning or opening within the field of rhetoric-composition, it will be necessary to describe some of the major debates with narrativity,

embodiment, and posthumanism that have recently concerned media theorists. One of these major debates is the role of informatics as a language system that is disconnected from referentiality and meaning. We will arrive at a position that argues for the need to advocate a way of writing and invention that emphasizes the remainder that is left after both meaning and narrativity have been de-emphasized from literacy practices. To do this, we (I) have no choice but to operate by paradox; academic discourse operates by these narratological and interpretive means to which I cannot not be bound.⁶ More essentially, I will be making an argument that attempts to disrupt the way in which the posthuman argument has been framed, that is, according to the following set of dualisms: presence/absence, pattern/randomness, information/meaning, nonlinearity/narrative, disembodiment/embodiment. Oscillating between all of these pairs is something human and something machine. For some time, people such as Donna Haraway (but many others I will skip over for now), have attempted to erase these boundaries and the older framework following from Heidegger that *Dasein* is a being-in-the-world that eliminates the separation between world and human being has been applied to show that there never was a gap between human and world and, as such, there should be no gap between human and machine.⁷ We cannot really begin to think how we can write for this world (which is us) if we don't know what we (which is the world) are dealing with. The separation between being and world is a quite useful and *soothing* idea, one that allows us to think "I am in here" – in my space and in my body – while "you are out there" – in the network and the flow of information. These are problems that seemingly have little to do with Freud's "A Child is Being Beaten," but

my hope here is to pinpoint within Freud's essay a peculiar non-subjective moment that will carry us towards them. This non-subjective moment which is also the construction of repressed fantasy situates us within the Lacanian Real and an area of what is known in Lacanian circles, following from avant Andre Breton, as "acephalous knowledge," or, a knowledge that cannot be said to be organized, or to use analogous terms from various schools, "oedipalized" (psychoanalysis), "coded" (semiotics), "territorialized" (schizoanalysis), or even "libidinal" (all of the above). In short, the question that faces us – you and I – is how "A Child is Being Beaten" affords us the opportunity to enter into the Lacanian real from the beginnings of the middle voice we have introduced concerning sado-masochism. Once we enter, to quote Jean Baudrillard, "the desert of the real," we can set our sails into the mysteries of mediality. But first, the *traversing of the fantasy*.

5.2.1 The Middle Voice as a Construction of Fantasy

It is this particular essay in which Freud tells us that the memory of being beaten by the father can never be said to have existed for the four women and two men that were the subjects of his case study. In typical cases, it is repressed memories that are released through the course of analysis. Here, the concern is not so much with memory as it is with fantasy – indeed, a masturbatory fantasy – of being beaten by the father! From a purely psychoanalytical point of view, it is a marvelous case study, and Laplanche takes it up to find out how repressed fantasy can be the genesis of sexuality.

Laplanche describes "A Child is Being Beaten" as a veritable performance of the theoretical issues worked out in Freud's discussion of sadomasochism analyzed

above. For Laplanche, as E.C. White also notes, the notion of the “reflexive turning around” holds much inventive possibility. Without discussing the specific details, Laplanche uses this section of his analysis in order to solve a theoretical dilemma raised in the above discussion. That is, whether the privilege that Freud affords the middle voice in his discussion of the vicissitudes of voyeurism-exhibitionism can be applied as well to the vicissitudes of sadism-masochism. In the former situation, we said with Freud, that the voyeuristic drive enters by way of substitution where upon the subject looking at his own sexual organ arises the drive to substitute another’s object for one’s own. In this case, the active voice as well as the passive arise *out of* the middle or self-reflexive moment.

Here it is time for us to diverge from Laplanche’s discussion. Up until now, we have been concerned with Laplanche’s analysis as means rather than ends. American academicism, as Bruce Fink experienced while writing his book on Lacan, is frequently concerned with exposing the limitations and imposing a critique on various authors. Laplanche’s discussion of sexuation in *Life and Death in Psychoanalysis* often falls prey to criticism of biological determinism because Laplanche is such a close reader of Freud’s thought and often traffics in the same vocabularies. While Laplanche, as Sherry Turkle notes, was on the Freudian side of the scandal between the Freudians and Lacanians, he nonetheless took important influences from Lacan that show through in his readings of Freud. It is not without Lacan’s revisiting of the work of Jacobson’s discussions of metaphor and metonymy that Laplanche would be able to fuse together these different starting points of the drive. Thus, while it is promising to read the middle

voice along with Laplanche in a way that finds it as a possible *source* for the genesis of sexuation, doing so has two major limitations: it mires us in a quasi-scientific theories and keeps us even from discussing things in terms of language and it would severely restrict the possibility of moving from language to cybernetics and mediality.

Nonetheless, in our departure from Laplanche, two things that we might “steal away” present themselves as noteworthy. The former, we have already mentioned and that is Laplanche’s (diluted Lacanian) discussion of metonymy. The second is the creation of fantasy.

It happens to turn out that in all of this discussion of the middle voice what appears most important is not Barthes’ description of the intransitivity of writing but instead his performance of the middle voice in *S/Z*, a performance that can be found echoed in Vitanza’s discussion of *kairos* in chapter four, nor is it the self-reflexivity of gaining control of one’s self by a baby gaining control of one’s limbs or one pulling oneself up by one’s bootstraps or a dancer lifting herself off the floor by grabbing her own hair. Instead, on the verge of the discussion at hand, we would have to say that *all* of these descriptions of reflexivity are only moments within a larger system, the surface of which has just begun to itch. Instead, it is *fantasy* that concerns the middle voice most intimately since it is fantasy that links the Lacanian real to the symbolic.

Let me here explain the two points from Laplanche that are most useful. In his discussion of “A Child is Being Beaten,” Laplanche says that it here where the clinical proof the vicissitudes of the sadomasochistic drive, “or perhaps even its genesis” can be encountered (97). Freud posits the three phases of evolution in the beating fantasy:

1. My father is beating the child whom I hate.
2. I am being beaten by my father.
3. A child is being beaten. (in Laplanche 98).

First, to avoid confusion, let's put forth Freud's correspondences to the sadomasochistic drive. The first phase loosely corresponds with the aggressive drive located on the non sexual plane (see figure 5.6), but Freud takes pains to avoid describing the fantasy as sadistic but that does not mean that it is *not* sadistic. Freud writes:

As is well known, all the signs on which we are accustomed to base our distinctions tend to lose their clarity as we come nearer to the source. So perhaps we may say in terms recalling the prophecy made by the Three Witches to Banquo: "Not clearly sexual, not in itself sadistic, but yet the stuff from which both will later come." In any case, however, there is no ground for suspecting that in this first phase the phantasy is already at the service of an excitation which involves the genitals and finds its outlet in a masturbatory act. (*SE* 17: 187)

Laplanche reminds us that who is doing the beating is of little significance. The ego seeks to destroy whatever obstacle is in its way, and it matters little whether it is done directly by the subject or another person (101).

The second stage, "I am being beaten by my father," is clearly masochistic. In fact, Freud says that here "for the first time we have the essence of masochism" (*SE* 17: 189). In the third stage, "A child is being beaten," Freud's clinical observations locate the analysand as an outside observer, a position that has the *form* of sadism but the satisfaction is masochistic. Freud explains:

Here the child who produces the phantasy appears almost as a spectator, while the father persists in the shape of a teacher or some other person in authority. The phantasy, which now resembles that of the first phase, seems to have become sadistic once more. It appears as though in the phrase, "My father is beating the child, he loves only me," [another way

of putting the first phase] the stress has been shifted back on to the first part after the second part has undergone repression. But only in the *form* of this phantasy is sadistic; the satisfaction which is derived is masochistic. Its significance lies in the fact that it has taken over the libidinal cathexis of the repressed portion and at the same time the sense of guilt which is attached to the content of that portion. All of the many unspecified children who are being beaten by the teacher are, after all, nothing more than substitutes for the child itself. (ibid. 197).

Laplanche makes four important points: 1) the subject does not have to be in the role of aggressor for the ego to intervene in a sort of quasi-sadism as in the first position (phases 1 and 3), 2) the Oedipus complex Freud discusses in this text, if the changes of the fantasy are followed chronologically, indicate that the Oedipus complex comes before the genesis of sexuality (the second phase). This means for Laplanche that propping does not act solely as a catalyst that brings together self preservation with the libido, indicating that newly formed sexuality takes the life drive as its point of departure. Instead, rather than being anchored by self preservation, propping functions as a conductor whose sole purpose seems to be the genesis of sexuality. Laplanche writes: “. . . newly formed sexuality seems able to take as its point of departure *absolutely anything*” (101). 3) This clinical example allowed Freud to study repression from various points of view. Repression and regression function in a way that show that the object of satisfaction is never to be obtained. As in the case of voyeurism-exhibitionism, the object is substituted by another object so that satisfaction is not obtained by the satisfaction of reaching one's aim (*ziel*) but through the substitution of another object, metonymically acting as a stand in. Throughout all the phases of “A Child is Being Beaten,” the object is continually substituted by another object. As in the

case of the sadomasochism scheme, aggression is the first movement, followed by a turning round on the subject's own self, and then sadism. 4) The key moment is the process of turning round in the second (masochistic) stage because it is here that a link is made between the unconscious and fantasy.

Of these four points, the first is essential insofar as we recognize the process of substitution, whether in the name of the father or of the son or daughter. The second suggests the power of the middle voice to construct sexuality, an idea that has been elaborated by Eric C. White in *Kaironomia*.⁸ While this second point is fruitful for those concerned with the genesis of sexuality, I am going to move in a direction that Laplanche suggests but one that remains underdeveloped. It will be this point of departure, namely, the middle voice as a construction of fantasy, that will provide us the opportunity to move into a Lacanian framework and cybernetics. To do this, we will begin by concentrating of Laplanche's third and fourth points.

Laplanche's fourth point is that the second phase must be constructed in the course of analysis. The key comes from the following Freudian statement. Concerning the second stage of the fantasy where the child substitutes itself in the beating, Freud writes:

Profound transformations have taken place between this first phase and the next. It is true that the person beating remains the same (that is, the father); but the child who is beaten has changed into another one and is now invariably the child producing the phantasy. . . . This second phase is the most important and the most momentous of all. *But we may say of it in a certain sense that it has never had a real existence. It is never remembered, it has never succeeded in becoming conscious. It is a construction of analysis. . . .* (SE 17: 185; my emphasis)

Laplanche's main argument is concerned with showing that the reflexive turning round occurs at this stage, ascribing to the middle voice a power of invention that brings into being, *stemming from the unconscious*, an entire sexual complex. He writes: "It may be seen that it is in the transition to phase 2 that *the fantasy, the unconscious, and sexuality*, in the form of *masochistic excitation* together emerge in a single movement" (100). Most essential is that the statement "I am being beaten by my father" is not a repressed memory that, like the first and the third statements, resurface in the course of analysis. Instead, the memory of being beaten by the father is not repressed. *It is not a memory at all*. It is instead the *fantasy* of the repressed memory, and it is this fantasy that explains the process of sublimation in the third stage. At the same time, this memory that doesn't exist drags the original memories with it into the unconscious (stages 1 and 3) which are released in analysis. The fantasy, alternatively, is *constructed*. It is this analytical reconstruction of something that cannot, in the strictest and most logical sense, be said to have previously existed with which we find our stance to take a new departure.

CHAPTER 6

RETROACTION; OR, THE CUT OF THE EVENT

How does the previous chapter assist us in understanding rhetorical invention for new media? In the discussion of the middle voice in relation to the Holocaust in chapter four, I made the claim that the middle voice could change the way we think about writing (and hence prepare us for invention for new media) only if the middle voice was taken literally and was put into practice in a way similar to Stein, Spiegelman, or Vitanza. I claimed that unless there was an absolute need, as in the case of the Holocaust, it would be likely that the middle voice (while providing scholars [such as Hawhee and Vivian] something to advocate) would have little consequence in changing the way we string words together on the page. The irony is that claims for the middle voice are often oriented not towards writing but towards subjectivity, that these arguments are more concerned with how the middle voice can be used as a metaphor for thinking about how the self is situated in the middle between the active and passive stances (Hawhee) or how the self is created as an ethos in the course of writing (Vivian). (We are both doers and receivers, producers and consumers, private and public, individual and world.) But unless you are writing like Stein, Spiegelman, or Vitanza, your writing itself strips you of your mask. You cheer, “write in the middle voice!” but that is not what you do.¹ Grammar won’t allow it.

Neither will the signifier. In Seminar XI, Jacques Lacan reminds us that when we ask what the signifier represents, it is not that which represents “another subject” but “another signifier” (*Four* 198). Lacan gives the example of a stone covered with hieroglyphics. The person who finds it knows without a doubt that somebody scribed the marks, and she knows just as well that those marks are not addressed to her since they cannot be read. But she also knows that these marks relate to one another, constituting a “field” that belongs to the “Other.” What takes primacy cannot be the subject, for, as Lacan writes, “the subject is born as the signifier emerges in the field of the Other.” That subject may exist as an object—as a stone or a piece of wood. As a biological machine that subject may also even have agency, the kind that belongs to an animal (no matter if its actions may appear more rational) but that subject only has agency (in the usual [humanistic] sense of understanding that term) through the “field of the Other.” “But,” Lacan writes, “by this very fact, this subject—which, was previously nothing if not a subject coming into being [through the field of the Other]—solidifies into a signifier” (199). There was no one who knew better than Lacan that the signifier gives birth to the subject.

In actual fact, the discussion between grammar and the signifier cannot be separated. For Lacan, there is neither subject nor agent without the field of the Other, and that field follows a grammar, a grammar that must be adopted as part of the constitution of the field itself. Insofar as the middle voice is said to oppose (or compromise) this grammar, it attempts to thwart the discursive formation of subjectivity, keeping the subject in a state of coalescence and tension between himself

and world and denying the idealism that results when the two are separated. The only way to write in the middle voice is to find an innovative way of expression that purposefully *fails* to succumb to, and thereby succeed, the dialectical nature of grammar. Sometimes we see these kinds of writings in our students, especially those who haven't mastered the syntactical organization of the sentence, those students who write from the *need* to express but who lack the control of the idiom. Time and again such students have passed through our classes (think of Bartholomae and Petrosky's *Facts, Artifacts, and Counterfacts*), those students who can't write the academic essay well, but whose writing still overflows with expressive excess. On some level, their writing is poetic and interesting and stylish and poignant, but it also reveals that they haven't mastered the idiom of the university. They have yet, as Bartholomae says, to *invent* it.² We admire their writing, but, to use rhetorical parlance, no matter how *moved* we are, being moved means not less but *much* less than the standards by which we judge their writing. Ironically, of course, forcing their writings into academic models takes away the poetic quality that is part of their expression. Like Richard Rodriguez (who took twenty years to realize and admit his cultural alienation), we professors know that the university can do a lot for you; what we forget is what it can do *to* you. On the level of student writing, the middle voice is inadmissible. It is a mistake—a sign of failing to have had the proper and most elementary schooling. On the level of scholarship, the middle voice is an exception. It is an interesting concept to discuss (perhaps)—but not something that one freely engages in—unless you are a Vitanza. No matter how much we rail against it, no matter how many CCCC statements are written

in the name of Students Rights to Their Own Language, no matter how many bilingual and ESL essays we write in the spirit of making our studies more multilingual, no matter what we say—our actions speak louder than our words. To be heard, the simple factual and boiling pustule remains—we write in SAE. And—do you hear that? That’s Foucault screaming at us.

So we have to see the counterfact that the middle voice helps in another way. With the exception of E.C. White, no one in rhetoric (to my knowledge) has undertaken an exploration into Freud’s use of this concept. By following the middle position through Freud’s grammar of the drives into his “A Child is Being Beaten,” my analysis reveals something rather peculiar that helps think again what the middle voice might mean, or, if we are going to use it as a metaphor, we can do so in a way that will have some bearing beyond picking up and shaking our pom poms (while pertinent discussions take place elsewhere). Freud’s point that the patient never remembers being beaten means two things: that it is not a memory but a fantasy, and that the fantasy is constructed through analysis. This conclusion helps me to tie together a few points. In chapter four, I cited Jean Pierre Vernant’s comment that the middle voice was lost with the Occident’s vocabulary of the will (the agent as being the source of her actions). Even if it can be said with certainty that the middle voice existed in ancient Greece or in Indo-European cultures, in our lifetimes, the middle voice is lost in our grammar. The examples of Stein, Spiegelman, and Vitanza testify to the difficulty and originality required to reconstruct it. In the discussions of sadomasochism in chapter five, the subject’s “turning round” distinguished the middle voice from the reflexive position. In

this case, sadism (whether sexual or non-sexual) occupied the first phase of the drive and masochism the last phase. But this “turning round” of the middle phase also cannot be said to exist. It also had to be constructed in order to explain the movement from sadism to masochism. As Antonio Quinet notes, “the reversal into its opposite is very easy to see: for instance, to torture and to be tortured,” but the same cannot be said for “turning round” (141). Hence, in the case of diathesis and in the grammar of the drives, we can conclude that, strictly speaking, the middle voice—just as in the case of the beating fantasy—cannot be said to exist. It must be constructed, whether through psycho- or rhetorical analysis. But if the middle voice is a fantasy, that does not mean, as Freud says, that it is not important. In fact, it is the “most momentous [event] of all.”

Since the middle voice will continue to remain lost in general so long as a need to use it is lacking, the question of what the middle voice says about rhetorical invention needs to be rethought. By pushing the concepts of *kairos* and the middle voice towards these limits, we can begin to ask not what the middle voice says about rhetorical invention but what the fantasmatic construction of the middle voice tells us about the “*a priori* structure of *kairos*” mentioned at the beginning of the previous chapter, a structure that, as Bennington says, is figured “only after the event.”

If in Heidegger’s kairological analysis (see chapter three), *kairos* is reduced to *nomos*, “blunting” (as Bennington says) the cut of the event, then the (first) analysis that will take place in this chapter will seek to use fantasmatic construction in a way that will expose the force of the discontinuous interruptive cut of *kairos* in a way that does not reduce it to Heidegger’s or even E.C. White’s *Kaironomia*. In short, it is not

possible to disregard the point that *kairos* is dependent on *nomos*, or, in other words, the new that issues from *kairos* has already been constituted and limited by culture and history. However, as an act of interpretation, it constitutes a knowledge that is “already there.” But neither can we stop at this interpretation because in opposition to interpretation stands construction. Interpretation is essentially reactionary and always comes after the fact; as Slavoj Žižek notes in a somewhat different context, “interpretation and construction stand to each other as do symptom and fantasy: symptoms are to be interpreted, fundamental fantasy is to be (re)constructed . . .” (*Plague* 36).

6.1 Retroactive Causation

Let us take as our starting point Žižek’s Heideggerian discussion in *The Ticklish Subject*. Given our trajectory, the best entryway into this discussion is a few comments that Heidegger makes in “What Calls for Thinking.” Here is where the famous words that “science does not think” are uttered. He writes, “science itself does not think, and cannot think—which is its good fortune, here meaning the assurance of its own appointed course” (373). The point, of course, is that science does not think because it is not concerned with Being or with what is “essential,” yet its blindness to Being is the very condition that ensures scientific progress. Here, then, is the split between the ontic and the ontological where for Heidegger, as Žižek says, “ontological insight necessarily entails ontic blindness and error, and vice versa. . . .in order to be ‘effective’ at the ontic level, one must disregard the ontological horizon of one’s activity” (*Ticklish* 15).³ Of course, analogues to these statements are found in Heidegger’s discussions of *aletheia*

as well as Kenneth Burke's well known adage, "A way of seeing is a way of not seeing." The difference, here, however is the loss of value attributed to any way that is not ontological. Žižek writes, "[W]hat Heidegger seems unable to endorse is a concrete political engagement that would *accept* its necessary, constitutive blindness—as if the moment we acknowledge the gap separating the awareness of the ontological horizon from ontic engagement, any ontic engagement is depreciated, loses its authentic dignity" (ibid.). The split between the ontic and the ontological is a split of value, a way of thinking that reframes Dasein along the lines of either/or. Yet, it is generally very difficult to recognize this as a theological Heideggerian split since the choice—from the start—is *rigged*.

As my analysis showed in chapter three, Heidegger's concern concerning *augenblick* is with constancy (not to be confused with Freud's constancy), where "authentic" Dasein revisits birth in its being-towards-death (repetition) and incorporates repetition, the present, and the future in the gathering of Dasein, an analysis that trumps historicity over *kairos*. But as Žižek reminds us in the following quote he takes from *Being and Time*, *augenblick* does not arise spontaneously; instead, it is based on the "possibility that Dasein may *choose* its hero . . . [it] is grounded existentially in anticipatory resoluteness" (*Ticklish* 17; original 437; emphasis mine). Dasein chooses a particular form (in anticipatory resoluteness) of Dasein as its hero, and while the Heideggerian revolution begins with Dasein in the world, it is also from the world that Dasein must escape so that it may return to the world in a more authentic way. Žižek (who is a strong Heideggerian reader) makes a point that Heidegger's analysis of

“thrown projection” is phenomenologically “ungrounded,” and this point should lead us to (re)cognize that the reason why thrown projection is “ungrounded” doesn’t hinge on unearthing the history of phenomenology beginning with Hume, Leibniz, and Kant, but instead hinges on the immediate and apparent notion of the definition of *choice* as it relates to conceptions of temporality. In short, Heidegger’s split between the ontic and the ontological hinges on whether choice is seen from the position of a *kairos* overwhelmed by history or a *kairos* that works in the opposite way, in a way that *makes and determines* history. This difference is the difference between what is usually considered as choice and what is so apparent but often missed—the forced choice.

Here’s why we need Žižek to read Heidegger:

This passage from the “thrown projection” of the individual Dasein who, in an act of anticipatory decision, achieves an authentic mode of being, “freely chooses his fate,” to a human community of People which also, in a collective act of anticipatory decision *qua* repetition of a past possibility, authentically assumes its historical Destiny, is not phenomenologically grounded in an adequate way. (ibid.)

Why not? The difference between the ontic and the ontological—the difference between science and humanity is the difference between a free and a forced choice. Heidegger has no use for a “vulgar” notion of a choice as being free as the term is considered in everyday speaking. To choose freely for Heidegger means to freely accept one’s destiny (*moira*, *nomos*). In Heidegger, this choosing of one’s destiny, this opening up of *kairos*, is more of an opening up towards *nomos*. Instead of Dasein choosing the new, Dasein chooses his own historicity and what he always already was. When I make the choice for my ontological future, when I hear the call of my finitude, I choose freely to accept

who I am, will be, and have been, all of which have been ontologically constituted and prescribed. The final move is to thus accept my destiny. It is undeniable the theological problematic of destination this position opens, and Žižek goes on to explain that such a choice is hardly free. Once I anticipate my own authenticity, I may indeed choose my destiny, but the important question falls on the status of the *choice*. I choose my destiny over the alternative. Instead of *inauthentic* experience, instead of *das man, mitsein*, everydayness, curiosity, instead of ontic life (etc.), present before me is the call of my finitude, and my possibility for being whole. Tell me, how can I choose otherwise? I cannot, and my Being has been prescribed. But by thinking this way, we are, like a teenager abiding by her parents' rules, on a "lockdown."

This kind of forced choice is embedded in everyday experiences such as the one represented in the 2006 release of the Hollywood comedy *The Break Up* (starring Jennifer Aniston as Brooke and Vince Vaughn as Gary). At one point during the couple's bickering Gary is lying on the couch relaxing; he pops up, and the following exchange ensues:

Gary: Fine, I'll help you do the dishes.

Brooke: Now that's not what I want.

Gary: You just said you wanted me to help you do the dishes.

Brooke: I want you to *want* to do the dishes.

Of course, Gary answers with the typical male-centered (and insensitive) retort, "Why would I *want* to do dishes?" In this most typical of mundane exchanges, Brooke only appears to be asking Gary to help with the dishes. The deeper issue is that Brooke is asking Gary, who wants to relax on the couch and watch television, to choose between

his enjoyment of relaxation and the feeling of satisfaction that she receives from knowing that helping her is more important to him. By revealing that she wants him to *want* to do the dishes, she reveals that she wants him to enjoy being selfless. The choice she offers is not a choice at all, for, if Gary chooses to watch TV, he loses Brooke's good graces. If he chooses to do the dishes, he also loses Brooke's good graces. The only way he can do the right thing is through the impossible—by enjoying an activity that he does not enjoy.

Žižek offers another example through the Althusserian notion of ideological interpellation. Žižek writes:

In general, the Althusserian notion of ideological interpellation involves the situation of “forced choice” by means of which the subject emerges out of the act of freely choosing the inevitable—that is, in which she/he is given the freedom of choice on condition that she/he makes the right choice: when an individual is addressed by an interpellation, she/he is “invited to play a role in such a way that the invitation appears to have already been answered by the subject before it was proposed, but at the same time the invitation could be refused.” Therein lies the ideological act of recognition, in which I recognize myself as “always already” that as which I am interpellated: in recognizing myself as X, I freely assume/choose the fact that I always-already was X. When say, I am accused of a crime and agree to defend myself, I *presuppose myself* as a free agent legally responsible for my acts. (*Ticklish* 18-19)

In other words, I am a free agent legally responsible for my acts so long as I recognize what I always was (a citizen). Or I am an ideological subject so long as I recognize that I have always been interpellated.

To explain this a little further, consider the classic position of ideological false consciousness that Žižek rephrases from Marx: “They do not know it, but they are doing it” (*Sublime* 28). The process of ideological critique, the one that can be ascribed to

critical theorists in composition studies who have followed the work of Paulo Friere,⁴ is reasonably straightforward. All that needs to be done to enlighten mystified subjects is to train them to recognize that their views of social reality are distorted. Naïve subjects do not realize that the T-shirts they pay thirty dollars for only cost the merchant pennies to make, and neither do they realize that the company selling those shirts makes a fortune because it is permitted to exploit child labor in third world countries. Once their misrecognition is corrected, such mystified subjects are trained to recognize their own complicity within an exploitative social reality, and they can get on with the business of acting in their own interests and the interests of others. Removing the mask exposes the ideological truth, and their false consciousness simply falls away like an old skin. Or so goes the theory. . . .

But in 1989, Žižek was saying something that critical composition theorists in the nineties did/could not hear: the statement "They do not know it, but they are doing it" no longer applies. Žižek explains:

In the *Critique of Cynical Reason*, a great bestseller in Germany . . . Peter Sloterdijk puts forward the thesis that ideology's dominant mode of functioning is cynical, which renders impossible--or, more precisely, vain--the classic critical-ideological procedure. The cynical subject is quite aware of the distance between the ideological mask and the social reality, but he none the less still insists upon the mask. The formula, as proposed by Sloterdijk, would then be: 'they know very well what they are doing, but still, they are doing it.' Cynical reason is no longer naïve, but is a paradox of an enlightened false consciousness: one knows the falsehood very well, one is well aware of a practical interest hidden behind an ideological universality, but still one does not renounce it. (*Sublime* 29)

Cynical reason is a paradox but it is no more difficult to explain than classic ideological critique. It points to the gap between what the subject does and what the subject knows, but unlike critical-ideological critique, it recognizes that doing and knowing do not carry the same force; what one knows sometimes means little in the face of what one does. Tony Myers puts the contemporary understanding of ideology like this: "[T]oday, we already know we are receiving a distorted version of reality. We already know that when we go to college we are being groomed to keep the system going. We know that when we go to a polling station, our vote will not substantially alter the political system. We know that going to church helps keep us as pliable citizens" (65).

But notice that in the classical ideological position as well as in the cynical critique, ideological interpellation is always already recognized. In both cases, recognition is meant to expose false consciousness. The difference between the two is the effect of this exposition. In the first case, revolution. In the second, cynicism. But in both cases, the choice seems to be between recognition and naïveté, but one cannot *choose* to be naïve after ideological interpellation—only cynical.

A third example of forced choice comes from Lacan in Seminar XI, where he gives the example of “Your money or your life!” Again, an impossible choice. If I choose the second, I lose both. If I choose money, I lose the means to have a life.

Alenka Zupancic explains:

The paradox of the forced choice comes from the fact that one of the alternatives between which we are required to choose is at the same time the universal (and quasi-neutral) medium of choice itself; it is at one and the same time the part and the whole, the object of choice and that which generates and sustains the possibility of choosing. It is for this reason

that we must choose one alternative if we do not want to lose them both—that is, if we do not want to lose the possibility of choice itself. (215)

In other words, to be given a choice is preferable over not being given one, even if the same choice is made every time.

Returning to Heidegger, from the perspective of *Dasein*, we must choose authenticity since *Mitsein* offers only the alternative of staying-thrown. Because *Dasein*'s constitution is temporal, where the moment of vision reveals that *Dasein* can accept its destiny, *Dasein* can *choose* to accept what it always already was, but this forced choice offers *Dasein* the semblance of a choice only so long as *augenblick* is reduced to accepting what was always “already there.” But what is missing from this conclusion, why the choice is forced (and the primary reason for Žižek's point that the analysis of authenticity is not adequately grounded), is that the decision itself only reveals the possibility of authenticity; the decision itself is neither integral to nor part of one's destiny. *Augenblick* (the moment of decision to accept one's destiny) is not itself integrated into the choice to accept one's destiny to begin with. It does not recognize that the event itself creates the context. The decision to accept one's destiny is like a doorway opening into a brightly lit room, causing us to say, “ah, this is *it*,” but such a conception of *kairos* strictly limits the constitution of the decision, or in Bennington's words, “blunts or denies the cut of the event.” Nomos says that every decision is contextualized and historicized, that the context creates the decision. Such a statement ignores the power of the decision; specifically, that the decision itself—as the case of

the Freudian construction—creates the context; rather than *nomos* making *kairos*, it is the other way around—there is no *nomos* without *kairos*. Žižek writes, “The undecidability here is radical: one can never reach a ‘pure’ context prior to a decision; every context is “always-already’ retroactively constituted by a decision (as with reasons to do something, which are always at least minimally retroactively posited by the act of decision they ground—only once we decide to believe do reasons to believe become convincing to us, not vice versa)” (*Ticklish* 19). Once a kairic event happens, *only then* does its context become possible.

We have thus come to the theory of retroactive causation. In the briefest and simplest of positings, the past only comes to light in light of our present decisions. It serves well to remember the etymology of *kairos* as *kerein*, meaning to cut, to sever away the past even in our representations of it. It is our present decisions, whenever we are engaged in the act of writing or reading, that we choose to tell ourselves the stories and anti-stories of our lives, the stories, meanings, and anti-meanings of those things we habitually face; the stories we choose to ignore, the stories we don’t want to face, the stories we know about yet close our eyes towards, the stories of the dying child, the stories of the sick, the news reports we file away in our memories to which we promise but never return.⁵ This is the crux of the theory of retroaction—not that we can’t decide,⁶ but that we have been deciding all along—and in a way that we don’t want or care to face.

6.2 *Vorhandenheit* and *Zuhandenheit*

But we would be mistaken to say that Heidegger does not account for retroactive causation. In this next section, I will draw heavily upon Graham Harman’s excellent discussion of the tool analysis in *Being and Time*. We will come to see that from the point of view of the tool analysis, retroaction is more than a reconstruction of fantasy. What Harman learns from Heidegger is that retroaction is an *a priori*, ontological truth. This statement should appear quite difficult to accept given that my previous analysis of *augenblick* has revealed that *nomos* and *kairos* don’t exist for Heidegger on equal footing, or, in other words, retroactive causation stands in opposition to Heidegger’s analysis of *kairos*. Without doubt, this is the case. However, seeing how retroaction works for Harman (and for us) is a matter of emphasizing those parts of *Being and Time* that Heidegger did not emphasize, and those are the things I will turn to next. Before I do, however, it is important to say a word concerning Harman’s own reading of Žižek. I will mention it in more detail later, but suffice to say for now that Harman reads Žižek’s points by reducing them to the analyst’s obsession with subjectivity—what has long been considered to be the model home in the conceptual neighborhood of psychoanalysis. However, on this specific point about retroactive causation, Žižek and Lacan both show that subjectivity is *not* the primary interest. From the perspective of retroaction, Žižek’s denies the possibility of subjectivity, calling it “subjective *destitution*” (*Plague* 37; my emphasis). Likewise, Lacan denies the possibility of a human with a head and calls this anti-subject, “the surrealist collage” who has “neither head nor tail” (*Four* 169). For Žižek and Lacan, subjectivity is not the issue concerning

retroaction. What is at stake is the nature of the drives, and this will mean that Harman and Žižek are more in agreement with each other ontologically—than Harman will allow. More of this later.⁷

For now, drawing on Harman's *Tool Being: Heidegger and the Metaphysics of Objects* (2002), I would like to begin the discussion of Heidegger's tool analysis. As already suggested, one reason that Harman's book is so compelling is that he has no desire to remain faithful to Heidegger; in fact, Harman openly states that Heidegger would disagree with many of the ideas Harman puts forth.

While Harman's argument is quite complex and its unfolding and further developments cover a lot of ground, what is most essential can be recognized by Harman's (and, consequently, my) lingering on an aspect often overlooked by Heidegger's commentators—that is, the discussion of equipment as present-at-hand and ready-to-hand in *Being and Time*. This discussion is so widely known and accessible that even new students recently introduced to Heidegger are able to recount its details with ease. As Harman notes, most commentators simply pass the discussion by on their way to more fruitful territory,⁸ but this analysis is for Harman what is most relevant in Heidegger's thinking, especially as we are moving towards an era where the historical need to discuss matters of the linguistic turn has passed (a similar move is happening in media theory).⁹

So Harman argues that the tool analysis contains the whole of Heidegger's important thought. The tool analysis makes the difference between ready-to-hand and present-at-hand, where ready-to-hand is an object in use and forgotten and present-at-

hand is an object unused, empty, insignificant. As far as *Being and Time* is concerned, the problem comes when the ready-to-hand tool breaks. In breaking (hard-drive crash), the ready-to-hand becomes present-at-hand. Work stops, frustration sets in, and, since the constitutive structure of being is being-in-the-world, the present-at-hand creates an opening where the world announces itself as world and sucks Dasein in, as though through a Blakean vortex. Dasein's unconcernful absorption in its activity when the tool breaks causes, to use Heidegger's terminology, the world to announce itself. Harman underplays this hyperbolic phrasing, choosing instead to emphasize that what is for him most important in this unfolding: since humans primarily encounter objects as readiness-to-hand, "objects are implements taken for granted, a vast environmental backdrop supporting the thin and volatile layer of our explicit activities" (18). In fact, it is the "everydayness" of our activities where most of our time is spent and it is "only rarely, most often in the cases of malfunction, do we notice any of these subterranean elements of our lives" (ibid.). And it is just this point that tools disappear into the background that Harman seizes upon. Because tools, "as a rule" are not present-at-hand but ready-to-hand, humans only deal with the effects that tools have on our day-to-day experiences. So long as a tool is working, we experience the effect of the action of the tool. As long as the chair supports me while I work at my desk, I experience the effect of being held up against the force of gravity. At the same time, however, experiencing this effect means to take it for granted, to forget it. The reader can think of numerous other examples where objects are taken for granted (to say nothing of other humans). Generalizing this situation, Harman writes, "For the most part, they [tools] work their

magic upon reality without entering our awareness. Equipment is forever *in action*, constructing in each moment the sustaining habitat where our explicit awareness is on the move” (18; Harman’s emphasis).

This is significant for Harman primarily because it is a mistake to assume that objects only “work their magic” on humans or that tools only become invisible because humans use them. For Harman, locating Dasein at the center of the tool analysis, “wrongly casts Dasein in philosophy’s starring role” (19). Harman explains:

Equipment is not effective “because people use it”; on the contrary, it can only be used because it is *capable of an effect*, of inflicting some kind of blow on reality. In short, the tool isn’t “used”—it *is*. In each instant, entities form a determinate landscape that offers a specific range of possibilities and obstacles. *Beings in themselves* are ready-to-hand, not in the derivative sense of “manipulable,” but in the primary sense of “in action.” The tool is a real function or effect, an invisible sun radiating its energies into a world before ever coming to view. In this way, the world is an infrastructure of equipment already at work, of tool-beings unleashing their forces upon us just as savagely or flirtatiously they duel with one another. (20; Harman’s emphasis)

To illustrate the particular agency of tools themselves, Harman abandons the familiar image of the hammer and considers the being of a bridge. He writes:

The reality of the bridge is not to be found in its amalgam of asphalt and cable, but in the geographic fact of “traversable gorge.” The bridge is a bridge-effect; the tool is a force that generates a world, one in which the canyon is no longer an obstacle. It is crucial to note that this is not restricted to tools of human origin: there are also dependable earth-formations that provide useful caravan routes or hold back the sea. At each moment, the world is a geography of objects, whether these objects are made of the latest plastics or were born at the dawn of time. This is the true scenario of Heidegger’s tool-being: equipment as an agent thoroughly deployed in reality, as an *impact* irreducible to any list of properties that might be tabulated by an observer. (21)

In Heidegger's analysis, the movement from readiness-to-hand to presence-at-hand serves a very specific function that concerns Dasein. For Harman, it is here that Heidegger, in placing the emphasis on the human, prematurely makes a wrong turn. Heidegger's analysis suggests that objects only *matter* because they are *handy*—for Dasein. But, as this quote suggests, objects, Harman argues, do not only matter for Dasein they matter—just as much—for other objects. On this same point, notice Deleuze, working from Wittgenstein's account of "eternal objects," in *The Fold*:

A concert is being performed tonight. It is the event. Vibrations of sound disperse, periodic movements go through space with their harmonies or submultiples. The sounds have inner qualities of height, intensity, and timbre. The sources of the sounds, instrumental or vocal, are not content only to send the sounds out: each one perceives its own, and perceives the others while perceiving its own. *These are active perceptions that are expressed among each other, or else prehensions that are prehending one another*: "First the solitary piano grieved, like a bird abandoned by its mate; the violin heard its wail and responded to it like a neighboring tree. It was like the beginning of the world. . . ." (80; my emphasis)

That the question of Being is posed by Heidegger as a matter of concern for humans—indeed, the question only has significance because only humans are concerned with Being (only humans are *da Sein*), puts humans in a space that prevents them from asking questions that are ontological rather than anthropomorphic.

Questioning, too, as a matter of disclosing being, is a human-centered activity that only points in a direction of *human* being and avoids the question of being all together. But this is not because there is a problem with *questioning* per se. Following Heidegger on this point, Harman agrees that the question is *more* than a human activity, but the problem is introduced once the question itself disappears as equipment to

disclose being. For Harman, what is at stake concerning questioning is not the matter of *questioning* being; it is the *being* of the question that takes priority. Harman writes:

The crucial factor is not that “questioning” is a people-centered lens that conditions Heidegger’s subject matter. The key is not the being of the *question*, but rather the *being* of the question. The key is that the act of questioning is no mere mental incident . . . rather, the question is executed rather than merely represented to some observer, which is to say that it has the mode of *existence*. It will be readily admitted that Dasein’s pursuit of the *Seinsfrage* is necessarily an attempt to clarify being *as* being. And all would be lost if this “as” were not shown in its emergence from being itself, if it were taken as some kind of present-at-hand immediacy rather than as the equipmental derivative that Heidegger shows it to be. But it follows from this that the question of being cannot be elucidated until the meaning of being itself has already somehow been clarified, prior to any special description of Dasein. And in *Being and Time*, this clarification occurs in the disavowal of all *Vorhandenheit* [presence-at-hand]—an oath sworn for the first time in the analysis of equipment. (40)

That Heidegger *disavows* the being of objects in the analysis of equipment emphasizes that Being *is only an issue* to Dasein (through *Zuhandenheit* [readiness-to-hand]), but even more importantly, severs the being of the question itself by turning to the questioning of being. Once this severance from the world of objects is complete, Heidegger can continue with his analysis of Being as a matter of concern (and care) only for Dasein. Harman continues:

The real reason that Dasein makes for an effective starting point for Heidegger is that human action simply offers the clearest possible case of the ineptitude of presence-at-hand as an absolute philosophical solution. Human Dasein is obviously an entity, but it is not the kind of entity that one would lightly regard as an “object” (in Heidegger’s pejorative sense of the word, which I do not follow in the rest of this book). But it is all too easy to misconstrue wood or chemicals as present-at-hand material, even if wrongly so. Entities are never merely fact, but also reality; even Heidegger’s most vehement enemies might admit this where human beings are concerned. But as I have argued, the same holds

true of hand-tools, and probably in an even more transparent way. As a result, asking about “the structure of the question,” or asking about human Dasein at all, is only *one way of rousing the question of being to life*. In principle, even marginal objects such as rocks could have been the subject of Heidegger’s analysis in *Being and Time*, and with equally fruitful results. Even in this case, the question of the *being* of the rock would have thrown the dictatorship of physical categories into irresolvable crisis. (40-41; my emphasis)

While it is quite difficult to imagine that the subjective “structure of care” of Heidegger’s analysis might have applied to objects in *Being and Time*, I feel confident that Harman’s point is that had Heidegger decided to argue *for Vorhandenheit* rather than *for Zuhandenheit*, then he might have arrived at a place that desubjectivized Dasein (or granted agency to objects) to the extent that would have required a total rethinking of Being.

But I could continue citing passage after passage from Harman, for almost all the pages seem to be relevant to my discussion, so much so that I would want to applaud and incorporate any analysis that achieved a similar solution. The problem, however, that I find with Harman’s book lies explicitly within Harman’s own analysis; that is, that the book’s greatest insight is also its greatest weakness. In my view concerning Harman’s book, however, concerns the Lacanian realm of the symbolic. At bottom, as I understand his book, Harman’s primary concern is that the common sense view that humans, once being is severed from a concern that primarily applies to the human, is that they occupy the same space as objects, that they too should be seen as present-at-hand. This perspective is not far from our discussion concerning *Gestell* in “The Question Concerning Technology” (to which we will turn), a discussion where

Heidegger argues that humans become, like tools, subject to a standing reserve, so much that the human—through technology—encounters himself as a labor pool. Harman, it seems fair to assert, would see the problem of the human as “standing-reserve” as positive predicament so long as it was remembered that human *being* holds no privilege over *tool-being* (or object-being). And I would grant this perspective, since the only thing that separates the human from other objects is that he, as Lacan writes, is “that which speaks.”

Harman’s analysis has the effect of leveling out the playing field of agency between humans and objects, as is illustrated by the example of the bridge. Harman quickly passes through the concerns of the problem of language for two reasons: first, he feels that the problem of language has served its historical purpose, and it has come time to move into more fruitful territory; second, Harman believes that the so-called linguistic turn hastily limits the field of investigation to overly subjective and psychologistic matters. One of the many interesting aspects of Harman’s book is that by focusing on objects and their effects, Harman is able to open up a space that I would like to call an embodied desubjectivation.

Harman’s protests to the side, what remains essential is that nothing other than language, for it is language, in Lacan’s terms, the symbolic, that divides the Real from reality. But that does not mean that Harman does not have a recommendation for how to understand language; it’s just that for Harman there is no point in making a difference between language and world. In one way, by championing the tool analysis, Harman’s book can be interpreted as an effort to move past the linguistic turn and to (re) turn to a

theory of substances that incorporates but subordinates the relationality between objects and language to the undeniability of the being of objects. He would apply this undeniability to the being of language as well. By analyzing Heidegger's essays on language, Harman argues for a view, just mentioned, that sees no difference between language and objects. Words are objects themselves, and they occupy the status of both presence-at-hand and readiness-to-hand. Citing Heidegger, Harman writes:

Bit by bit, the reality that Heidegger calls "language" begins to shed any trace of language at all. Speaking collapses into a cor-responding to the differentiation of world and thing. Hearing is no longer a mere listening, but rather a "belonging" to the stillness of the very same differentiation of world and thing. Instead of a discrete act of speaking, what we have is a concept of "language" that seems utterly indistinguishable from reality as a whole: "Language speaks. [writes Heidegger.] It's speaking welcomes the difference which expropriates world and things into the unity of their intimacy." But when is this differentiation *not* summoned to come? In every instant, the play of world and thing is deployed, as already suggested by the double meaning of "heißt": not only does the speaking of language *summon* the differentiation, it itself *is* the differentiated onefold of world and thing. Language becomes just another name for world, for being, for the universal empire of tool and broken tool. (179)

My take underlying Harman's point is that any argument issuing from signs, signifiers, and signifieds that finds separation or arbitrary correspondence among the various elements to be nothing less than a passing though useful fad in intellectual history. The relationship between words and things that Harman points to here in Heidegger is more concerned with effects than with causes. The *effect* is that when language speaks, it conjures up the unitary relationship between the thing and the world. From this view, either language *is* the world that unites with the thing when language speaks or that language is a non-pejorative tool ready-to-hand that disappears as the thing (another

tool) and the world (the totality of tool relations) are revealed together. In either case, language does not function as an arbitrary stand-in that represents things but instead rubs up against things, not unlike the four figures of resemblance mentioned by Foucault in *The Order of Things* or the way in which air rubs against a leaf. The language *effect*, through disclosure, shares the same materiality as things themselves. When Harman calls upon the quote “language speaks,” he is calling upon the ready-to-hand effect of language, an effect that disappears in its use, much like the chair disappears while we work at our desks or the systems of the airplane disappear as we enjoy our beverage service 35,000 feet high or the branch disappears for the bird as it makes its nest or as the cup disappears for the ice as it cools the liquid.

From this point of view, the reader can quickly make the correspondences between broken language and broken tool. If the broken tool announces the world [tool relations] then what are we to make of language that breaks down? Is there any wonder that parapraxis, as a breakdown in language, “opens the world” of unconscious desire?¹⁰ The difference between slips of the tongue and fractured equipment is that psychoanalysis moves too fast by asking what the slip *means* rather than focusing on the slip itself, and it is between ontology and analysis that arguments against psychoanalysis carry their fullest weight. Broken equipment, on the other hand, writes Harman, “emerges as a determinate entity, torn loose from the totality; to this extent, it attains a kind of presence *in spite* of the system that tries to consume it” (49; Harman’s emphasis). The difference between broken language and broken tool is that, on the one hand, psychoanalysis does not ask what the being of being broken reveals *in itself*

(existenz) while on the other, philosophy has decided that before asking the meaning of the break, it hovers over the break's existenz. While the two seem closely related, they are worlds of difference apart. The first signifies readiness-to-hand and the second presence-at-hand. What parapraxis *does not ask* is the second question.

Harman's explanation of presence-at-hand is read as broken tool, but while he uses this turn of phrase, he is careful to point out that presence-at-hand does not signify only a tool that breaks while we are engaged in a larger world of reference. Instead, broken tool means any object that is considered directly, whether or not it breaks. This distinction seems plausible given the fact that working tools, depending on their system of reference, have the capacity to reveal themselves as presence-at-hand when they fail but do not have to do so necessarily. Just as often, a tool that breaks—rather than causing the world to announce itself—simply shifts the system of reference.

Troubleshooters are we. When the tool breaks, our concerns shift to how the problem of the broken tool may be solved: new tools are employed immediately, put into use, and forgotten, becoming what they were even before they were employed—ready to hand. If we mistakenly delete a file, we find a *computer operation* to help us locate the file we deleted. If our hard drive crashes and we don't know how to recover it, we use the *phone* to call tech support to help with the problem, and so on. This all means that the issue of the tool analysis (and hence, the difference between present-at-hand and readiness-to-hand) is not whether the tool functions properly but is whether the tool's "referential totality" is disturbed. The fact is that if I am an auto-engine repairman, there is nothing remarkable about an engine that won't start. Malfunctions are par for the

workday. What is remarkable is that stubborn engine that I can't fix. What is important in Heidegger, then, is *not* the working condition of the tool but instead the structure of visibility/invisibility (a structure that repeats itself in the concealing/unconcealing twofold of *aletheia*). Harman writes:

[T]he point is that the tool-being of a thing is invisible *in principle*, that whatever comes into view belongs to an entirely different realm from the execution comprising a tool's reality. Whether it is "out of order" or not, the visible tool is simply *not* the tool in its being; in this way, insofar as they are encountered, *all* beings are broken equipment. (46)

In other words, the way that the tool analysis in *Being and Time* unfolds suggests that equipment disappears as it is used and its breaking, or "disturbance of reference" causes the tool to reveal itself (as *un-ready-to-hand* in Heidegger's parlance), but Harman offers a more productive understanding of this analysis by saying instead that whenever a tool is encountered as tool—it could be functioning perfectly—the referential totality (its ready-to-hand quality) is disturbed because of that encountering of the tool. This also means that it does not require Dasein to encounter the tool. When a power line falls or my cat knocks over a plant, the referential totality is also disturbed. In addition, what goes for tools, Harman has argued, also goes for language, and this is the most difficult point to accept.

It would be a shame to confuse Harman's view towards language as a return to a naïve realism, where between language and thing is a transparent correspondence. This would be the grossest of misreadings. But, at the same time, Harman is arguing, there can be no doubt, a distinct and uncompromising concern with *reality*. But then, the difficulty does not appear so daunting once we start limiting what this so-called world

of reality is, and once we do, we find something that is paradoxically at once narrow and universalizing. The first step is to consider what *counts* as reality, and Harman's reader responds quickly: objects. But then, what constitutes an object? And here, virtually everything is permitted, from electrons to memories to fish to humans to moonbeams to words. As we continue asking questions such as what about those parts that comprise objects? And what about processes? And what about what Husserl called a temporal object such as song? As we stack these questions, all of which Harman has considered but I cannot go into here, we come up with a thoroughly relational account of substance. I use the word substance but not in a way that is meant to be confused with Aristotle (for Harman's discussion of Aristotelian substance see 268-80 in *Tool-Being*). All the way to the end, Harman sticks with one single claim and that gives us the definition for substance as it does for equipment or objects or tools or things or processes. That is, anything can be an object so long as it functions as ready-to-hand and present-at-hand. Once it is observed or contemplated, our thoughts which would be part of the tool's referential totality, disturb this reference, bringing it into visibility. So long as it remains unthought, it functions as it is supposed to, forgotten, working in the background to make its share of the world. What is finally important for Harman is that the human being is removed from the center of Heidegger's thought and future research rely on (Harman's version of) the tool analysis in order inquire into the mysteries of objects.¹¹

6.3 Reality or Drives?

I have covered just about everything necessary concerning Harman's excellent rethinking of the tool analysis, but I am not ready to disengage with Harman yet. As I hope I have shown, his book promises to be an exciting direction for future inquiry concerning the metaphysics of objects, but I would now like to take a turn back to the issue of retroactive causation and Harman's reading of Žižek.¹² What should be obvious by now is that the structure of retroaction, a structure that shows that *nomos* is a context created by the cut of the event (*kairos*) is the same structure as the interplay between *vorhandenheit* and *zuhandenheit*. Once the referential totality of an object and its relations has been disturbed, this disturbance is a kairic event that brings that totality into view.

Given Žižek's radicalizing tendencies, it may appear surprising to some that the problem Harman finds with Žižek's version of the tool/broken-tool relation (i.e., retroactive causation) is not that Žižek goes too far but that he does not go far enough. The difference is that for Harman, since there is no significant difference between retroaction and the tool structure, they both apply to all of reality. But Žižek's version applies only to human *fantasy*, as in the case of Freud's "A Child is Being Beaten." As such, Žižek's version subjectivizes Heidegger's tool analysis and diminishes the concept considerably, consigning it to the darkhouses of the unconscious. Here is how Harman explains Žižek's theory of retroactive causation:

By cementing the priority of the future at this early stage, Žižek is setting the table for his doctrine of retroactive causation, in which the Real is not a "real world" outside of the human sphere, but the very *gap* between

appearance and the non-appearing that is first *posited* by the fantasy of the human subject. As he [Žižek] puts it . . . “once can never reach a ‘pure’ context prior to a decision; every context is ‘always-already’ retroactively constituted by a decision.’ Not only do my perspectives and projections affect how the context is *seen*, but the context is *created* by the very act of decision. (207; Harman’s emphasis)

We have already seen the *gap* Harman alludes to here in our discussion of the middle voice and reconstruction of fantasy in the last chapter’s discussions, and Žižek explains this gap in *The Plague of Fantasies* by calling upon the different tasks of the (psycho)analyst by writing, “interpretation and construction stand to each other as do symptom and fantasy: symptoms are to be interpreted, fundamental fantasy is to be (re)constructed . . .” (36). The problem, for Harman, is that Žižek, like Heidegger, is only able to see the significance of the tool analysis through the subject (or Dasein).

To continue with my analysis, there are two parts to a single sentence to which I would like to draw your attention. One will continue to explain Harman’s position, the other will turn against it. Let me repeat the important section:

By cementing the priority of the future at this early stage, Žižek is setting the table for his doctrine of retroactive causation, in which the Real is not a “real world” outside of the human sphere. . . .

The first part indicates Harman’s difficulty with prioritizing the future over the past and present. The second part shows that Harman wants to make a rigorous distinction between subjective and ontological dimensions of reality, the second of which would subsume or contain the first.

First, Harman is not able to say that the future has primacy over the past because to do so would be to say that the subject has primacy over “reality,” that the

Heideggerian analysis of ontology has primacy over the ontic, that readiness-to-hand has primacy over presence-at-hand, and, my friend, there is nothing but turtles. What is important for Harman does not issue from “everydayness” and proceed towards ecstasy, this discovery that is grounded on one’s guilt and one’s “being a basis of a nullity,” this analysis that is typically considered most dazzling in Heidegger’s *Being and Time*. On this score Harman and Žižek agree that Heidegger’s analysis is inadequately grounded. For Harman, *that* analysis carries no greater significance than everyday experience and typical knowledge.

And this is the same reason that Harman downplays temporality—the tool analysis does not favor anything that issues from Dasein over anything that issues from any other object (or object-relation). Whatever has to do with Dasein, for Harman, has already gone too far. For this reason, ontological questions are limited not necessarily to objects but to things present-at-hand, to which Dasein, as do the rest of lights, crickets, shadows, and hummingbirds, belongs. Since Dasein has no special ontological status, the play of futurity and potentiality are issues only for Dasein. Any focus, then, that privileges one aspect of time over another perspectivizes temporality through subjectivity. Harman states that the reason that Žižek privileges the future is not because he follows the structure of Being, but because he is seeking to set up the theory of retroaction that proceeds from a human centered awareness. And *this* human centered awareness is the problem.

The second point, the point that moves us *away* from Harman, is that to draw a distinction between the Lacanian Real and “reality” is the thing that locks Žižek (and

consequentially, Lacan) into psychocentrism. What retroaction means for Harman is a diminution of the tool analysis, one that hinges on the order of the Symbolic.

Commenting on Žižek, Harman writes: “On the one hand, there is no real world of things themselves located in sheer isolation from the symbolic realm; these things themselves are nothing more and nothing less than the retroactive positings of a subject that never encounters them” (ibid). This is a very interesting statement by Harman, one that goes so far as accuse Žižek of a pure form of (post) structuralism in the spirit of Derrida’s *Il n’ya pas de hors-texte*.

Hence, Harman wants to find that retroactive causation (or the tool/broken tool structure) applies to all of reality. Žižek’s description of it, wherein it is framed by the human being, is severely limited because Žižek fails to recognize the fantasy-structure as a universal ontological principle. In conclusion, Harman writes,

But simply remove the human-centered model that Žižek is working with, and you will find that the same structure holds equally good for all levels of reality. Both plankton and bingo chips encounter other objects and project them, encountering them only ‘as’ such-and-such and not entering into intimate contact with their being. All objects constitute their surroundings retroactively—objects are *retroviruses*, injecting their own DNA back into the nucleus of everything they encounter. It is not just humans who do this. (212)

But I would argue that the problem is not that Žižek is unwilling to take this thesis of retroaction and apply it to noumena outside of phenomenological subjectivity; the problem is in Harman’s conflation between the Lacanian Real with noumenal so-called reality.¹³ In other words, Harman’s thesis works like the swallowing mechanism of an anaconda, swallowing language whole into the structure of tool/broken tool. It is not

that language has become transparent and forgotten but just the opposite. Language has become *more* real, more *embodied*, *more* materialistically constituted; language has taken the status of objects. In short, language has been pushed to its limit and the effect has not been that language takes over the world as it does in late structuralism and early poststructuralism. Instead, once language takes the status of a *real thing*, there is nothing remarkable about it. Nothing more remarkable about language than the running of blood through your heart or the shadows cast by the leaves of your morning jog. If nothing else, one can see in a concrete way the affect of discussing concrete objects and the way of drawing our attention to both the beauty of language and of nature. It is for this reason that Harman does not engage in any discussion that would limit the tool analysis in a way that would follow the distinction between the Real and the Symbolic; when understood correctly, Harman's point of view—his emphasis of noumena over phenomena (though he does not explicitly *Kantianize*)—echoes the opposite point Deleuze makes concerning Kant in his book on Kant; that is, Deleuze reminds us, as I mentioned in my discussion of *zweifalt* in chapter two, that the effect of Kant does not *limit* subjectivity but the division of reality into the two spheres of noumena and phenomena places the human being in charge of phenomena, giving the subject a boost and making it in charge of those things we *can* know. But the fact remains that from Harman's view, language becomes subordinated to the tool analysis, and as a consequence, the distinction between the Lacanian orders of symbolic and the real are erased.

CHAPTER 7

THE UNDEAD LAMELLA

As I mentioned several times in chapter six, the difference between Žižek and Harman on the issue of retroactive causation is only a difference defined by Harman's perspective. The tool structure has just as much to do with objects interacting with each other as it does with humans interacting with other things. Human consciousness and awareness are things that can disturb a tool's referential totality and bring a ready-to-hand thing out from its invisible structure, but so far as Harman is concerned, interaction with Dasein is not necessary for the tool's referentiality to be disturbed. Objects interact with other objects all the time without Dasein's participation—a bird makes a nest in a tree or the side of a glacier falls spontaneously into the ocean. In both cases the ready-to-hand quality is disturbed by objects acting with each other, where things encounter other things—whether Dasein is nearby or a thousand miles away matters little. According to Harman, Žižek is too psychocentric to recognize that the psychoanalytical reconstruction of the fantasy is not limited to a patient but is a universal principle, seen from the perspective of the tool analysis. It is true that the beating fantasy could never be said to properly exist, that it had to be *reconstructed* through the course of analysis. As an act of creation rather than discovery, the beating fantasy is not recalled or remembered. The fantasy is constructed through analysis

which is to say that the fantasy (as past) is retroactively constituted by the present.

Harman is dissatisfied that this conclusion is reached in this way, so that only humans are responsible for retroactive cause. Harman writes:

In the end, his [Žižek's] problem will turn out to be that he restricts retroactive causation to a narrowly human realm, and orbits around the same unique gap between human and world that dominates most contemporary philosophy. But humans are not the only entities that encounter phantoms rather than things in themselves. I have argued that the as-structure also characterizes the strife between bananas and fruit flies, and even the collision of mindless rocks. . . . Whereas Žižek apparently wants to restrict retroactive causation to the fantasy life of human subjects, I have insisted that even inanimate objects display this sort of fantasy. The murky depths of rock-being gain specific, tangible form not only through the retroactive positing of a human who encounters the rock, but even through inanimate entities that are forced to encounter it "as" such-and-such, "as" a specific obstacle or blessing. (208)

We can make sense out of Harman's proposition here but only by ignoring the difference between the distinction between fantasy and fundamental fantasy. The similarity between the way a human encounters an object or another human is similar to the way an object encounters another because the as-structure determines the creation of the fantasy. A boulder that rolls down a hill and up another one encounters the second hill as an obstacle to its forward movement. While the hills may be similar, the second hill is encountered in a way that is opposite to the first, but this encountering says only a small part of the being of the hill, so that the rock never encounters the hill in its being, only *as* a hindrance to its motion. This is what Harman means by an object having a "fantasy," a fantasy that is retroactively caused by the encountering.¹ In this way, fantasies are all that people and objects ever deal with, biases and perspectives projected

onto those interacting things by all the perspectives of the objects and beings in an overall referential totality.

But Harman and Žižek, I think, agree more than Harman allows. Because this analysis is enough for Harman to define fantasy, Harman would likely be uninterested in making the distinction between this sort of fantasy and what Žižek calls “fundamental fantasy.” In addition, the reason this description is enough for Harman is that he has no need to follow the Lacanian orders of the Real, Imaginary, and Symbolic. Harman says that “Retroactive causation is a global ontological structure, and not a narrowly defined psychoanalytical one. Whatever distinguishes human being from animals and rocks cannot be found in this structure alone” (ibid.). The knee-jerk reaction to this statement would be to recall that for Lacan the difference is that the subject is “that which speaks,” but as we saw at the end of the previous chapter, this distinction will not do either. Rather than asking the differences between humans and animals and objects, however, we should be asking another question, one that warrants us to read Žižek and Harman together, but—more importantly—provides the necessary beginning to develop the present chapter on contemporary issues of writing and technology.

Here’s the question: If Harman wants to argue that retroactive causation is a “global ontological structure,” and one that comprises—although it does not issue from—human subjectivity, Dasein, or psychocentrism, how can we come to an understanding of fantasy that would recognize that retroactive causation is not equivalent to *human* retroactive causation? Underlying this question is an assumption I

would like qualify. The question assumes—with Harman—that it is possible to identify something called an “global ontological structure.” While Harman has no problem in using this kind of universalizing language, I do. However, as far as Harman’s tool analysis is concerned, I find the argument, along with Harman’s supporter Bruno Latour, to be rather convincing, but neither of these statements are relevant to my discussion. In either case, I am not interested in anything nearly so grand as describing, discovering, or inventing an ontology. Ontological discussions are important to me from a rhetorical, not a philosophical, perspective. That is, I am simply not interested in ontological arguments for the sake of describing an ontology. I am interested in them for the sake of making interesting and persuasive arguments about how we should think about relevant rhetorical, cultural, and technological contexts that surround and make them. So when I pose the question of how to think of retroactive causation in a way that removes the subject from the center of the equation, my purpose is not the same as Harman’s. In short, I have another motive.

By turning to the issue of fundamental fantasy that Žižek describes, my purpose is to turn away from Harman’s ontology and to open towards what I see as *the* theoretical debate concerning contemporary media theorists: the problems concerning the contexts and issues surrounding *information* and *meaning*. I will turn to and contextualize these debates shortly. For now, let’s continue by attempting to formulate an answer to the question posed: what are the consequences of thinking of retroaction from a Lacanian frame of reference?

It just so happens that up-and-coming media theorist Mark Hansen echoes Harman's concern in *Embodying Technesis*. Hansen writes: "Lacan's notion of the real is itself the problem, insofar as it remains incapable of breaking with . . . psychocentrism" (171). Like Harman, Hansen's problem with Lacan is that Lacan sees the real as constituted fundamentally by lack. Hansen writes: "Because he [Lacan] consistently conceives of the real from the standpoint of the symbolic, Lacan effectively renders a psychic construction. As long as it remains junctured to the symbolic . . . the real cannot furnish the material basis for a robust conception of technological autonomy" (ibid.). We are well-familiar with the psychic reconstruction of the real, the very structure of retroaction, that Lacan takes from Freud. Hansen's complaint is echoed by many other critics of Lacan, specifically, that the real is constituted by lack and that this lack is a consequence of symbolic language. But there is a way of understanding the real that neither Harman nor Hansen explore.

If the dominant mode of seeing the real is through the lens of the symbolic, in *The Plague of Fantasies* Žižek reminds us that the consequences of having to construct the real (retroactively) means that the subject taps into the real itself. Referencing the beating fantasy in Freud's "A Child is Being Beaten," Žižek writes:

The fact that this phase 'never had a real existence', of course, indicates its status as the Lacanian *real*; the knowledge about it, a 'knowledge in the real', is a kind of 'acephalous', non-subjectivized knowledge: although it is a kind of 'Thou art that!' which articulates the very kernel of the subject's being (or, rather, for that very reason), its assumption *desubjectivizes* me – that is, I can assume my fundamental fantasy only in so far as I undergo what Lacan calls 'subjective destitution'. Or – to put it in yet another way – interpretation and construction stand to each other as do symptom and fantasy: symptoms are to be interpreted,

fundamental fantasy is to be (re)constructed However, this notion of ‘acephalous’ knowledge emerges rather late in Lacan’s teaching – somewhere around the early 1970s, after the relationship between knowledge and truth had undergone a very profound shift. (36)

Žižek goes on to explain that during the first phase of Lacan’s career, from the 40s to the 60s, Lacan holds to the “standard philosophical opposition” between “the ‘inauthentic’ objectifying knowledge which disregards the subject’s position of enunciation, and the ‘authentic’ truth in which one is existentially engaged, affected by it” (36). Žižek then explains that the Lacanian interpretation of inauthenticity/authenticity lies in the matter of attempting to bring both the truth-teller (obsessional neurotic who hides his desire by telling the truth) and the liar (the hysteric who hides the truth in the guise of a lie) to “full speech,” where both recognize their desire—the neurotic recognizes that his obsession with the truth discloses his desire for the opposite of the truth, and the hysteric recognizes that the lie contains a “truth effect,” revealing what he desires to hide. Ideally, both move towards a so-called authentic condition where one not only recognizes his truth but recognizes as well his enunciative position (36-37). But during the 60s and afterwards, however, Žižek explains that Lacan’s primary psychoanalytical focus was a matter of revealing neither truth effects nor the position from which they are announced but how the drive *itself* is a means of satisfaction. Drive, here, is a kind of “acephalous knowledge” about the drive that perpetually delays gratification, or, somewhat paradoxically, gratification only comes about in the drive’s continual (as Lacan says) “return into the circuit” (*Four* 178).

How, specifically, does this work? First, we are likely to find the drive's return to the circuit in virtually all instances of excess, or what Žižek (borrowing and amplifying from Marx and Lacan) calls "surplus enjoyment." With his own particular neatness and clarity, Žižek describes the relationship between this surplus and enjoyment: "It is this paradox that defines surplus enjoyment: it is not a surplus which simply attaches itself to some 'normal,' fundamental enjoyment, because *enjoyment as such emerges only in the surplus*, because it is constitutively an 'excess.' If we subtract the surplus we lose enjoyment itself" (*Sublime* 52). A simple "attachment" of surplus could be illustrated by a thirsty athlete having a drink of water after a strenuous workout. But that first glass of water is not enough to satisfy her need for hydration. She enjoys the second and third glasses just as much as the first. In this case, more water simply helps to satisfy and fill the lack in her body. But an enjoyment that "emerges in the surplus" shifts the emphasis from the object (water, in this case) to the *act of having more*. Astra Taylor, the director of *Žižek!* (2005), provides an entertaining example in the form of an animated skit that calls up connotations associated with Coca Cola. In lieu of having the ability to show the clip, we can best visualize the example through the following set of static screen shots:



Figure 7.1. Screenshots from Žižek!
An illustration of surplus enjoyment.

If the soda is never *it*, then what is? If I were to answer hastily, I would say Lacan's *petit objet a*. For the most part this is correct, except that the terminology of the question asks specifically for an *it*. This *it* would make the *objet a* into an object, and given that the *petit a* is explicitly called an *object*, does this not stand to reason?

Certainly, but the terminology associated with the *petit a*, it turns out, is a paradox. The first step is to notice the distinction between the hydrating athlete and this example. The firsts point towards *demand*. The second to *desire*. Where to demand requires an object to fulfill a biological need, desire can never be fulfilled. In *The Lacanian Subject:*

Between Language and Jouissance, Bruce Fink explains:

Desire, strictly speaking, has no object. In its essence, desire is a constant search for something else, and there is no specifiable object that is capable of satisfying it, in other words, extinguishing it. Desire . . .

does not seek satisfaction, but rather its own continuation and furtherance: more desire, greater desire! It wishes merely to go on desiring. Thus desire, according to Lacan, is not all that goes by that name in common parlance, for it is rigorously distinct from demand. (90-91)

As Fink explains, to speak of an object of desire, is to reverse the equation of the object of demand. If we were to express our hydration example in the form of an equation, we might write something simple like this:

strenuous exercise → lack of water → replenishment

But there is nothing specific that desire demands. For this reason, desire cannot be satisfied. It is perpetually displaced by new objects, or as Lacan says explicitly, a “return into circuit.” In “The Partial Drive and It’s Circuit.” Lacan writes: “[Freud] tells us somewhere that the ideal model for auto-eroticism would be a single mouth kissing itself—a brilliant, even dazzling metaphor, in this respect so typical of everything he writes, and which requires only to be completed by a question” (*Four* 180). The question Lacan asks is this: “In the drive, is not this mouth what might be called a mouth in the form of an arrow?” (180). In these few words, the conversation turns upon the central figure of this lecture, Figure 7.2:

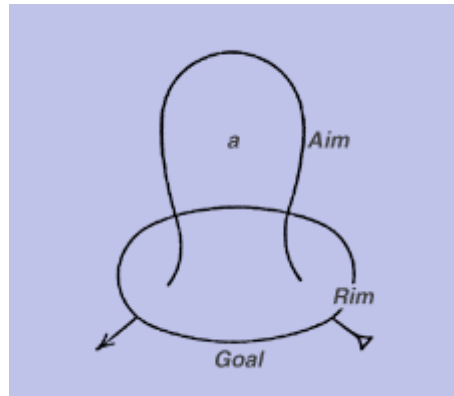


Figure 7.2. Circuit of the Drive.

Source: Lacan Seminar XI, 178; cited from Louis Armand “Symptom in the Machine: Lacan, Joyce, Sollers.”

Autoeroticism is a metaphor for the circuit of the drive. The reason Lacan says that this mouth is in the form of an arrow is that he is speaking of the arrow of the partial drive. As I discussed in chapter five, Freud says that an appeal to pure drives are never made; drives are partial, always already a mixture. Lacan seizes on the fact that drives are never pure and divides the drive into two different though connected actions. The first is the object of demand (as discussed above), and Lacan explains it by saying that “this object” is “simply the presence of a hollow, a void, which can be occupied, Freud tells us, by any object [sublimation]” (ibid.). The second is the object (a), and it occupies a different position than the object of demand. Its central position in the above graph shows its functioning as the cause of the feedback loop, illustrating that desire is an “outwards and back movement” into the “circular character of the path of the drive” (178). In a linguistic context in Seminar 2, Lacan explains feedback in some more detail that resonates with the circuit of the drive: “What’s needed is that when I reach the tail of my message, the head should not yet have arrived back. The message must have time

to turn around. It turns quickly, it doesn't stop turning, it turns around in circles. It's funny, this turning back on itself. It's called feedback" (in Kittler "World" 144).² If the mouth is in the form of an arrow kissing itself, then it is because the entire process of the circuit is illustrated by this image's economy. In relation to the oral drive, the object (a) is not like the object of demand. "It is not introduced as the original food," Lacan writes. "It is introduced from the fact that no food will ever satisfy the oral drive, except by circumventing the eternally lacking object" (*Four* 178).

Rather than chasing the object in order to determine why it does not satisfy, Lacan concludes that once the object of desire is attained, it slips through the hands like a child trying to grab a handful of smoke (to borrow an image from Henri Bergson). For instance, Freud's analysis of infantile sexuality shows that the object of the oral drive (nourishment) becomes something else, namely, the *cause* of infantile sexuality. Here, the drive attains "its satisfaction without attaining its aim—in so far as it would be defined by a biological function" (179). How? Lacan writes: "If the drive may be satisfied without attaining what, from the point of view of a biological totalization of function, would be the satisfaction of its end of reproduction, it is because it is a partial drive, and its aim is simply this return into circuit" (179). It is the partiality of the drive, its *in-mixture* with other drives, that pulls the metonymical lost object back towards the circuit of the drives, where an object is perpetually substituted for another object *ad infinitum*.³ Does this mean there is no object?

Yes. What desire seeks, as the soda illustration shows, is nothing but more desire. This soda is never it! The *it* may never be found; *it* is perpetually lost,

metonymically slipping from one soda bottle to the next. Fink writes: “Desire has no “object” as such. It has a cause, a cause that brings it into being, that Lacan dubs object (a), cause of desire” (91). Contrasting our earlier equation for demand, the equation for desire would look like this:

cause [object (a)] → desire → metonymic slippage from one object to
the next (Fink *ibid.*)

So why does Lacan retain the term *object*? Interestingly, Fink explains that by keeping the term, Lacan’s interest was in attempting to change the course of psychoanalysis by prompting discussion by attempting a change in the nature of the discipline’s terms.

What is most interesting and fascinating, especially for my purposes, is that the cause of desire emerges from the real. Fink writes that by the postface to the “Seminar on ‘The Purloined Letter,’” “Lacan no longer writes object *a* (the ‘a’ being in italics), but rather object (a)” (*ibid.*) This change is to indicate “the object’s transposition from the imaginary register to the real” (*ibid.*).

In light of this analysis, it is worth reconsidering Harman’s and Hansen’s objections that the theory of retroaction that comes from the construction of the beating fantasy is “psycho-centric” or located explicitly within the “human sphere.” The object (a) is a manifestation of the real that is the cause of desire in the subject; but the object (a) is not itself *subjective*, and it is for this reason that Žižek says that the beating fantasy is an “acephalous knowledge” and that in this same lecture, we hear Lacan say that “this articulation leads us to make of the manifestation of the drive the mode of a headless subject” (181). To complete this point, however, the question that arises is that

if the aim of the drive is always already a return into circuit (i.e., to keep on desiring), how are we to understand this circuit?

7.1 Lamella

At the level of the drive, we are all dogs chasing our own tails. But, if we catch our tail, what do we do? What the dogs do: we let go and start chasing again. *This tail is not it!* The propensity to repeat the circuit over and again in constant feedback is represented by the object (a), the cause of desire that keeps the circuit moving. Clearly, the object (a) is no particular tail, and it is certainly no ideal or essential tail that we are trying to grasp. The object (a) *causes* desire but it does not come from desire. It stems from the real. As such, this object is linked neither to what we say nor to what we see. As Maire Jaanus says, it is linked neither to the symbolic nor the imaginary. Jaanus writes:

[T]his unique object is pre-linguistic and pre-specular (neither symbolic nor imaginary). Of it we have neither images nor words. It remains the unobjectified object, the non-represented object, the pre-object, or the object—unseen, unheard, unsmelled. It is that part of jouissance that can never be spoken. It can only be lived. It has to happen. Thus drive is freedom from any visible, defined object. It is a movement or merely the reenactment of a movement, guided by something unclear, fragmentary, and impossible. ‘The essence of drive’ is ‘the trace of the act.’ Objectlessly, drive merely retraces an unrecuperable act. (127)

Pre-linguistic, and pre-symbolic, the object (a)—despite Harman’s and Hansen’s objections—is not subjective. As languageless it is “headless” and therefore not a subject at all. In the drive, there are no subjects and there are no lacks. When we talk about the object (a) from the point of view of the symbolic, we do not say that the object, technically speaking, is an object. But from the point of view from the real, the

lost object (a), stands in for something lost long ago. As Jaanus explains it, the circuit of the drive are the motions that we go through—blindly do we try, in vain, like a remote control car repetitively bumping up against the same wall, to re-experience an act or a wholeness that was lost with our entry into the imaginary and then the symbolic. But this loss does not designate a simple desire to return, as is read by pop-Lacanian, to infancy. For Lacan, the circuit of the drive is an echo, an impression of a “psychic movement around an object” that “surrounded our body” and filled up “our now open and empty erogenous orifices” (such as the breast in our mouth) (Jaanus 127). As such, it retraces some Thing (*das Ding*) that cannot be recuperated. This “unrecuperable act” is not infancy. It is the inhuman, the immortal, “self subsisting life” (ibid. 131) what Lacan calls the lamella. Lacan writes:

It is the libido, *qua* pure life instinct, that is to say, *immortal* life, or irrepressible life, life that has need of no organ, simplified, indestructible life. It is precisely what is subtracted from the living being by virtue of the fact that it is subject to the cycle of sexed reproduction. (*Four* 198; Jaanus 131; my emphasis)

In Seminar XI, Lacan compares the lamella to an amoeba, an organ that “survives any division” . . . and “it can run around” (ibid.) Lacan asks us, jokingly, to imagine that it comes to envelop our faces while we sleep. This scurrying, impenetrable, indivisible lamella or libido, “the ultimate substance or real from which singular existence comes” (Jaanus 131) is the thing for which the “*objects a* are merely . . . representatives, its figures” (Lacan *Four* 198).

In the following passage, Lacan explains that what we give up for immortality is sexual reproduction—what is nothing other than a displacement of immortality. We

become sexed, we become able to reproduce; in trade we lose immortal life, but an immortal life that is perpetually and metonymically displaced through reproduction.

Lacan writes:

The relation to the Other is precisely that which, for us, brings out what is represented by the lamella—not sexed polarity, the relation between masculine and feminine, but the relation between the living subject and that which he loses by having to pass, for his reproduction, through the sexual cycle. (ibid. 199)

Lacan goes on to conclude that the reconciliation of the drives result, finally, in death, and Jaanus, following Lacan quite closely, says that we are connected to this immortality through our own deaths, and as such, the lamella is a “negative immortality” (Jaanus 131). When Lacan says that the reconciliation of the drives results in death, he is speaking from the perspective of the symbolic. But we misunderstand this immediately if we fail to see that entry into the symbolic—since it constitutes the death of immortality—is itself death. It is very easy to miss this point. Lacan writes: “This lack is real because it relates to something real, namely, that the living being, by being subject to sex, has fallen under the blow of individual death” (*Four* 205). The blow of individual death has resulted *because* the being has been subjected to sex. Paradoxically, symbolic life is the death of immortality. Thus, the death drive of the Freudian tradition must be seen as the symbolic order itself. Lacan writes: You will now understand that—for the same reason that it is through the lure of the sexed living being is induced into his sexual realization—the drive, the partial drive, is profoundly a death drive and represents in itself the portion of death in the sexed living being. . . . (ibid.) Hence, Lacan designates a new term for the lamella—the *unreal*. He writes: “The libido

is the essential organ in understanding the nature of the drive. This organ is unreal.

Unreal is not imaginary. The unreal is defined by articulating itself on the real in a way that eludes us, and it is precisely this that requires that its representation should be mythical, as I have made it” (ibid.)

Žižek understands the mythical significance of the unreal. By reading Lacan acutely, the “acephalous” should not be confused with the death drive in Freud. Instead, if we read both Freud and Lacan closely, we come to realize that there is something else at work concerning *trieb*, specifically, the *undead*, the immortal. Žižek writes:

Life is the horrible palpitation of the ‘lamella’, of the non-subjective (‘acephalous’) ‘undead’ drive which persists beyond ordinary death; death is the symbolic order itself, the structure which, as a parasite, colonizes the living entity. What defines the death drive in Lacan is this double gap: not the simple opposition between life and death, but the split of life itself into ‘normal’ life and horrifying ‘undead’ life, and the split of the death into ‘ordinary’ dead and the ‘undead’ machine. The basic opposition between Life and Death is thus supplemented by the parasitical symbolic machine (language as a dead entity which ‘behaves as if it possesses a life of its own’) and its counterpoint, the ‘living dead’ (the monstrous Life-Substance which persists in the Real outside the Symbolic) – this split which runs within the domains of Life and Death constitutes the space of the death drive. These paradoxes are grounded in the fact that, as Freud emphasizes repeatedly, *there is no notion or representation of death in the unconscious*: the Freudian *Todestrieb* has absolutely nothing to do with the Heideggerian *Sein-sum-Tode*. Drive is immortal, eternal, ‘undead’: the annihilation towards which the death drive tends is not death as the unsurpassable limit of man *qua* finite being. Unconsciously, we all believe we are immortal – there is no death-anxiety in our unconscious, which is why the very phenomenon of ‘consciousness’ is grounded in our awareness of our mortality. (89)

The beginning point to understanding this passage is not to insert the “as structure” according to “common sense” or “everyday realism.” This passage does not work if we contrast the symbolic subjective experience (fullness, self, or life) against death (the

real, the void, nirvana). Doing so would be the primary and, in this case, fundamental, mistake. Instead, our recognition must point towards accepting that when the symbolic is seen in contrast to the real, we reverse the typical and everyday semiotic connotations. Considered from the perspective of the symbolic, we—you and I—died once we became initiated (or entered language), but considered from the perspective of *drive*, an immortality to which we once belonged persists. Elsewhere, Žižek puts this situation in other terms:

But the paradox for me, as I try to develop in my work, is that death drive is a very paradoxical notion if you read Freud closely. Death drive is basically, I claim, the Freudian term for immortality. Death drive has nothing to do, as Lacan points out, convincingly, with this so-called nirvana principle where everything wants to disappear, and so on. If anything . . . death drive is that which prevents you from dying. Death drive is that which persists beyond life and death. Again, it's precisely what, in my beloved Stephen King's horror/science fiction terminology he calls the "undead": this terrifying insistence beneath death, which is why Freud links death drive to the compulsion to repeat. You know, it can be dead, but it goes on. This terrifying insistence of an undead object. (Žižek and Ramey "On Divine")

It would not be a far stretch to read the so-called "Nirvana Principle" in these terms. If the goal of life is death (as Freud says) then this death is a return to the Earth. But the earth gives life immortally, and it also grants immortality. The location of the drive no longer persists, from this point of view, in the subject. The manifestation of the return to the circuit, of the object (a), is that the insistence of immortality bubbles up from beneath death so that the subject is but replaced by the life-giving, immortal earth itself. It is this immortality that we recognize as lost when we enter puberty and become part

of the world of experience. When we give up our innocence and become adults, we also abandon the idea that we will live forever.

7.2 How Math and Science Live the Undead Life

When Heidegger says that science doesn't think, it is because not thinking allows science to stay to its "own appointed course" ("What Calls" 373). Žižek helps us understand that science is the underbelly of death, the immortal, desubjectivized, acephalous, and undead knowledge that persists. Contra Nietzsche's will to knowledge, Žižek writes:

Is not the paradigmatic case of such an 'acephalous' knowledge that pertains to drive provided by *modern science*, which exemplifies the 'blind insistence' of the (death) drive? Modern science follows its path (in microbiology, and manipulating genes, in particle physics . . .), cost what it may; satisfaction is provided by knowledge itself, not by any moral or communal goals that scientific knowledge supposedly serves. And are not all the 'ethical committees' which abound today and endeavor to establish rules for the proper conduct of gene manipulations, medical experiments, and so on, ultimately so many desperate attempts to reinscribe this inexorable drive-progress of science, which knows of no inherent limitation (in short: this *inherent* ethic of the scientific attitude), within the confines of human goals, to provide them with a 'human face', a limitation or 'proper measure' that they are expected to obey? The commonplace wisdom today is that 'our extraordinary power to manipulate nature through scientific [or technological] devices has run ahead of our faculty to lead a meaningful existence, to make a human sense of this immense power'—at this point, the properly modern ethics of 'following the drive' clashes with the traditional ethics of leading a life regulated by proper measure and subordination of all its aspects to some notion of the Good. The problem is, of course, that the balance between the two can *never* be achieved: the notion of reinscribing scientific drive into the constraints of life-world is fantasy at its purest—perhaps the fundamental *Fascist* fantasy. Any limitation of this kind is utterly foreign to the inherent logic of science; science belongs to the Real and, as a mode of the Real of *jouissance*, it is indifferent to the modalities of symbolization, to the way it will affect social life. (*Plague* 37-38; Žižek's emphasis)

First, Žižek makes clear that science is a return to the repetitive circuit of the drive, where satisfaction is not fulfilled by an object but is obtained in the perpetual pursuit of knowledge for no sake other than the continual search. As Alex Csiszar writes in his recent rhetorical analysis of mathematical discourse, “A principal difficulty for mathematicians is the perceived ‘uselessness’ of mathematics, [for] much mathematical work will never lead to any practical application. . .” “This has led to the oft-repeated claim that mathematics is a waste of time or that its time has passed” (241).⁴ Second, by pointing to this non-thinking and ultimately meaningless pursuit,⁵ Žižek points to the fundamental incompatibility of ascribing a recognizable, subjectivized “face” to this drive, a circuit that was earlier represented as an amoeba waiting to suck our visages dry. It might at first sound odd, but from this perspective, science, like Foucault, “writes to have no face.” Third, to even think that it is possible to represent the drive with a symbolic and meaningful presence is the ultimate denial of material reality. Point of fact is that there is an undeniable, unsymbolic, non- and pre- linguistic reality that *does not think* that appears (or compears). Through the object (a), it makes its way through, or, to borrow a word from Lacanian composition theorist Marshall Alcorn, *penetrates* the symbolic order. It makes it way through, but it will not be compromised by the symbolic order. While the drive won’t be compromised (for doing so would be a violation of its impenetrable and “inherent logic”), humanity continually attempts to make not only meaningful but *moral* and *ethical* significance out of the repetitive circuit of the scientific and technological instantiation of the real. From this perspective,

science is seen as a threat, a wild animal that must be tamed and brought under the control of humanity, an effort that is bound to end in failure, and if Žižek is on target here, points to the worst in the human and the need for the inhuman.

7.3 Lamella, Symbolic, Cybernetics

Yet this moralism is the same fantasy that embroils contemporary media studies and their disciplinary problems between meaning and information, and, by extension, humanity and machine.⁶ As Katherine Hayles says, “From [cyberneticist] Norbert Wiener on, the flow of information through feedback loops has been associated with the deconstruction of the liberal humanist subject” (*How 2*). No surprise there, especially given that Lacan’s teaching, as Friedrich Kittler has made abundantly clear, “would remain mere theory without this clarification or technicality. It is not for nothing that Lacan forbid himself from talking about language with people who did not understand cybernetics” (“World” 145). To read Lacan through Kittler is to realize that they write on the same wavelength, that the strong and dominant thread of Lacanian theory is wholly a theory of the subject based on the disembodied, informational processing circuits of the real, a theory geared—ultimately—towards clinical practice, but one reliant on what can be summed up by what scientist Heinz von Foerster called in his groundbreaking *Observing Systems* (1984) “second order cybernetics.” As von Foerster explains it, so-called “second-order” cybernetics is the point at which the scientist/observer becomes part of the system that he is observing. In other words, if the basic principle of scientific discourse demands the separation between scientist and the thing observed (an *observed* system), second-order cybernetics violates that principle by

requiring that the scientist recognize his own participation in the system that s/he is observing.⁷ Speaking of the naïve realism of the traditional scientific method in an essay entitled “Ethics and Second-Order Cybernetics,” von Foerster writes:

I gave this principle here in its most brutal form, to demonstrate its nonsensicality: if the properties of the observer, namely, to observe and to describe, are eliminated, there is nothing left: no observation, no description. However, there was a justification for adhering to this principle, and this justification was fear. Fear that paradoxes would arise when the observers were allowed to enter the universe of their observations. And you know the threat of paradoxes: to steal their way into a theory is like having the cloven-hoofed foot of the Devil stuck in the door of orthodoxy. (“Ethics”)

The allusion to the devil is no mere accident, and the title of the essay reminds us of the difficulty of trying to apply ethics to science. von Foerster explains that the difference between morality and ethics is the same difference as that between first- and second-order cybernetics. First-order cybernetics requires that one’s orientation to the world be of one where one sees oneself as an independent observer watching the world go by. Here, I can tell others how to act: “Thou shalt. . .,” “Thou shalt not. . . .” “This,” says von Foerster, “is the origin of moral codes.” In the second case, where one’s view towards the world is that the self is seen as a participant in the larger “drama,” one is able only to direct oneself: “I shall. . .,” “I shall not.” Yet, ultimately, von Foerster adopts for second-order cybernetics Wittgenstein’s conclusion that an ethics “cannot be articulated,” for doing so ultimately results in a moralism—the attempt to impart a meaning on to a thing that resists articulation (ibid).

von Foerster belongs to the second wave of cybernetics that issued from the Macy Conferences that were organized by the Josiah Macy, Jr. Foundation and took

place between 1946 and 1953. They are generally considered the first interdisciplinary conferences between the “hard” and “soft” sciences, including contributors from mathematics, psychiatry, physics, engineering, anthropology, sociology, and other disciplines. The Macy conferences spawned systems theory and cybernetics, both front-runners to catastrophe theory, chaos theory, complex adaptive systems, and the digital revolution. Hayles’ popularity has been central to framing how modern media researchers think about the Macy Conferences. Her book *How We Became Posthuman* presents a careful and detailed study of the important debates concerning the researchers involved with the Post WW II conferences. According to Hayles, the Macy conferences proceeded from one major debate that eventually gave way to the “industry standard.” The debate focused on the relationship between meaning and information, what is at bottom little more than the debate concerning the contingent meaning of any message based upon its context, where the meaning of a message or utterance changes according to context. For the modern literary or rhetorical theorist, even if that context could be localized and fixed, as in the purest of communicational transmissions, individual subjectivities would have the potential to disrupt the meaning of the message. In a way strikingly similar to our earlier discussion of *kairos*, Norbert Wiener explained in 1948 that information involved the choice of choosing one message over a range of possible messages at any given moment. As Hayles explains it, the question confronting the information engineer (a designer of a company’s computerized telephone answering system, for example) is how to link up all inquiries or all possible messages with their probable recipients. The most efficient way to handle this kind of problem is to

eliminate the meaning attached to any individual message (the particular needs of the caller), to be concerned primarily with the number of possible messages that could be communicated, and to find the most efficient ways of opening the circuits for their transmission (Hayles 53). In this schema, the particular individual is less important than the successful completion of the circuit.

This debate is located at the beginning of the problems between human and machine, meaning and information, embodiment and disembodiment, humanism and posthumanism. But it has a robust history, and while a deep historical investigation is not in my scope here, I would like to single out some key motifs that can help us move beyond the impasse these divisions imply. I'll end this chapter with these ideas and pick them up again in the next.

7.4 Mathesis and Resemblance

And new philosophy calls all in doubt,
The element of fire is quite put out;
The sun is lost, and the earth, and no man's wit
Can well direct him where to look for it.
And freely men confess that this world's spent,
When in the planets and the firmament
They seek so many new; they see that this
Is crumbled out again to his atomies.
'Tis all in pieces, all coherence gone;
All just supply, and all relation.
—John Donne

The problem confronting the cyberneticians had already been encountered by Descartes in a similar way who had hoped that his *Discourse on Method* would, as apparatus theorists Michael Hobart and Zachary Schiffman say, “lay the foundation for an analytical vision of knowledge based upon mathematics, in which symbolic language

would supplant natural language as the most effective means for organizing and managing information” (108). As Hobart and Schiffman explain (and as the popular story goes), Descartes’ purpose for turning towards mathematics was a feeling of disenfranchisement from the rhetorical training he had received. Where rhetorical training during the Renaissance had promised wisdom, none of the scholastics could have predicted the power of Gutenberg’s printing explosion. It is no stretch to suggest that the turmoil expressed in the poem by Donne (above) has a strong correlation with the incertitude associated with the increasing numbers of (contradictory) books made available by the printing press. For Descartes, mathematics provided a renewal of science for discovering the moral wisdom promised by philosophy and rhetoric that could not be delivered. Hobart and Schiffman write:

What is there about mathematics – so forbidding and mysterious for so many – that animated Descartes’ unbounded confidence in it”? Why did he and others after him believe that the “imagination mathematical” . . . was capable of coping with the deluge of information so troubling to the order-seeking minds of the age? Natural language and the classifying impulses it had shaped over the centuries proved themselves incapable of responding to the crisis. Overflowing with information, the old classificatory categories had become useless for discernment or discovery amid natural and social flux. (114)

Rather than answering the Nietzschean sense of Heraclitean flux or the Bergsonian sense of duration, classical rationalism could offer little hope in thinking in terms of temporality. Hobart and Schiffman, who tell the story the story that goes by their title from the ancients to the information age *Literacy, Numeracy, and the Computer Revolution*, don’t realize it but echo Žižek’s point made by the acephalous knowledge of modern science. While Descartes’ intentions may have been fueled by the desire to

pair *scientia* (ordered knowledge) with *sapientia* (ordered knowledge of the divine, i.e. wisdom) so to achieve the latter, Descartes would unwittingly separate the two.

The invention and application of the printing press can be seen as responsible for issuing in a proliferation of knowledge overwhelming at the time. What mathematics or *mathesis* promises is, according to Michel Foucault, above all, *order*. Fredrich Kittler has accused Michel Foucault of limiting himself to analyzing discourse (see the introduction to *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*) at the risk of ignoring the impact technological innovations have had on the history of thought. If only we could respond to Kittler by pointing out that nobody writes like Foucault, that nobody manages so much in such a little space, that nobody openly works through problems in his writing as Foucault does and shares that thinking with his readers, that he, as Foucault said of Nietzsche, wrote such good books. That response cannot do. Kittler is right that Foucault ignores technological innovations and beyond the influential factors between the two figures, it is the *effects* and not the causes of historical discontinuities that would give us the patterns to see through the masterful weaving of Foucault's writing loom so much that Western popular discourse has obscured. All that is needed for those who concern themselves with why the beginning of the seventeenth century marked a radical shift in how knowledge would be ordered is to plug Gutenberg's machine into the split between Renaissance Resemblance and Classical Representation in Foucault's *Les mots et les choses*. If we were forced to choose which story we should believe, Descartes' disenfranchisement with rhetoric which ushers in a new age or the umpteen other changes Foucault's comparison of Renaissance *similitude* with the

ordering of the classical age, can there be any doubt which yields more food for thought? Prior to the Classical order of the age of Descartes, Foucault tells us what language was like:

In the sixteenth century, real language is not a totality of independent signs, a uniform and unbroken entity in which things could be reflected one by one, as in a mirror, and so express their particular truths. It is rather an opaque, mysterious thing, closed in upon itself, a fragmented mass, its enigma renewed in every interval, which combines here and there with the forms of the world and becomes interwoven with them: so much so that all these elements, taken together, form a network of marks in which each of them may play, and does in fact play, in relation to all the others, the role of content or of sign, that of secret or of indicator. In its raw, historical sixteenth-century being, *language is not an arbitrary system*; it has been set down in the world and forms part of it, both because things themselves hide and manifest their own enigma like a language and because words offer themselves to men as things to be deciphered. The great metaphor of the book that one opens, that one pours over and reads in order to know nature, is merely the reverse and visible side of another transference, and a much deeper one, which forces language to reside in the world, among the plants, the herbs, the stones, and the animals. (35; my emphasis)

The move from the sixteenth to the seventeenth century, does much more than mark a distinction between *scientia* and *sapientia* (even if the intention was to separate them for the purposes of bringing them back together); Foucault tells us that to know the divine is nothing less than to discover the *unarbitrary* resemblances between words and things that present themselves mysteriously to be deciphered. Here I quote Foucault at length:

The world is covered with signs that must be deciphered, and those signs, which reveal resemblances and affinities, are themselves no more than forms of similitude. To know must therefore be to interpret: to find a way from the visible mark to that which is being said by it and which, without that mark, would be like unspoken speech, dormant within things. . . [During the sixteenth century] divination is not a rival form of

knowledge; it is part of the main body of knowledge itself. Moreover, these signs that must be interpreted indicate what is hidden only in so far as they resemble it; and it is not possible to act upon those marks without at the same time operating upon that which is secretly indicated by them. This is why the plants that represent the head, or the eyes, or the heart, or the liver, will possess an efficacy in regard to that organ. . . . The project of elucidating the “Natural Magics,” which occupies an important place at the end of the sixteenth century and survives into the middle of the seventeenth, is not a vestigial phenomenon in the European consciousness; it was revived – as Campanella expressly tells us – because the fundamental configuration of knowledge consisted of the reciprocal cross-reference of signs and similitudes. The form of magic was inherent in this way of knowing. And by the same token, so was erudition: for, in the treasure handed down to us by Antiquity, the value of language lay in the fact that it was the sign of things. There is no difference between the visible marks that God has stamped upon the surface of the earth, so that we may know its inner secrets, and the legible words that the Scriptures, or the sages of relation to these texts is of the same nature as the relation to things: in both cases there are signs that must be discovered. But God, in order to exercise our wisdom, merely sowed nature with forms for us to decipher (and it is in this sense that knowledge should be *divinatio*), whereas the Ancients have already provided us with interpretations, which we need do no more than gather together. Or which we would need only to gather together, were it not for the necessity of learning their language, reading their texts, and understanding what they have said. The heritage of Antiquity, like nature itself, is a vast space requiring interpretation; in both cases there are signs to be discovered and then, little by little, made to speak. In other words, *divinatio* and *eruditio* are both part of the same hermeneutics. . . . There is no difference between marks and words in the sense that there is between verifiable fact and tradition. The process is everywhere the same: that of the sign and its likeness, and this is why nature and the word can intertwine with one another to infinity, forming, for those who can read it, *one vast single text*. (32-34; last emphasis mine)

Although Foucault continually returns to the role of interpretation in this passage, we would be mistaken to ignore how our own notions of hermeneutics must be – of necessity because of the arbitrariness of language – fundamentally and radically different. What is at stake and what has made all the difference is the middle space that

binds words and things. Much is often made of Jacques Derrida's discussion of the signature, but Foucault's discussion of the *signature* – where God himself wrote upon things their names, names that correspond with the essence of the thing – is only one among the many other notions of resemblance and similitude that bring together what Foucault calls “the prose of the world.” This, if you will, “missing link” between words and things means that when we speak of interpretation today, we are already only speaking of meaning in the diluted sense of being the compliment, much like the Boolean 0 (negation) compliments the 1 (universe), to the sign. For the sixteenth century before Descartes, if the limits of thought were designated by the extent to which they could *not* be rolled into one (such as magic, divination, and knowledge), it was because everything in the world resembled and shared affinities with everything else; indeed, what is called the symbolic language today, so long as it is understood as dividing the world into discrete units (i.e. so long as it is a *digital operation* [in the sense of counting as in the digits of the hand]) did not exist, according to Foucault, for the sixteenth century, and, as Hobart and Schiffman also suggest, should be seen as distinct from what we can only after Foucault (truly) appreciate what is meant by *natural language*. Instead of the symbolic separating the real; instead of the unrepresentable amorphous mass *murmuring* (to borrow Foucault's term) beneath language, *resemblance* indicated that there was no gap between words and things because words were things themselves (reminiscent of my chapter on Harman) and corresponded to nature not through signification but through kinship; the various modes of similitude (*aemulatio*, *convenientia*, *sympatia*, *analogia*) that Foucault presents

shows that words and things were connected in multiple, overlapping, and intersecting ways, in which, like a pair of snakes, “signs and their similitudes were wrapped around one another in an endless spiral” (32). In a way that appeals to our modern sense, Foucault calls this relationship between words and things as nothing less than an “*infinite richness of resemblance introduced as a third term between signs and their meaning*” (ibid.; my emphasis). Meanings are only polar ends of a middle that can only be expressed poorly by hyperbolic terms such as infinite, layered, rich, intersecting, blending, and so on.

Foucault’s ideal shines through his analysis as clearly as any argument made against him (that is, his nostalgia), a condition that creates little need for polemics here. This ideal would be whether the great excluded middle could ever be recovered. If we were to ask such a question now would only bring us back to a repetition of Foucault. (Or, we could go even further back into history, in a “return to the Greeks,” and bring back the middle voice where the middle was already at work in any utterance, as part of the linguistic structure.) Instead, what this analysis tell us is precisely that there is a long history of the severance of language from the world (logos as cosmos for the Greeks and logos as resemblance for the Renaissance). What needs to be added to this analysis is the role of technology that begins with Descartes.

7.5 Foundation of Science

The typical narrative of the damage technology does to humanity should be clear to many. Following from Heidegger-Foucault and postmodernism at large, the narrative is that man through *physis* (nature’s unfolding without man) and *techne* (nature’s

unfolding through man) has a status on earth that is itself part of the revealing process of the cosmos. With dividing practices of ordering set by Descartes and Classical rationalism, *physis* is divided in half, where man becomes subject and the world object (and so on). As for *techne*, craftsman and artists originally shared the same ontological status because of their catalytical role in the emergence of art. Ontologically speaking for Heidegger, there was no difference between craft and art (which should not be confused with modes of production). As we can imagine, what is most essential about modern technology is not that it changes the statuses of artisans versus poets (a condition complicated by the introduction of aesthetics), but turns man into the equivalent of a piece of equipment. This is Heidegger's argument in the well-known essay "The Question Concerning Technology" that I turn to now.

7.6 Framing the Question

It is first worth noting that that the question concerning technology resonates with the turn that Foucault marked between resemblance and representation, for Heidegger says that the "essence" of technology is a question that is quite different from historical technological advancements. Instead, it is located in the epistemological shift of order, that is, mathematical science. Heidegger explains that while technology arises simultaneously with the development of modern physics as a science, physics "sets nature up to exhibit itself as a coherence of forces calculable in advance, it orders its experiments precisely for the purpose of asking whether and how nature reports itself when set up in this way" (120). Thus, Heidegger writes, (modern) technology and physics require one thing: "that nature report itself in some way or other that is

identifiable through calculation and that it remain orderable as a system of information” (328). For this reason, “the essence holding sway” within technology, begins with “mathematical science” (327, 326) and Descartes.

For Heidegger, *techne* is a mode of revealing or a mode of unveiling, of *aletheia*. On the one hand, there is *physis* (nature) that reveals, that is, a revealing that is a coming forth from within itself. A tree that grows leaves and new branches in the spring is *physis*, since especially its revealing is within itself. The difference between *physis* and *poiesis* is that the latter is a mode of revealing in another. Heidegger gives the example of a silversmith who makes a chalice. It is through the silversmith that the chalice comes to be revealed/disclosed. Heidegger writes: “Whoever builds a house or a ship or forges a sacrificial chalice reveals what is to be brought forth, according to the terms of the four modes of occasioning” (319).⁸ As Heidegger explains it, what is to be brought forth or the end product (naturally, *product* contains all the wrong connotations) of the object is revealed by the materials presented to the artisan. In turn, the “what is to be brought forth” determines for the artisan how the object should be constructed from those materials. “Thus,” writes Heidegger, “what is decisive in *techne* does not at all lie in making and manipulating, nor in the using of means, but rather in the revealing mentioned before. It is as revealing, and not as manufacturing, that *techne* is a bringing-forth (319).

What separates *techne* from modern technology, however, is the relationship that technology has with modern physics and that modern physics is founded on mathematical science. These relationships, from mathematics to physics to technology,

change the relationship between *techne* and technology. Modern technology still reveals that which is concealed but its mode of doing so is not a matter of “bringing-forth.”

This is because the gathering in *techne* determines the manner of construction, so that the work of the artist is a matter of bringing forth what lies dormant (without as such materiality, form, or finality) and the artisan serves as the efficient cause to allow revealing in another to “occasion.” For modern technology, however, revealing is not a matter of a *bringing-forth* but is what Heidegger calls, a *challenging*, a sort of *dare* that humans impose upon nature, a dare that nature be not only supply but storage for the demands of man. In a comparison to the forces gathered by the wind, Heidegger writes:

The revealing that rules in modern technology is a challenging, which puts to nature the unreasonable demand that it supply energy which can be extracted and stored as such. But does this not hold true for the old windmill as well? No. Its sails do indeed turn in the wind; they are left entirely to the wind’s blowing. But the windmill does not unlock energy from the air currents in order to store it. (320)

Heidegger asks what kind of unconcealment is particular to a modern technology whose mode is a challenging of nature for both supply and ordering. Hence, we come to the famous answer. Heidegger replies that nature becomes a “standing-reserve,” a storage that should be distinguished from “stock” since standing-reserve everywhere implies a “rubric” of modern technology, a design and ordering *for* nature that calls everything in this design to be on call for the technology (322). Such an ordering, fundamentally changes man’s relation to the earth. Thus, Heidegger writes that “the earth now reveals itself as a coal mining district, the soil as a mineral deposit” (320).

That which reveals the earth as a coal mining district and/or nature as a “standing reserve” issues from what Heidegger calls *enframing*. As soon as man begins to think with Descartes that nature can reveal itself in its essence through ordering, then the doorway opens to the experience of modern technology. As such, what is essential about modern technology is nothing technological but is instead numerical *ordering*. *To order* must be understood in both the sense of a mathesis and that human beings exert a will to mastery over nature. This is the danger of technology, but this is not all.

To speak of the danger of technology for Heidegger is to recall Heidegger’s discussion of the typewriter in *The Parmenides*, where it is the typewriter that severs the human’s relationship with the word. Since the word is intimately tied to the hand, the typewriter cuts the human’s relationship with Being. It was here, in 1943, that Heidegger wrote:

The typewriter tears writing from the essential realm of the hand, i.e., the realm of the word. The word itself turns into something “typed.” Where typewriting, on the contrary, is only a transcription and serves to preserve the writing, or turns into print something already written, there it has a proper, though limited, significance. . . . Mechanical writing deprives the hand of its rank in the realm of the written word and degrades the word to a means of communication. In addition, mechanical writing provides this “advantage,” that it conceals the handwriting and thereby the character. The typewriter makes everyone look the same. . . . (in Kittler *GFT*, 198-99)

This reduction of language to communication and handwriting to sameness is extended in “The Question Concerning Technology” to where human beings themselves are reduced and ordered to a standing-reserve. As David Krell notes, Heidegger delivered a lecture in 1949 called “The Danger” that finds its fulfillment in “The Question

Concerning Technology.” Heidegger explains the way that man implicates man as a stock of resources waiting to be exploited. He writes:

As soon as what is unconcealed no longer concerns man even as object, but exclusively as standing-reserve, and man in the midst of objectlessness is nothing but the orderer of the standing-reserve, then he comes to the very brink of a precipitous fall; that is, he comes to the point where he himself will have to be taken as standing-reserve. Meanwhile, man, precisely as the one so threatened, exalts himself and postures a lord of the earth. In this way the illusion comes to prevail that everything man encounters exists only insofar as it is his construct. The illusion gives rise in turn to one final delusion: it seems as though man everywhere and always encounters only himself. (“QCT” 332)

That is, the essence of modern technology is found in enframing (in both senses of ordering). As Mark Taylor writes, “By reducing objective truth to subjective certainty, Descartes set in motion developments that eventually led to ‘the will to mastery,’ which has resulted in twentieth-century techno-science” (83). Greg Ulmer makes a similar point in saying that “From Heidegger’s point of view, the danger of technology is that its rigid cause-and-effect enframing order might blind humanity to alternative orders” (*Applied* 15). The machine of the typewriter transforms every hand into the same hand, establishing a uniformity over the materiality of the word. This is only possible because it was already that mathematical ordering reduces nature to the same uniformity. Enframing transforms man by two illusions: first, failing to see nature as other than a standing-reserve opens the danger of his establishing technological rule over the earth. Second, he himself cannot escape from enframing himself, where man, once subject, is no longer even object, as he becomes mere means for technology which means that he not only exploits and dominates nature but that he does the same to himself.

Likewise, Foucault advises us to at least understand the Cartesian implications in a way that draws our attention that what occurs as a result of “Classical rationalism” is not the attempt to make nature calculable and mechanical neither is it to “discover beneath this rationalism a play of ‘contrary forces’: the forces of nature and life refusing to let themselves be reduced either to algebra or to dynamics, and thus preserving, in the depths of Classicism itself, the natural resources of the non-rationalizable” (56-57). Instead, Foucault suggests that we recognize two primary effects. First, that all things become reducible to establishing an ordered succession between their relations, even those that are non-measurable. Second, that on the foundation of order everything does not turn to mathematics but that disciplines have a reduction to order as their foundations. As Hobart, Schiffman, and Foucault all explain, though the intentions were to arrive at the destination of wisdom, using *scientia* and mathesis to provide what resemblance could not – a method for *sapientia* – doing so would separate words and meanings, a severance that would result in wisdom occupying the space of mere knowledge. This is, in fact, the consequence of the foundation of order. The popular postmodern narrative that turns Descartes into a devil that insinuates the split if not between heaven and earth then between words and things and the other doubles that follow (mind/body etc.), offers little by way of figuring how it may be possible to displace the modern day fetish for order.

The information revolution and the development of the opposed schools of the so-called “hard” and “soft” sciences introduced by Descartes should remind us that the reach of the Classical age was exemplified (not without various stops along the way) by

cyberneticist's Claude Shannon's ability to combine Boolean logic with electronic circuitry. Whereas Boole hoped to apply the abstract equations of mathematics to so-called "natural" language by inventing the binary system where 1 stood for the universe and 0 for its complement, Shannon showed how binary digits (bits) could express the possibilities of "and," "or," and "not" to current moving through a circuit. Hobart and Schiffman describe how Shannon's paper "The Mathematical Theory of Communication" would take the Cartesian desire for order to an extreme so severe that it would become the "catalyst for the development of digital logical circuitry (210)."

They write:

In digital circuitry, logical operations are achieved electronically by means of gates, or switches, which open and close, thereby halting or permitting the flow of electrons through them. The positions of the switches, either off or on, can correspond to a 1 or a 0, according to the design's architect. Consequently, placing a number of switches in a properly designed circuit enables the flow of current to correspond exactly to Boole's logic. (210)

Hobart and Schiffman suggest that were it not for Shannon's "pathbreaking paper," the theoretical background for designing the first generation of electronic devices, components, and machines as well as the more advanced integrated circuits of the contemporary age would have remained dormant. What we owe to the Descartes-Boole-Shannon aggressive obsession with control and order, is nothing other than electronics and their applications in every field, from aeronautics to medicine.

While Shannon's paper and Weaver's further contribution in 1949 were to become the major contribution to designing circuits, their role in the Macy conferences were primarily as a theory of communication. Central to the thesis was nothing less than

what we should perceive, given our current discussion, as a purification or even an exaggeration of the Cartesian desire for order through two eliminations: First, anything that did not fit the constraints of the imposed design of the communication system (such as “and,” “or,” and “not”) was considered excess or noise. As such, since noise (or what counted as noise) could not be channeled by the constraints imposed by the transmission circuitry, it would be filtered and discarded. Second, if, as Foucault suggests, classical rationalism turned a rich and complex ternary system based upon resemblance into a truncated and sterilized signifying system based upon representation, then Shannon went one step further by attempting to eliminate *all meaning* from the process of information; on the one hand there would be nothing but pure signs; on the other, meaning itself – even in this now truncated form – would become unnecessary! In the following passage, Shannon provides a brief summary of the model he put forward in “The Mathematical Theory of Communication”:

The fundamental problem of communication is that of reproducing at one point either exactly or approximately a message selected at another point. Frequently the messages have *meaning*; that is they refer to or are correlated according to some system with certain physical or conceptual entities. These semantic aspects of communication are irrelevant to the engineering problem. The significant aspect is that the actual message is one *selected from a set* of possible messages. The system must be designed to operate for each possible selection, not just the one which will actually be chosen since this is unknown at the time of design.
(Shannon and Weaver 3)

Attaching *meaning* to the transfer of information would add unnecessary interference to the task of designing a circuit that would account for a variety of different outcomes (expressed as “and,” “or,” and “not”). Also, it is just this different set of possible

messages that constitutes what Shannon and Weaver hope to designate as *information*. In other words, as Shannon and Weaver write, “the concept of information applies *not to the individual messages . . . but rather to the situation as a whole*” and that this implies choices for selecting different messages among a set (ibid. 99; Taylor 109; my emphasis).

Here is Kate Hayles’ reaction to the Shannon-Wiener model. Hayles writes:

Not that the theory is formulated entirely without reference to what information means. Only the probabilities of message elements enter into the equations. Why divorce information from meaning? Shannon and Wiener wanted information to have a stable value as it moved from one context to another. If it was tied to meaning, it would potentially have to change values every time it was embedded in a new context, because context affects meaning. (*How* 53)

Here Hayles gives the example of how the same utterance (“It’s raining”) means something quite different when a person who does not know what the weather is asks someone who does from when two people who are standing in the pouring rain. Hayles explains the dilemma confronting Shannon: “An information concept that ties information to meaning would have to yield two different values for the two circumstances, even though the message (“It’s raining”) is the same” (ibid.). She continues, “To cut through this Gordian knot, Shannon and Wiener defined information so that it would be calculated as the same value regardless of the contexts in which it was embedded, which is to say, they divorced it from meaning” (53-54).

The acceptance of Shannon’s theories have done nothing less than to lead Hayles to argue that information is here severed from embodiment and to venerate others attending the Macy conferences (such as Lawrence Kubie and Donald MacKay)

who looked for ways to keep meaning and embodiment connected to cybernetics. Hayles understands quite well that Shannon's ideas for information are (and were) not to be taken as a theory of communication but instead as a theory for information transmission. The severing of information from meaning and the application of it for the purposes of distributing data such as 1's and 0's in computer algorithms was not – even by Shannon – meant to suggest that language, which as Lacan says is “burdened with history,” should be conceived of in terms of information or data. Hayles' concern, however, is with the semantic slippage and simplification that happens with the introduction of new concepts; for this reason, Hayles is less concerned with Shannon than with how Shannon's theories have turned into an ideology that moves too quickly into the completing the separation between mind and body. Hayles writes:

Shannon and [Norbert] Wiener defined information so that it would be calculated as the same value regardless of the contexts in which it was embedded, which is to say, they divorced it from meaning. *In context*, this was an appropriate and sensible decision. *Taken out of context*, the definition allowed information to be conceptualized as if it were an entity that can flow unchanged between different material substrates, as when Moravec envisions the information contained in a brain being downloaded into a computer. Ironically, this reification of information is exacted through the same kind of decontextualizing moves that the theory uses to define information as such. The theory decontextualizes information; Moravec decontextualizes the theory. Thus, a simplification necessitated by engineering considerations becomes an ideology in which a reified concept of information is treated as if it were full commensurate with the complexities of human thought. (*How* 54)

In light of our discussions of Foucault and Žižek, what should be evident is that the most striking concern is not the theoretical misappropriation or semantic slippage. What should appear as most startling is modernity's continued attempt to moralize by

attempting to salvage meaning from its connection to the sign. Between the age of resemblance and the age of mathesis, language moves from being a body itself to signs that *represent* bodies. Hayles's frustration is with this continual slippage towards increased formalization and the digital evolution of language. She opens *How We Became Posthuman* with the explanation of the shock and fear that hit her when she read Hans Moravec's *Mind Children: The Future of Robot and Human Intelligence*, a fear expressed in the Morevec's statement that "it will soon be possible to download human consciousness into a computer" (1). In her most recent book (*My Mother was a Computer*), Hayles extends this argument into the discussion of language and code, where code, she argues, continually takes on a stronger force in a world where computers talk to each other just as frequently as do humans; hence, language is continually and ever increasingly becoming more digitized and, as such, strictly and unambiguously dehumanized. Of course, such a statement assumes a disciplinary bias typical of those who work in the humanities, specifically that the *mathesis* of order in the tradition of Descartes, Leibniz and Boole,⁹ and that enframing (a la Heidegger) is a danger to the autonomy of the human being.

In sum, the greatest fear is that the modern world tends towards increasing technological formalization. To think in terms of either, to valorize either, as in recent arguments concerning posthumanism, is to think in terms of the burden of memory that is inscribed into language. The arguments against the side of science; that is, the arguments that argue against negation, will to knowledge, forgetting, information, disembodiment, anti-narrative, and death, all do two things: they use particular

connotations of these definitions in the service of their programs and share the moralistic fantasy of being able to seize control by imposing meaning on pure mathematics. Rather than resisting increasing formalization and symbolization, I would like to ask at the time being what are the potential benefits—aside from the goals of mathematics, engineering, or physics—in ascribing or holding to a benefit to be derived from mathematical formalization, in severing and cutting meaning from the sign? In the next section, I take up these debates with more contemporary researchers/thinkers.

CHAPTER 8

RHETORICAL INVENTION FOR A DYNAMIC VERNACULAR; OR, FROM INFORMATION TO AION

Thought is replaced by a Boolean algebra, and consciousness by the unconscious, which (at least since Lacan's reading) make of Poe's "Purloined Letter" a Markoff chain. And that the symbolic is called the world of the machine undermines Man's delusion of possessing a "quality" called "consciousness," which identifies him as something other and better than a "calculating machine." For both people and computers are "subject to the appeal of the signifier"; that is, they are both run by programs. "Are these humans," Nietzsche already asked himself in 1874, eight years before buying a typewriter, "or perhaps only thinking, writing, and speaking machines?"
—Friedrich Kittler

Reflecting back over my (our) investigation into the possibilities of rhetorical invention for new media, the first part of this dissertation was largely concerned with *kairos* and *nomos*, and since it was, it was largely concerned with temporality, the cut of the event, history, memory, and forgetting. The middle chapters of the dissertation began working towards what I started mentioning as *the* debate concerning contemporary media theory, a debate that signifies the tension between the humanities and technology in the term, *posthuman*. I promised early on that by the end of the dissertation I would offer another form of temporality that would loosen the constraints between *kairos* + *nomos* that we studied in those early chapters. (Thus, part of this chapter will be to illustrate that temporal form, one that should prove to have important consequences for thinking and performing invention for new media.) As I proceeded down that path, pursuing what I identified as the limits of the middle voice with the help of Geoffrey Bennington, Freud, E.C. White, Jean Laplanche, Heidegger, Graham

Harman, Lacan, Slavoj Žižek and others, I came to two primary discoveries. First, that the cut of the event (retroaction) reverses the kaironomic relationship; respecting the scission or cut of *kairos* (kerein) rather than letting it be absorbed in a Heideggerian desire for constancy, gives the opportunity to recognize that it is the cut that *causes* nomos. As such, as Žižek recognizes in his book on Deleuze, it is “the fundamental cut that is the condition for meaning” (*Organs* 86). Consequently, by following Deleuze, another temporal dimension (that we will explore in this chapter) becomes possible. As I will show, this other temporality has important consequences for writing studies. Our second primary discovery follows from the first: only once the kairic event happens does its context become possible. This context, as I have shown in the example of the beating fantasy and in the example of the boulder rolling down and up the hill, must be *constructed after* the decision (why else do authors write their introductions last?). This construction indicates that the knowledge gained from the past is a “desubjectivized” or “fundamental” fantasy; as such, it (nomos, meaning, history) never had a “real” existence. This “acephalous knowledge” indicates its relation to the real, or, as we said with Lacan, this knowledge indicates its status as the lamella—the *unreal*, immortal life that persists. In turn, we observed how this drive is associated with modern science and technology; in the domain of cybernetics, acephalous knowledge is associated pejoratively; it is more concerned with *mathesis* and the consequences of mathesis—namely, the blind will to knowledge and disembodied information; conversely, the humanistic tradition ought to be concerned with meaning, interpretation, and ethics.

This second half of this dissertation has been arranged by first discussing issues of temporality and the humanistic, obsessive tendency to impose a morality on the inhuman drive (in its informational “disembodied” manifestation). In relation to this backdrop, this final chapter will be arranged chiasmically. First, I’ll pick up the discussion of the post- or the in-human, and then I’ll turn again to temporality. In this second part, I’ll draw upon Gilles Deleuze in *The Logic of Sense* to illustrate what I mean by “another form of temporality.” I will compliment this discussion with illustrations taken from director Greg Harrison’s 2004 Sundance Film Festival Winner *November* (starring Courtney Cox). *November* is an excellent example of how film is able to imagine and construct the paradoxes of time that thinking with new media makes possible. More importantly, the film puts into visual form the abstract concepts that Deleuze articulates; and while these concepts may challenge our received linear and imagined paradigms, the examples from the film unproblematically (yet still paradoxically) offer more immediate prehension.

After this discussion, which is admittedly the climax of the dissertation, I will end the dissertation in a Postface by discussing some avant-garde artists who have sought to challenge our originary *chronic* view towards time in a way that opens up the possibility of, to use a phrase from Derrida, “pluri-dimensional symbolic thought” (*Of Grammatology* 80).

8.1 How Information Lost It's Body: Hansen and Hayles

Mark N.B. Hansen, who I mentioned only briefly in chapter six, has become one of the loudest spokespersons of the body in American media studies in recent years. With a wide and varied schooling paralleled by a boldness and willingness to take on what he himself calls in his *Embodying Technesis* the “master-thinkers” of twentieth century philosophy (from Heidegger to Derrida to Lacan to Deleuze), Hansen has set a trajectory for himself that will likely require that future students of mediality to consider his work. While Hansen has an impressive breadth and a rather endearing if sometimes exacerbating obsession with esoteric language (especially in his second book *New Philosophy for New Media*) he couldn't have gotten so far or written so much, he tells us, without the help of Kate Hayles. In his Acknowledgments to *Embodying Technesis*, Hansen writes:

Finally, Kate Hayles has literally opened a new scholarly world for me; her generous support for my project and her own example as a sophisticated cultural critic of science and technology have reaffirmed for me the urgency of rethinking our received linguistic and literary paradigms in our ongoing efforts to grapple with the fundamental shifts currently underway in our culture (xi).

The reason Hansen takes on such figures as those “master-thinkers” mentioned above can be traced back to Hayles' *How We Became Posthuman*, for it is here where Hayles, in a confessed following of the thought of the smart technophobe Arthur Kroker, takes up the issue of “how information lost its body” in the “flesh-eating 90s” (Hayles *How* 5). Suggestive of the predilection that our current decade would mark a return to embodiment, as though informatics succumbed to the pendulum swings of ten year

cycles, it is this disembodiment that most troubles Hayles. What Hayles emphasized then was that—and Hansen recently has written two books and several articles on this motif—it can be “a shock to remember that for information to exist, it must *always* be instantiated in a medium, whether that medium [alluding to Shannon] is the page from the *Bell Laboratories Journal* . . ., the computer-generated topological maps used by the Human Genome Project, or the cathode ray tube on which virtual worlds are imaged” (13; original emph.).¹ Anticipating a turn *back* towards embodiment (a turn that found supporters in the work of Antonio Damasio, the rise of *affective* studies, and the resurgence of Spinoza), Hayles emphasized that in order for information to survive, it would always require a material substrate. If information didn’t *need* a *human* body, then it needed (some) *body* nonetheless.

Apparently, Hansen *was* shocked, and did not bother (neither did Hayles) to make the distinction between bodies and *human* bodies. As Fred Kittler, Marshall McLuhan, Greg Ulmer, and even Paul Virilio have shown, a material substrate that encodes or stores information of whatever sort certainly need not be one that is accessible to humans. Hansen’s main claim in both *Embodying Technesis* and *New Philosophy for New Media*, is nothing less than the problem of the relationship between technology and language. What does Hansen mean by *Technesis*? He answers: “The putting into discourse of technology” (*Embodying* 27).

To understand Hansen’s argument is to understand two important steps. The first step is to consider two different versions of what is meant by the term *technesis*. First, when Hansen says that technesis is the “putting into discourse of technology,” he does

not mean that technology is talked about rather than directly experienced, but that the cultural impact technology has on the lifeworld is reduced and subordinated to the ideological and constructivist social systems of power that are, in the popular academic postmodern imagination, products of language. What Hansen is attempting to do here is to elevate concerns of technologies to the level of language, and, consequently, to push the envelope of cultural studies. Hansen writes:

Like language games, technologies play a constitutive role in structuring the worlds within which they exist. To the extent that we humans necessarily act within such prestructured worlds—worlds we in fact share with our technologies—our practices presuppose technology in ways that foreclose all possibility for analytical isolation and cognitive recuperation. (*Embodying 2*)

Nothing is gained by arguing with Hansen on this particular point. Technologies are just as important as language. If language structures social reality and human consciousness, technologies do the same (as Marshall McLuhan made clear long ago). My intention in quoting this passage is to point out what it says, but I have to pause and draw your attention to *how* it says. Notice the last clause of the final sentence. In a different context, I would not bother to draw your attention to his particular *style*, but what to make of—in the context of this quote—this turn of phrase? Should we let it simply pass? A weird, unnoticed editorial oversight? “*Analytical isolation and cognitive recuperation*”? Perhaps I should overlook it, but in this context, a context specifically about the reduction of language to technology, I see a revealing symptom. Given the particularities of his thesis, the *way* that Hansen writes reveals a style that shows his allegiances not to technology but to the play, signification, and ultimate

meaninglessness of language. (Who can blame him?) In fact, in the forward to Hansen's book where she generally lauds his study, Hayles picks up on this symptom that lies at the attack-a-cardia of Hansen's project. She writes: "Skeptics might wonder if Hansen suffers himself from the disease that he so brilliantly diagnoses, for he seems to shy away from actual technologies and our experiences with them in favor of verbal articulations" (vii-viii). Hayles does not, however, go on to counter this analysis, an analysis that is nobody's but her own. Instead, she explains that the importance of the study outweighs "the paradox," a paradox she is willing to "grant" but since the project "fulfills an important role that could not be accomplished in another way," she is not willing to grant the "judgment" (viii). I have my own suspicions as to whether we can call this a paradox, especially since paradoxes have different levels of reducibility, or, in other words, paradoxes either stand or are resolved according to the information and knowledge one has available at one's disposal.

Still, returning to Hansen, technologies are not reducible to language, and Hansen goes on to state "the majority of cultural critics [with the exception of Kittler and Hayles] remain incapable, often despite their own intentions, of overcoming their dependence on a representationalist conception of subjectivity" (5). But Hansen accuses the so-called "master-thinkers" of "high-theory" of just this reductionism, and *Embodying Technesis* moves along the path of pointing out that from Heidegger to Freud to Derrida to Lacan to Deleuze and Guattari (and those between) have failed to "embrace technology" and have thus failed to account for this proposition—a proposition that is more McLuhanesque than Hansenian.

The second part of Hansen's thesis is particularly about his division of *embodiment* into two types: epistemological and corporeal. By epistemological, Hansen says, "embodiment demarcates the materialization in artifactual form of some given process of inscription" (26). For a moment, this sounds like Foucault's signature that we discussed in chapter seven, where the name of something could not be separated from the actual body; although Hansen is not alluding to Renaissance resemblance, we would—in theory—not be off the mark in making this comparison. This epistemological embodiment is to be contrasted to Hansen's preferred form, corporeal embodiment. What lies between the two is either a question of *origins*, of whether epistemological or corporeal embodiment comes first, or a question of *value*, of whether one has been neglected over the other. But both cases intersect since what has been given originary status has also been given primacy. Epistemological embodiment sees writing (inscription) as signifiers floating freely and landing, much like pollen lands on the roof of a car, on some kind of artifact or material body. Unlike the pollen, however, our hoses or afternoon thundershowers can't wash it off; instead, since it is language, it is absorbed into the body and resides there. The artifact thus serves—and here Hansen explicitly mentions Derrida's *différance*—"to stabilize and *exteriorize* something that is by nature amorphous and highly tenuous—for example, meaning . . ." (27).²

In some magical (and hence, transparent) turn of the screw, Hansen determines that *différance* is a concept that stabilizes meaning rather than recognizing that *différance* is a *paracept* that recognizes the impossibility of meaning's stability; instead, Hansen wants to say that epistemological embodiment needs to be seen in contrast to an

embodiment that he calls corporeal. Thus, here, inscription (writing) originates in the living matter of the body rather than the social constitution or system. In short, writing cannot be seen as independent from the body; instead, the body—the human body—is the origin of inscription. Hansen writes: “rather than moving from inscription to (technical or artifactual) embodiment, it [the corporeal view of embodiment] stresses the fundamental role of embodiment as the necessary background out of which all acts of inscription emerge and take on meaning” (27). Hansen goes on to explain that this corporeal embodiment—because it comes from the living body—cannot be represented or articulated by language. To emphasize this point, Hansen quotes philosopher Mark Johnson who reminds us of what we have covered thoroughly in many different discussions throughout this dissertation;³ that is, that representation is inherently oxymoronic—what representation proposes to do cannot be done. So for Hansen, representation fails at representing the “dimensions of our experience and understanding, [so] we must not mistake our mode of description for the things described” (ibid.). For all the esoteric language, it may be said confidently (and without worries of reductionism) that the split that Hansen makes between these two kinds of embodiment relies on the knowledge that corporeal embodiment contains an excess that cannot be captured by language. On the other hand, Hansen does not explain whether what he calls “epistemological embodiment” is or is not representable; instead, he emphasizes not only that corporeal bodily experiences are unique in that they exceed language but also that they are the background or origin from which “all acts of inscription emerge and take on meaning” (67).

In “Cinema Beyond Cinematics, or How to Frame the Digital Image,” Hansen exposes his allegiances to Hayles by drawing upon her analysis of the Macy Conferences in *How We Became Posthuman*. Hansen writes: “Kate Hayles has brilliantly demonstrated how contingent decisions on the part of a small group of scientists (most prominently, Norbert Wiener and Warren McCulloch) led to the disembodiment of information that has become our legacy and, as Hayles so perceptively shows, our problem” (68). Hansen picks up on the point I concluded my last chapter with, specifically Hayles’ concern that Shannon’s theories (as in the case of Hans Moravec’s proposition that consciousness would some day be digitized) were being severed from their contexts for the quite literal purpose of completing the separation of mind from body.⁴ But Hansen’s reason for citing Hayles is to follow and build upon her analysis of the Macy conferences, particularly from the perspective of those scientists involved who offered alternatives to the Shannon-Weiner model that led to second-order cybernetics and beyond.

Of the two theorists that Hayles mentions as offering alternative approaches to information theory—British scientist Donald MacKay and Freudian psychoanalyst Lawrence Kubie—Hansen focuses on MacKay, primarily because “as Hayles stresses, MacKay’s model serves to indicate the possibility for a different articulation of information, semantics, and change, and thus forcefully underscores the contingency of the disembodiment of information that most of us now take to be a black-boxed fact” (69). In other words, Hansen stresses that MacKay offers a “*theoretical* argument *against* the separation of information and semantics—*against* the very hinge of

Shannon's model. . ." (ibid.). The difference between the Shannon model and the MacKay model is the difference between information transmission and information interpretation. In Shannon's model, how a message should be interpreted is obviated for the possibility that the number of possible messages can be increased, and an increase in message transmission will increase—through multiplicity—the possibility that a message will successfully reach its destination, or, considered from the inverse perspective such as a person making a phone call attempting to reach the correct destination, that the caller will reach the information because one of the total number of messages in the set correlates with the needs of the caller. Conversely, the MacKay model adds another dimension to the set of messages. By giving the messages a context in which their meaning may be relevant, it attempts to account for how the same message may be interpreted by the given context. By setting this standard, the engineering problem is complicated immensely. No longer does the engineer need to account for a total set of messages; now the engineer must account for the total possible contexts in which the message may have meaning. In other words, considering semantics, MacKay's model attempts to take *connotations* and not mere *denotations* into account. (Hayles *How* 52-60). Hansen is impressed that MacKay's theory is more robust and complicated than Shannon's, but Hansen here confuses and misses the crucial distinction between complexity and efficiency (or even functionality)—for while MacKay's theories offer for Hansen a theoretical backdrop to argue for embodiment against the posthuman, this argument—so long as Hansen remains one of the very few followers of MacKay—will continue to remain academic. In fact, by 2005

Hayles herself swerves against Hansen's alignment with MacKay. In her most recent and more learned study *My Mother Was a Computer*, Hayles writes: "MacKay's theory, although more encompassing in correlating information with meaning, could not be reliably quantified with technologies available in the 1950s (and still cannot today)" (34-35). Moreover, the crippling agent in MacKay's theory is pointed out efficiently by Hansen himself, and it is the thing that Hansen finds most valuable. Summarizing MacKay's paper "In Search of Basic Symbols" delivered at the Macy conferences, Hansen writes:

[The paper] lays out a distinction between what MacKay calls "communication" and what he calls "scientific information." More significant than this distinction, however, is the fact that, *in both cases*, the receiver's internal structure plays an active and determinate role: whether the message emerges out of a prefabricated ensemble or requires specification of an ensemble, the receiver's internal structure performs the crucial function of converting incoming stimuli into "internal symbols." In this process of conversion, the components for the internal representation form what is 'perceived.'" Put another way, activity in the receiver's internal structure generates symbolic structures that serve to frame stimuli and thus to *inform* information: this activity converts regularities in the flux of stimuli into *patterns* of information. (76)

This is a fine explanation, and while Hansen begins to steer away from Hayles' explanations, hers suit better. In actuality, the problem with the MacKay model is that it is too *smart, too embodied, too human* to work efficiently. As described in the above passage, the center of the information theory is the "receiver's internal structure"; such a statement falls ironic given Hansen's complaint that Lacanian psychoanalysis is too "psychocentric" to offer a productive understanding of the material roles that modern technology plays in our lives (mentioned in chapter seven). What is located in the

center of MacKay's theory is the human *subject* (not the body)—and here is the risk and the slippage that is the problem with Hansen's argument about *technesis*—embodiment reveals its mask as a way of finding the possibility of reintroducing the pre-Heideggerian phenomenological subject.

My restating Hansen's complaint against Lacan is particularly fitting at this stage since the reason Hansen is interested in MacKay is not because he is interested in righting our received understandings of cybernetics—those are a done deal. As I explained in chapter six, Shannon has become the industry standard. Rather, Hansen is threatened by one of Lacan's foremost, and—in media studies—most influential followers: Friedrich Kittler. Indeed, in this same essay, Hansen finds an adversary in Kittler as well as he finds one in Deleuze. Both of them suffer from the ailment of *technesis*. As one of his final notes from his second volume on cinema, Deleuze (for Hansen) reduces the digital image to an aesthetical program. If Deleuze doesn't suffer (as does Derrida [again, for Hansen]) from reducing the materiality of technology to language, he suffers just as much by insisting on the “priority of aesthetics over the technological” (56). Kittler is the worse offender because his particular style of *technesis* is an extreme form of so-called “epistemological embodiment” where information and media writes on the body (rather than Hansen's preferred *corporeal* embodiment where the body is the source of all inscription), or, in Kittler's words, “Media determine our situation” (*GFT* xxxix). Kittler's is a special case for Hansen because information performs in a way where it has no need, interest, or desire to come into contact with human beings.

Let's take up Kittler directly for a while. For Kittler, information is not stuff written by bodies for bodies, but stuff written in and for nobody. Very much like the Lacanian lamella, information is like the undead drive of the real. In fact, Kittler would see no distinction here and would balk at my analogy. The pure will of the drive of science that we mentioned in the previous chapter with Žižek becomes separated from scientific discourse and enters into the history of technics. Information, data flow, or media is not *like* the Lacanian real. It is the Lacanian real, and as such, it is pure memory. It is worth pausing here to remember how memory works in the real of Lacanian theory.

In “The Nature of Unconscious Thought, or How the Other Half ‘Thinks,’” Lacanian Bruce Fink speaks of language in a way that echoes Deleuze and Guattari’s description of the linguistic rhizome.⁵ Much has been made of D&G’s rhizome but what frequently gets overlooked is how the rhizome multiplies. “It is not the One,” they write, “that becomes Two or even directly three, four, five, etc. It is not a multiple derived from the One, or two which One is added ($n + 1$)” (*ATP* 21). Instead, to think of the rhizome means not to think of “units” but to think in “dimensions.” These different dimensions, or in D&G’s terminology “strata” are probably best thought as different levels of organization, from the smallest (molecular—cells, information, genetic code) to the most stratified and formalized (molar—individuals, disciplines, books). The rhizome works across these dimensions, making linkages between units, instances, or events, but these linkages or rhizomes are *subtracted* from their respective organizations, so that multiplicities are formed not by adding to the One but “from

which One is always subtracted ($n - 1$)” (ibid.). This is not an act of “building” as in the notion of building a community, but (keeping the community metaphor) is instead an act of spreading, dispersing, and co-mingling. In this sense, molar community forms become weaker as new combinations are made between different communities. Hence, as we said earlier (in chapter three), language spreads “like a patch of oil.”

Of course, Fink doesn’t use D&G’s terminology, but the backdrop of n dimensions where language cuts across modes of organization fits between the orders of the symbolic and real in Lacanian thought. In a very accessible style, Fink explains the common sense notions that we use language and as well as the more recent discovery that “language also operates independently, outside of our control” (14). Composition theorists have been well aware of the surprises that exist in language ever since process theorists such as Donald Murray and Peter Elbow explained that revision is the act of discovering beyond what we know or that freewriting lets us explore language without the interference of internal critics. Fink explains that these discoveries about language or the impositions that language makes on the conscious mind (the “image or metaphor” that imposes itself on our minds “without our ever having sought it”) arise from the real.

Fink writes:

Virtually every analysand is astonished early on in the analytic process, in his or her initial attempts to understand dreams and fantasies, by the complexity of the process that gives rise to such unconscious product (or ‘unconscious formations,’ as Lacan calls them).

Yet Lacan went much further still in his exploration of what occurs at the unconscious level, attempting to provide models by which to conceptualize the autonomous functioning of language in the unconscious and the uncanny “indestructibility” of unconscious contents. (15)

Fink provides his readers with an example of Lacan’s attempts to offer a model of unconscious language by explaining how a notation system applied to coin tosses can yield a syntax and how this syntax involves various degrees of “ciphering.”

In Fink’s coin toss example, a coin is tossed nine times. If we assign the value of + to heads and – to tails, the chain of tosses (by chance) yields the following:

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

While it is impossible to know whether a coin toss will yield heads or tails on any given flip, the string of tosses can be called a “chain” because of the way that the flips can be grouped into pairs (17). There are four possible combinations of any two flips: ++, --, +-, and -+. And Fink goes on to assign the first pair the number 1. So ++ = 1. Consequentially, the combinations of +- and -+ get the assignment of 2, and -- gets the assignment of 3. Thus,

1	2	3
++	+-	+-

(Fink 17)

If we take the original chain and apply these groupings to it, starting from the second position, the first two flips yield a 1.

+	+	-	-	+	-	-	-	+
				1				

The next pair does not begin with the next set of two but instead begins with the very next coin toss. So we take the second number from the first pair and add it to the next toss. Since the second and third tosses are “heads” followed by a “tails,” we get a + – combination. The + – is assigned a 2:

$$\begin{array}{cccccccc} + & + & - & - & + & - & - & - & + \\ & & & & 1 & 2 & & & \end{array}$$

The third designation in the chain would account for the third and fourth flips. These are – – and would thus be designated with a 3. In this manner, where every pair is connected to the previous pair, the entire chain looks like this:

$$\begin{array}{cccccccc} + & + & - & - & + & - & - & - & + \\ & & 1 & 2 & 3 & 2 & 2 & 3 & 3 & 2 \end{array} \quad (17)$$

We do not know whether the next toss will be + or –, but we do know that the next set will either be a 1 (++) or a 2 (+–). In this way, writes Fink, “we have thus already come up with *a way of grouping tosses* (a “symbolic matrix”) *which prohibits certain combinations*” (18; original emphasis). Fink goes on to explain that in an instance such as this one, where the next coin toss is unknown, it is not possible to say with certainty what the set will be, though it is possible to limit what can be a possible outcome. A different example of the symbolic matrix, however, would permit us to know with certainty what the tosses would be. For instance, if we know the first pair is a 1 (+ +) and we know that the third pair is a 3 (– –), then we know automatically that the second pair is a 2 (+ –): ++ – – (ibid.). Fink writes: “In this sense we may say that the *chain remembers or keeps track of its previous components*” (ibid; original emphasis). Fink

goes on to show more complicated forms of the symbolic matrix, proceeding in a similar fashion and by extending the length of the symbolic chains.

Two important ramifications come from Lacan's model of the unconscious. First, the signifying chain determines an order for the categories of the numbers (so long as certain positions are already known or defined) and, second, the chain records or "remembers" its previous components (19). This "memory," however, is to be seen as distinct from "living memory." Lacan writes, "the remembering in question in the unconscious . . . is not the same as that assumed to be involved in memory, insofar as this latter would be the property of a living being (cited in Fink 19)

From this trajectory—a pure form of memory expressed by a mathematical formulation of the unconscious—we again have rise to the lamella, the eternal undead quality of the real. Fink explains that matter as we know it, is "incapable of accounting for the *eternal and indestructible nature of unconscious contents*" (20; original emph.). In the first place, matter and living memory is susceptible to decay, and in the second, rather than the individual remembering something to begin with, something is remembered *for* the individual by the symbolic matrix or "signifying chain" (ibid.). In addition, the "unconscious *cannot* forget . . . it preserves in the present what has affected it in the past, eternally holding onto each and every element, remaining forever marked by all of them" (ibid.).

In addition, just as the Lacanian unconscious is opposed to consciousness in that it does not decay, it is also opposed to conscious thought in terms of meaning. Fink

makes the connection between the structure of the unconscious to machine language

(such as Claude Shannon's). He writes:

Jacques-Alain Miller says, "the structure of language is, in a radical sense, ciphering," the type of ciphering or coding Lacan engages in when he super-imposes numeric and alphabetic matrices on chains of pluses and minuses (altogether akin to the type of ciphering used in the machine language "assembler" to go from open and closed circuit paths to something resembling language with which one can program. To Lacan's mind, the unconscious consists in chains of quasi-mathematical inscriptions, and—borrowing a notion from Bertrand Russell, who in speaking of mathematicians said that the symbols they work with *don't mean anything*—there is thus no point talking about the *meaning* of unconscious formations or productions. (21)

While Hansen has his reservations, Kittler understands all of this, and Kittler unabashedly pursues the implication of the split between the real and the symbolic (or the unconscious and conscious) in his description of the impact the technologies have on culture. Simply put, if the real exists on some plane inaccessible to human beings that occasionally bubbles up from beneath death through the objet (a) to make its presence felt, Kittler sees that technologies are the Lacanian real made manifest. In fact, as Seminar 2 and Fink's description show, Lacan borrowed from cybernetics to make his models of the unconscious. Historically speaking, cybernetics precedes the Lacanian real. The correlation between Fink's description of the symbolic matrix and digital technologies are nothing less than striking. Like the signifying chain of the unconscious, storage technologies 1) have perfect (or near perfect) memory, 2) have no meaning in and of themselves, 3) (through capturing devices) make eternal what was ephemeral (such as the human voice), and 4) are coded or "ciphered" according to a mathematical language.

In *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*, Kittler picks up on several of these axes by quoting filmmaker Chris Marker's comments about memory in his film *Sans Soleil*.

Marker:

Lost at the end of the world on my island, Sal, in the company of my dogs strutting around, I remember the January in Tokyo, or rather I remember the images I filmed in Tokyo in January. They have now put themselves in place of my memory; they *are* my memory. I wonder how people who do not film, take photos, or record tapes remember; how humankind used to go about remembering. (in *GFT* 10)

Marker's comments are the perfect example for how memory is something that is done *for* us through the technological real of photography and cinema. And, as Kittler explains, for language too. In the following passage, Kittler makes a decisive split between "meaning" and "words," showing that whenever we choose one, we lose the other: "language . . . only leaves us the choice of either retaining the words while losing their meaning or, vice versa, retaining meaning while losing the words" (10).

But again, what is most striking is Kittler's recognition that with the real made manifest in recording and storage technologies, not only does the undead persist in the form of the technology itself, and not only does the technology capture and store those who have died, and not only is the technology capable of accessing the paranormal activity of the dead, but the technological reproduction is "authenticated by the object itself" (12). The reproduction, Kittler writes, "refers to the bodily real, which of necessity escapes all symbolic grids. Media always already provide the appearances of specters. For, according to Lacan, even the word 'corpse' is a euphemism in reference to the real" (ibid.). Kittler continues:

The realm of the dead is as extensive as the storage and transmission capabilities of a given culture. As Klaus Theweleit noted, media are always flight apparatuses into the great beyond. If gravestones stood as symbols at the beginning of culture itself, our media technology can retrieve all gods. The old written laments about ephemerality, which measured no more than distance between writing and sensuality, suddenly fall silent. In our mediascape, immortals have come to exist again. (13)

From the lamella, to the symbolic matrix, to the relationship between storage and the real, to the undead, Hansen leaves all of this out in his critique of Kittler and chooses instead to argue that what Kittler is *really* discussing (or what is at the heart of Kittler's project) is Kittler's need to create a provisional image of the human body in order to launch his analysis against it. But, as we pointed out before, if there ever was a writer arguing *against* the reduction of technology to language, it certainly isn't Kittler—since he reads writing as only one more technology among the various others. Rather, if it must be said explicitly, through his verbal twists and turns, Hansen—in *form* if not in content—continuously wrestles the robust quality of technology from linguistic descriptions. Perhaps, however, this still cannot be avoided, for as Lacan says, the only way we can communicate the pure matheme to another is through symbolic language (the epigraph above), a condition that puts us in a most “unfortunate” position.

So, in contrast to Kittler, compare the game of Twister Hansen must go through to turn things in his own favor after going some way (about ten pages) into Kittler's *GFT*. Hansen writes:

That this privilege of the imaginary is a generalized one, and not simply limited to a single storage technology, is made clear in Kittler's discussion of the capacity of the media to store time. Moving beyond the symbolic determination of time as the time of writing, modern media

cause time to pass through the defile of the image: time is thereby identified with the portion of the ‘quotidian data flow’ (or real) that can be ‘arrested’ in the autonomous inscriptional processes of phonography and cinema. The resulting autonomy of eye and ear notwithstanding, the fact that what is inscribed remains relative to the respective ranges of the relevant human perceptual organs—and indeed, the very necessity for any stable demarcation of sound from noise and image from light—ensures the continued centrality of the human body, even if it comes increasingly to function in absentia. For this reason, we cannot help but admit the covert centrality of the image within Kittler’s media ecology. (“Cinema” 61)

To begin, Hansen’s first sentence is a reference to a misreading where Hansen reverses the trajectory of the passage that he is referring to (see *GFT* 11-12). Secondly, when Hansen uses the word *image*, he is referring to *photography* (though *image* is not used by Kittler). Consequentially, what all this says is that since Kittler is speaking about photography (or cinema or phonography) there must be a human being attached to the specific media for the media to matter or make sense. But notice that Hansen himself avoids the problem of discussing the whole of the human body (and consequentially, subjectivity) by referring to the body’s appendages of the ear and eye (what in D&G’s terminology could be seen as instances in a larger rhizomatic machine or coupling). In the middle of the passage, Hansen is thinking *machinically*, unwilling to introduce the body or (the next step) the subject/mind. Yet, in the final sentences, he moves synecdochically from body parts to the whole of the body. The whole paragraph boils down to the fact that if there is media, there must be a human being to give meaning to it. This underlying warrant assumes that it is not possible to think at the level of the technological real, that for objects to exist, they need a human body—since, after all,

icebergs don't *really* fall into the sea spontaneously unless someone is there to watch them fall.⁶ Hansen is unable to let go of the human being as cause.

Media theorist John Johnston, who has translated and edited a collection of Kittler's works entitled "Literature, Media, Information Systems," explicitly denies that Kittler's notion of the "discourse network" (*Aufschreibesystem*, the neologism Kittler borrows from Freud's [in]famous patient Paul Schreber) is cut off from its material framework. In the following passage, Johnston explains the concept of the discourse network and how it retains its material connection.

The notion of the discourse network points to the fact that at any given cross-sectional moment in the life of a culture, only certain data (and no other) are selected, stored, processed, transmitted or calculated, all else being 'noise' (in information theory 'noise' is precisely what disrupts a communication channel.) Whether implicitly or explicitly, an outside is thereby defined and a system of addresses and commands (or instructions) is established. In other words, on the basis of this particular selection of data not only perceptions, ideas, and concepts – all that is coded as meaningful in short – but also a system authorizing certain subjects as senders and others as receivers of discourse is instituted. However, by replacing causal and expressive models with a communicational one, Kittler in no way cuts off discourse from its material context. While a discourse network by definition had no center or origin, it serves precisely to link bodies to institutions. In fact, an insistent theme in Kittler's analysis of the discourse networks of 1800 and 1900 is the human price paid – the exclusions, the pathologies, the suicides – for these linkages. (Introduction 10)

Calling Kittler posthumanist is like calling Claude Shannon or Heinz von Foerster posthumanists, but outside of the narrow realm of science, those labels would never stick. Likewise, as Johnston implies, there are bodies (including dead ones missing from Hansen's pages) all over Kittler's work; the difference is that they simply don't gain the

phenomenological pleasure of being located at the center of the mediaverse, but they are bodies that matter—whether (un)dead or alive.⁷

To wrap up this section consider the following statement from Lacan from Seminar II:

We thus find ourselves confronted with the problematic situation, that there is in fact a reality of signs within which there exists a world of truth entirely deprived of subjectivity, and that, on the other hand, there has been a historical development of subjectivity manifestly directed towards the rediscovery of truth, which lies in the order of symbols. (284-85)

The passage by Lacan encapsulates much of the problematic between Kittler and Hansen but also between many of the pairs that I have discussed throughout this dissertation.⁸ This “world of truth” that Lacan refers to is an “acephalous” truth “deprived of subjectivity,” and its status as the real indicates for us, as we have discussed via Fink, that it retains perfect memory and that it has no meaning in and of itself.⁹ In fact, elsewhere in this seminar, Lacan exposes his Cartesian (not pejorative ones here) tendencies and explains that the reason that “mathematical formalization” is “our goal, our ideal” is that “it alone is matheme,” and to be matheme means that “it alone is capable of being integrally transmitted” (285). Only mathematical formalization is able to withstand the decay of time and only it can be transmitted integrally across contexts. That Lacan chooses the matheme indicates not that the real is structured like a mathematical formula, but, as in the beating fantasy, that the real is constructed *retroactively* by the matheme. As we have discussed it in earlier chapters, this retroactive construction indicates a form of temporality that cannot be reduced to a temporal form that we have discussed. We will recall that this concept retains the force

of the cut of the event. It does not permit that an event be absorbed back into or by culture in a way that blunts or denies the cut. Rather, the cut creates or brings into relevance a particular selection of history.

8.2 Towards Another Time

Paul Patton, translator of Deleuze's *Difference and Repetition*, develops this thesis a little further by explaining how the description of an event can have significant consequences for how the event comes to be understood or appreciated. Patton writes:

[Consider] the phenomena to which Nietzsche and Foucault drew attention, namely that new forms of description of human behavior make possible new kinds of action. Only after the discursive characterization of behavior in terms of juvenile delinquency or split personality was established did it become possible for individuals to conceive of themselves and therefore to act as delinquents or splits. Not all discursive constructions of subjectivity open up new possibilities for action: some may serve to invalidate or remove possibilities for action. Hacking cites the case of a bill brought before the British Parliament which sought to pardon retrospectively several hundred soldiers who were shot for desertion during the First World War, on the grounds that they would now be regarded as suffering from post-traumatic stress. Such a redescription would pathologize the action of the deserters, retrospectively transforming their actions into symptoms. In other cases, the aim of retroactive redescription is to render reprehensible behavior that was formerly acceptable, as for example, when the European 'settlement' of Aboriginal land in the Australian colonies is redescribed as invasion. (5)

As Patton argues, the redescription associated with the cut of the event has significant political consequences. It also has significant consequences when applied to the possibility of new media writing.

Throughout this dissertation, I have had to do two things: to argue and trace, or, in other words, I have had to argue for positions while presenting the contexts of those situations. By now, my readers should see that we have come a very long way, and I

would like to thank anyone who has read this I dissertation word-for-word thus far. We should also notice that I have been advocating a way of thinking about invention for new media that—in our most recent analysis—breaks the division between invention (the new) and history (duration) into the division between information and the body. What I hope that I have shown that permits me to write the remainder of this final chapter is that I have contended against a particular way of seeing, a way of seeing that inscribes the human being into her own history, subjectivity, and body. In my view, these three aspects of the human *thwart* the possibility of genesis. All of these things—things which are really our human condition—pull us *back* towards our nomos, consciousness, and bodies (or subjectivities). Consequently, I have resisted them all the way through, but because have resisted these powerful presumptions, I must also admit (and now I am ready to) that they are just as important, just as *real* as those places where I have sought refuge and the places from which I have made my stand.

A major issue that was at stake in the early stages of this dissertation is still a major issue now (though it has changed, morphed, and emphasized different things along the way). This is the issue of how time works not only on the human body but, more importantly, on the possibility for rhetorical invention. Because new media recognizes that the paradigm of linearity is complicated by the proliferation of access to new technologies, what remains is the philosophical and rhetorical exploitation of these new possibilities. To move in this direction, I am not about to state that there is a particular philosophical *way* of rhetorical invention for new media. Instead, I recognize—even despite my own spirited attempts—that the complications, that (what

in my mind is the) the *modernism* I have been fighting, is part and parcel of our mutual rhetorical, philosophical, and medial situation. It is for this reason that I draw upon Deleuze, for nobody—to my knowledge—had the kind of foresight needed to combine our oldest and most impossible problems with our oldest and most impossible *need* for creation. For this reason, I again call upon the earliest—the most earliest—memories of many and the one.

8.3 Deleuze's Aion and Greg Harrison's *November*

Greg Harrison's *November* is an example of a film that has lost its boundaries. Unlike many of today's modern films that (as Steven Johnson describes in his popular *Everything Bad is Good For You*) rely on multiplying narrative threads towards an increase of overall complexity, *November*, like Christopher Nolan's *Memento*, tells only one narrative—but this singular narrative is told in a fashion more complex than any of the multiple-thread stories to which Johnson alludes. Surely it is a puzzle to be worked out, but its complexity is neither the primary criterion that makes it unique, nor why I find that it serves as an excellent instructional example of the kind of writing that can occur when the temporal logics of the event are exploited.¹⁰

What is most noteworthy about the movie is its paradoxical structure. To begin, if one follows the film through to the end, we recognize that the story of Sophie Jacobs is impossible. The story cannot exist because that would mean that Sophie Jacobs is both alive and dead at the same time. The narrative of the film unfolds in a way where we come to the realization that Sophie has been dead from the beginning, but we *simultaneously* realize that she cannot be dead either because she has been alive

throughout the whole film (teaching classes, meeting with her shrink, her mother, her investigator, and others); in addition, she has been trying to find out who her boyfriend's murderer is (who is her own as well). Unlike *Memento*, there is no possible solution to the movie. We cannot invent a scenario or apply an excuse (that Leonard [Guy Pierce] is telling the story from the insane asylum, for instance) to make sense of the film, even for our own personal tastes. As I said, the movie is an impossibility. But, still, "there you have it" (as they say).

The story begins with Sophie and her boyfriend Hugh (James Le Gros) stopping at a convenience store on their way home from dinner. Hugh goes inside to buy a snack for Sophie. A robber enters the store and demands that Hugh hand over his money, but Hugh doesn't have his wallet with him. The shooter kills everyone in the store including Hugh. The scene ends with Sophie running into the store after the shooter has escaped.

The movie is divided into three acts, with each section beginning with a different version of this same event. In between the shooting events, Sophie goes through her daily life. The narratives embedded between the initial event show Sophie going to her therapist to discuss the tragedy, meeting with the police investigator to find the truth of what happened, teaching her college photography classes, having dinner with her mother, and so on. The embedded narratives are also variations of each other.

The final scene of the movie again presents a variation of the shooting. Here, Sophie runs into the convenience store but, this time, the shooter is still there. He shoots her in the stomach.



Figure 8.1. *Dead and Alive*.

Sophie Jacobs (Courtney Cox) in Greg Harrison's *November*. Sophie confronts herself dying/having been dead at the end/beginning of the film.

Sophie is in two places at the same time. She has just been shot, but we realize that she always had been shot. She looks down and sees her Other Sophie lying wounded on the floor of the store who is looking up at *her* Other Sophie who is looking down at her before having fallen as she, having fallen, looks up before she falls. There is no attempt in the film to show Sophie as anything but a living human being throughout the film. There are no spirits, ghosts, afterlife. The separation between the two dimensions are made merely through the use of coloring. The film is not about life or death. It is about the paradoxical fact that life *and* death are the same thing or that the division between

the two, the *event* between the two can never be nailed down. In Deleuze's terms, the event-time does not exist.

To think in terms of new media invention, what is most important is that the elusive event of death makes itself known in ways other than the death-event itself. The most important instances—the instances I want to draw your attention to—are the moments when the various forms of temporality seem to collide. In the first act, there is a scene where Sophie is in her living room and the video film from the shooting appears spontaneously on her television screen. There is another moment where she (after the trauma) experiences ringing in her head, she wakes from the bed, moves into the bathroom and begins to put a cotton swab in her ear. Blood begins to drip from her ear; we hear noise; she begins to scream. Suddenly, her shirt fills with blood on her lower abdomen—the same place where she was shot. The screen is then filled with unrecognizable images—macros of string, meat, and a stream of blood, random designs, moving lines, the sound of heartbeat, the glare from a windshield, the droplets of rain on glass. In all of these moments, we experience collisions of time. In the first instance (the video appearing on her TV screen), the past interpenetrates the present. In the second instance, the temporal penetration is more ambiguous. It is both a movement into the past and the past invading the present. As Harrison says on the DVD, “It’s really difficult to describe where you are. Which I loved. It was perfect for how these narratives would just collapse into something you couldn’t describe rationally but affect you emotionally.”

How are these impossibilities possible? In *The Logic of Sense* Deleuze introduces (following the Stoics), the concept of Aion. But strictly speaking, the Aion (the eternal—as in the undead of Lacan), cannot be properly called a concept so long as concept is understood as existing in the mind. Nor does it exist as a thing in nature. Instead it, like the beating fantasy of the child, subsists or insists as opposed to exists. It is a form of pure becoming. It is a way of thinking and writing, when one can learn to write this way, that seems to be both hope and challenge for our current electronic epistemology.

Like the two-fold, the Stoic Aion operates at the level of language, but rather than language following a double movement that ties it to a circle that follows seasonal rhythms, language itself is split into two categories and ultimately into two dimensions of time. These categories are substantives vs. verbs, bodies vs. incorporeals. Bodies are nouns. As nouns, they exist and have being. They interact with other bodies, mixing together to make the world of appearance. Ultimately, they create and are created by the primordial fire typically associated with Heraclitus. Their relationship to time is through *chronos*.

Incorporeals, on the other hand, do not exist in the present, and as such they don't exist in *chronos*. A knife is a body and has particular bodily properties. It is shiny, steel, etc. But when the knife cuts into the flesh, causing a wound, the wound is not a property of the body, but is rather the attribute—or effect—of being cut with the knife. The knife does not act on the body, but the cutting acts on the body. This cutting is an effect on a body. It is what Deleuze calls an event.

The cutting event affects the body yet the cutting cannot be said to be or to have a body. It exists only in movement, which is to say it does not exist, but only in passing, but how can we add an “only” to this passing? As in the passing of a loved one or a birthing of a child. Deleuze asks: “What is more intimate or essential to bodies than events such as” these? (5). Bodies always exist in the present moment. I am a body. My body does not exist in the past and does not exist in the future. Whenever it exists, it exists in the present. What does that mean for the past and the future? The past and the future are alike in that both do not belong to the present and both do not contain bodies. But, together they do make a form of time: the past-future, or Aion. The Aion does not exist but subsists and insists. What chronos is to *kairos*, Aion is to the event.

I can say that you are cutting me NOW, but that statement fails to express the lack of a present instant to which the cutting can be reduced. We know this because as soon as the knife ceases to move, it ceases to cut. The event cannot be nailed down. There must be a distinction, then, between the time of events and the time of historical events.

Concerning historical events, Paul Patton writes: “One reason for drawing such a distinction emerges when we consider the paradoxes involved in identifying, in historical time, the precise moment at which events occur. Suppose we take a time before the event and a time after: the infinite divisibility of the series of moments implies that there are two converging series on either side of the event, but no point [no present] at which these series meet. Thus, from the perspective of historical time, the event is ‘eternally that which has just happened or that which is about to happen’ (16).

As such, events exist on any point in the past or the future but never in the present.

Deleuze explains this a little further by quoting the physicist Boltzman, who “explained that the arrow of time, moving from past to future, functions only in individual worlds or systems, and in relation to a present determined by such systems: ‘For the entire universe, the two directions of time are thus impossible to distinguish, and the same holds for space; there is neither above nor below’ (77).

The difficulty of the Heideggerian two-fold or the One-All is that difference is contained potentially, hidden, as Heidegger says in the *Parmenides*, in a protective covering. Deleuze’s theory of the event and the time in which events occur unleash a potential within the All-One that cannot be conceived otherwise. This is because there is not an either/or choice in relation to Aion and Chronos. The key element” of the Aion, writes Timothy Murphy, “is its function as a reservoir of [an]other time flow, which acts” as a switch, “like a train at a junction” (80). This switching mechanism allows the two forms of time to collide.

In *November*, Harrison employs just this switching mechanism. The embedded narratives of Sophie’s story show her, with the help of the Officer Roberts (Nick Offerman), trying to discern who was responsible for Hugh’s shooting. But the paradox—as we know—is that Sophie has already died. Of course, neither Sophie nor Officer Roberts know this. At one moment, Roberts is talking to Sophie asking her about the facts of that particular evening, but as he speaks, Sophie hears a painful ringing in her head. She looks down and sees Roberts’ gun. As though an internal light went off, it begins to glow. In the next moment we are transported through time back to

the shooting event in the convenience store. What is important to note here is that Sophie and the viewer *move* from the present moment into another temporal moment. But this is not a movement from the present to the past, as in the case of a flashback. Although much of the film follows a narrative thread, since the past has both happened and simultaneously not happened, the narrative caves in whenever the two temporalities touch.

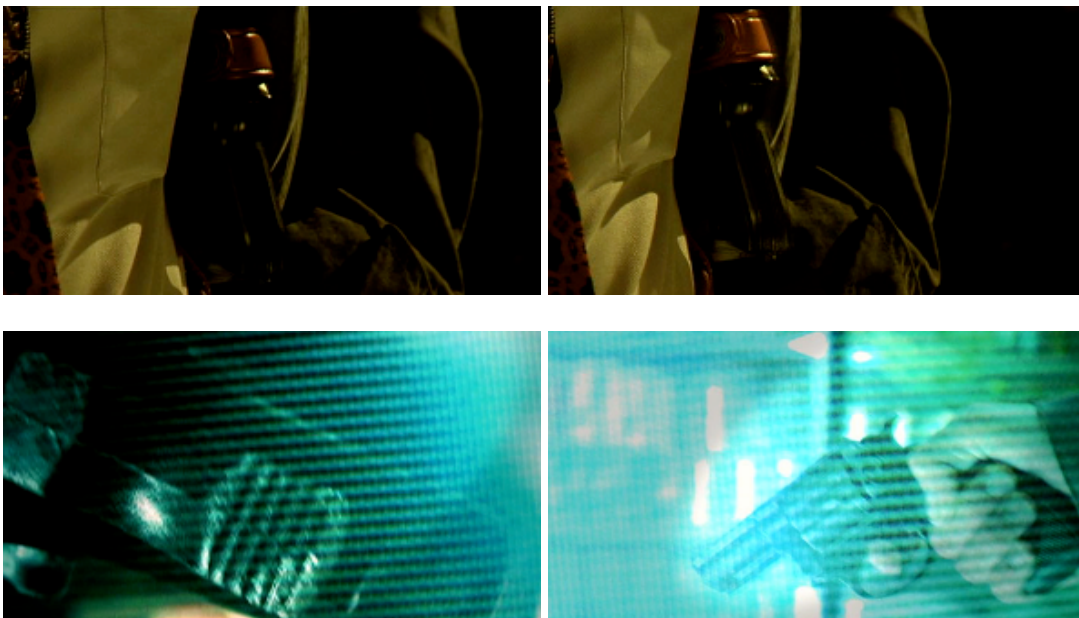


Figure 8.2 The Movement from Chronos to Aion in *November*.

The difference between the first two images is a small light shining on the gun in the second picture. The final picture reveals the shooter's gun in another temporal dimension. Throughout *November* Harrison often deploys such a switching mechanism to allow such the collision of different events.

Deleuze's theory of the event has two crucial attributes for writing. As an effect upon a body, as in the case of the cutting of a wound, the event invades historical time from without, flooding the present with events from the past and future. In addition, the question of sense, whether common or good, are both questions that belong to bodies,

chronos, and doxa. Common sense makes a singular line of time, moving from past to future; the function of good sense is thus to foresee, forcing “us to choose one direction over the other” (75). Paradox, alternatively, involves both chronos and Aion. “The power of paradox,” Deleuze writes, “is therefore not in following the other direction [contra sense] but rather in showing that sense always takes on both senses at once, or follows two directions at the same time. The opposite of good sense is not the other direction, for this direction is only a recreation of the mind. . . (77). “Which way, which way,” asks Alice” in Wonderland. The moment of the event-effect is an invasion of the past and future onto the present and opens both directions at once.

In contrast to the moments where Sophie encounters some kind of switching mechanism and she (and the viewer) are transported to another temporal moment, *November* illustrates that it is just as possible that these other times enter the present. Quite shockingly, the pictures adorning Sophie’s apartment (remember, she is a photographer) are images of her own and Hugh’s dying hands. One day she comes home, the pictures are gone, and she notices a hole in her wall behind where one of the pictures used to be. She sticks her finger in the hole and extracts a newspaper article. The newspaper is dated November 7, the day of the shooting. She opens it and reads about the killing at the convenience store. In contrast to the moments where Sophie is transported into another time, here, another time enters into the present. Like the blood that appeared on her shirt, the newspaper is an artifact of the interpenetration of another time—whether it is past or future is impossible to say—onto the present.



Figure 8.3. The Interpenetration of Aion into Chronos in *November*.

Sophie sees a hole in her wall; she pulls out a newspaper article that tells of the convenience store shooting where Hugh died. The article mentions that two customers were killed but the name of the second victim (Sophie herself) is missing from the article.

Arguably the most ambitious of the film, the Q-tip scene condenses Sophie's journey, by allowing all of these lines of time to work together, in a little over a minute, the viewer experiences the collisions of time along with Sophie. I've broken the Q-tip scene into smaller sequences in the screen shots below. I have forgone labeling these images since they, with my description, are the main body of the text.

The first set of small pictures shows Sophie waking up from a ringing in her head (the reason she tells the Doctor why she is going to therapy). As the pictures indicate (moving left to right), she notices blood and goes to the bathroom. The difference in light in the two scenes where she puts the Q-tip in her ear illustrates the first time shift that occurs. This bright light is accompanied by a ringing sound along with the sounds of being underwater, or what it might sound like being inside a sink's drain while a clog passes through.



Figure 8.4. Q-tip Sequence I

Immediately, we are sent to a splash of blood on an image behind a mirror that is bubbled with water. It is a shocking, unexpected image, and serves, like the glowing gun mentioned above, as a switch. We are then transported to the security camera of the convenience store recording where Hugh goes down from the shot. We move out of the camera and watch as Sophie comes running into the store, reliving the shooting event.



Figure 8.5. Q-tip Sequence II

As she did in her bedroom, Sophie puts her hands over her ears as they begin to ring. She begins to scream “Nooooooooo!” ostensibly for Hugh. But then, the sounds increase and blend into an odd alien noise, a sound like rubber tires being melted and expanded at the same time. A red blotch (obviously) of blood, but having no business being superimposed over her face, grows larger and larger as though this strange rubber sound was Sophie’s head filling with blood and about to explode. And it or something does explode.

Hence, with this combustion, we enter into another space-time that cannot be named. The blood first becomes a fleshy, thick body. The thickness flattens, and we are

left with red designs you see below dancing across the screen, painting pictures before our eyes.

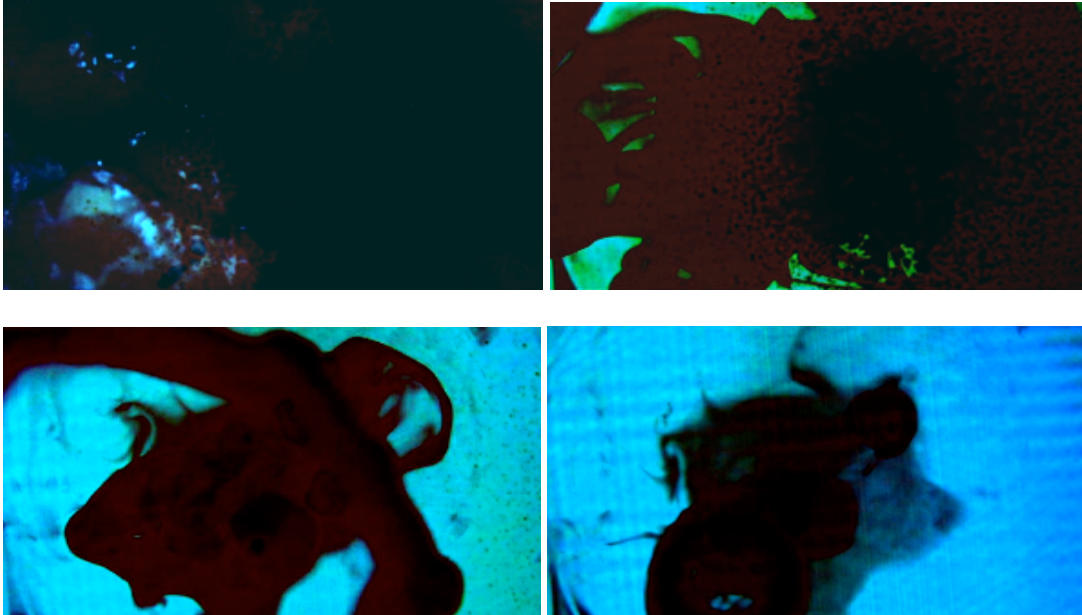


Figure 8.6. Q-tip Sequence III.

The next movement brings us back to Sophie standing in front of the mirror. All is quiet again as she continues pulling blood out of her ear. Then we hear a gun shot and the sound of the splash of blood as it hits her shoulder. More sounds: video noise and static from the convenience store camera, another shot, a splash, deep thumping sounds. Sophie places her hands over her stomach and immediately grabs her head and begins to scream “Noooooooooo!”



Figure 8.7. Q-tip Sequence IV.

And we move through another vortex. As the shots where she is holding her head reveal, they are composed of layers of simultaneous occurrences. The double vision suggests (and the story confirms) that Sophie is dividing from her self. Between the eyes of the viewer and Sophie's face, blood passes across the screen as though this blood were a boundary separating the viewer from Sophie's horrifying experience. A third layer is revealed underneath, as indicated most clearly by the cell phone and the pool of blood where the viewer comes to see Sophie lying on the ground of the store.

Quite obviously, the images tell us that she is dead, but this image must be lying. She cannot be dead, for the movie has been telling us that she is very much alive.



Figure 8.8 Q-tip Sequence V.

But it is immediately after the viewer sees these brief, passing images of Sophie lying on the ground that we are immediately transported to the solitary sounds of a heartbeat and the image of a few city lights glaring on the windshield of a moving car, but for only a moment. A high-pitched humming sound accompanies and finally replaces the heartbeat. Sophie—I think it is safe to say that we have gone through this with Sophie or at least have seen through her perspective much of the time—enters into a sea or stream of what feels like blood, but it is beautifully strange, as though traveling inside a vein. As the consequential pictures reveal, peculiar images start to form that static shots cannot do justice. The intensity of those lines moving with the sound track make for an

intensity that cannot be put into words without talking about something else entirely.

We see that Sophie survives the Q-tip experience and finally opens her eye(s).

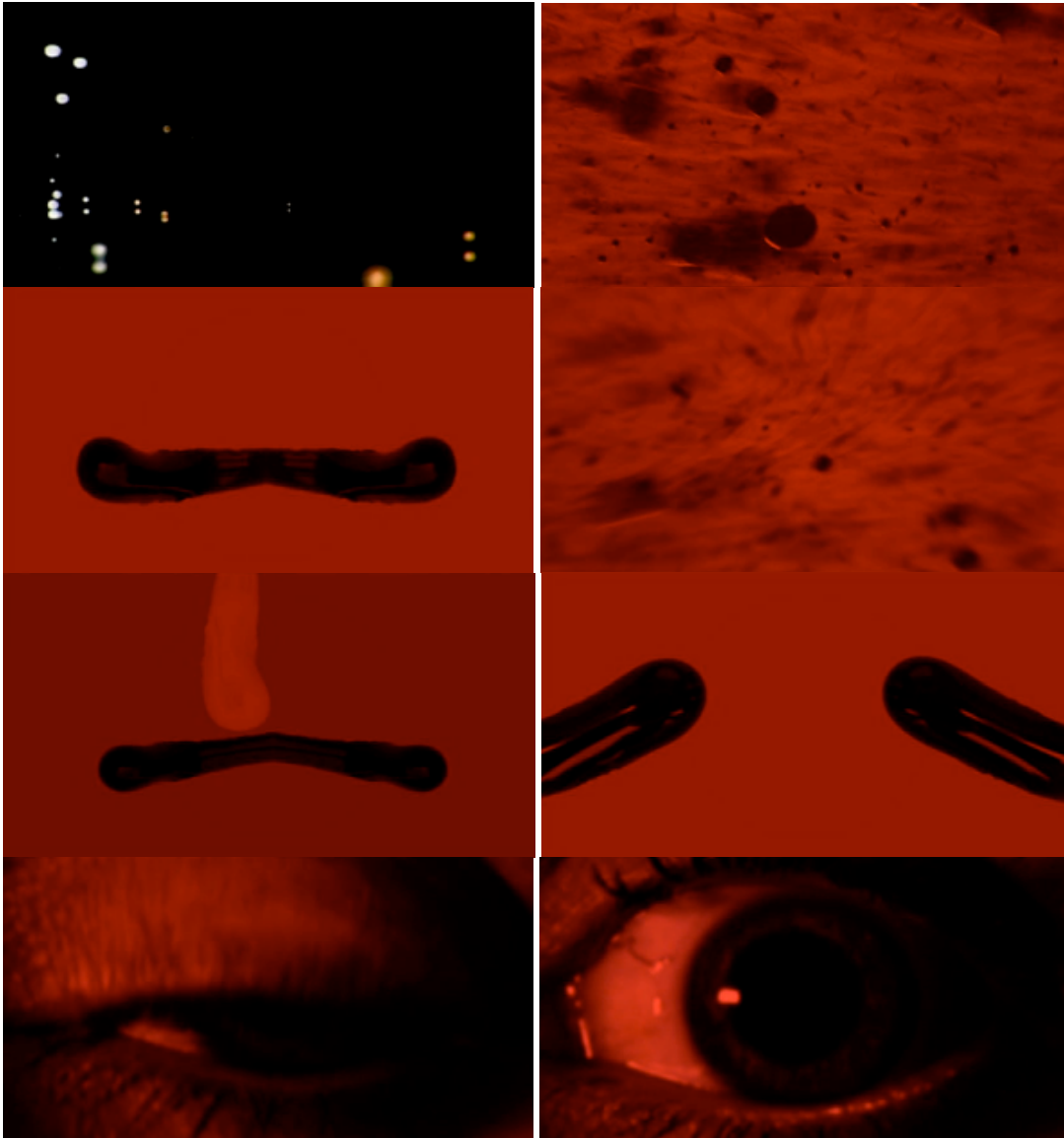


Figure 8.9 Q-tip Sequence VI.

The best way to illustrate the Aion and the *kairos* of the event is through nonprint media such as Harrison's *November*. The medium of print determines the kind

of message you will receive. It follows a straight line. It follows good sense. It is important to note, however, that print writers over the centuries have also thought nonlinearly and paradoxically. While often being considered brilliant, they have also been considered abstract, impractical, and occasionally subversive. In all media there have been such writers: In literature, art, philosophy, music, film. I would rather not resort to name dropping, (yet) Carroll, Woolf, Ionesco, Artaud, Kafka, Nietzsche, Bataille, Derrida, Frances Bacon, Warhol, Picasso, Cage, Eno, Eisenstein, Vertov, and, of course, the Spanish poets Lorca, Borges, and Rulfo. Conversely, film theorist Christian Metz has explained that film typically follows the narrative of the nineteenth century novel and Lev Manovich has said that webpages follow the aesthetics of the newspaper page. If these statements sound convincing, then even these nonprint forms await the logic of sense.

CHAPTER NINE

POSTFACE

As for my final statement, Janice Lauer's "Rhetorical Invention: The Diaspora" helps contextualize the problem this dissertation has sought to summon—that is, the need for the employment and deployment of adequate postmodern invention strategies to be used in contemporary research as well as composition and rhetoric classrooms. In her effort to report recent scholarly and pedagogical developments in the research of invention, Lauer confronted a morbid situation, saying that she wondered whether any new developments could be found (1). According to Lauer, the last major contributions to research on invention date approximately twenty years. Of these, only one book length study appears—Karen LeFevre's *Invention as a Social Act* (1986). Another major work was published by LeFevre's mentor, Richard Young (with Yameng Liu) in 1994, *Landmark Essays on Rhetorical Invention in Writing*. But this collection's most contemporary essays are still twenty years old, also published in 1986. Lauer goes on to explain that it would be hasty to assume that invention studies have died or exited composition studies; rather, the increasing fragmentation of the discipline correlates with a distribution of invention across various subfields.¹

While Lauer's configuration of recent work in invention may temporarily serve initiates in finding a place in a narrowly defined space, her description is

counterproductive for increasing the vitality needed to develop and sustain activity and interest in rhetorical invention. Likewise, her *Invention in Rhetoric and Composition*, while setting itself the task of presenting an historical impression of invention and dedicating a chapter to the specific task of presenting theoretical issues, fails to produce an opportunity that would include invention research in specifically three areas: those who publish outside mainstream composition-specific venues; the philosophical and counter-philosophical gains made by the Nietzsche-Heidegger tradition that involves invention with the question of Being; or the experimentation efforts made by artists and theorists who continuously forge new directions for thinking and writing with new media in the emergent apparatus of electracy. Because Lauer's recent scholarship is intended to reinvigorate interest in invention research, because Lauer's status is influential in various composition circles, and because her work severely limits the possibilities that can be brought to invention, these lapses are significant, not in the least by failing to include those possibilities for invention that would cultivate the prolonged experimentation and radical thinking that is required to support a field that opens toward the unhomely and the unknown.

If invention is able to be invigorated as a substantial area of investigation, where the excessive simplicity of naïve realism is held at bay, then attention to the marginal, artistic, and philosophical-counterphilosophical influences become the most pressing concerns to which our attention must turn. This dissertation has sought to open a space within composition and rhetoric that fosters innovation for the discipline by drawing upon those sources that have been overlooked.

Importantly and significantly for this project, it has become common knowledge in writing studies that the electronic age does not function according principles associated with print. Approximately a decade ago (in 1997) the National Council of Teachers of English passed a resolution encouraging writing instructors to start incorporating “visual literacy” instruction as major component of writing courses, and since then, textbooks continue to be issued (*Seeing and Writing* is in its second edition) that allow significance and even special status to the visual medium (Day).² In 2003, the NCTE passed a resolution entitled “On Composing in Non-Print Media,” an update of the 1997 resolution that extends the impact developing digital technologies are having on the apparatus of literary society in the West. (but, as we well know, in the East as well). In its entirety the resolution reads:

Background

Today our students are living in a world that is increasingly non-printcentric. New media such as the Internet, MP3 files, and video are transforming the communication experiences of young people outside of school. Young people are composing in nonprint media that can include any combination of visual art, motion (video and film), graphics, text, and sound -- all of which are frequently written and read in nonlinear fashion. We affirm, in our theory and practice of teaching English language arts, that reading and writing are ultimately different but inherently related aspects of the same process of meaning making. Why, then, would we treat the reading and writing of new media texts in any different manner? With multiple opportunities for student expression in the English language arts classroom, these nonprint media offer new realms for teachers of composition.

The now-standard computer applications for desktop video editing, for example, incorporate visuals, text, motion, graphics, and sound. Computer-based nonlinear video production alone provides a grand new palette for students and teachers. Teachers need both the theoretical and pedagogical base to guide their students in the best educational uses of multimedia composition. Because NCTE has always led the promotion of new literacies, be it therefore

Resolution

Resolved, that the National Council of Teachers of English

- encourage preservice, inservice, and staff development programs that will focus on new literacies, multimedia composition, and a broadened concept of literacy;
- encourage research and develop models of district, school, and classroom policies that would promote multimedia composition;
- encourage integrating multimedia composition in English language arts curriculum and teacher education, and in refining related standards at local, state, and national levels; and renew the commitment expressed in the *1983 Resolution on Computers in English and Language Arts* to achieve equity of access to the full range of composing technologies. (NCTE)

This is a large step forward for writing studies. However, those who concern themselves beyond analysis and into production tend to reproduce the kinds of projects to which average computer users are typically exposed— commercialized web pages that contain delineated spaces devoted to separate mediums of text, image, and video. Yet, while this is happening at home, the technological sector has already identified its target for the future. As commercial enterprises continue to realize the slowness of server-side loads and processes, they, in turn, become conscious that the time a user spends on a website entering information and waiting for results (an order placed online, a mortgage application) in Business speak could be “maximized” by creating a friendlier environment and speeding up the wait-time through a network distribution of processes. Macromedia, the software designers of Flash MX, Director MX and many other interactive multimedia web-based applications, have recently released Flex 1.5. According to Libbey Freligh, senior product manager for Flex, this new application is designed “to easily evolve the presentation tier of your architecture, by adding the ability to create rich applications, in a model very similar to how you create html applications today” (Freligh). The goal is to increase enjoyment for the user by creating

intuitive interfaces while allowing the host to design new and more efficient web-based applications, replacing the browser all together (Macromedia).³ It is hard to deny that the rate at which technology changes and develops has a profound impact on how teachers and students write and think with digital media, but the question that must be asked is whether educators will remain followers of evolving technology, teaching students to reproduce what will soon become obsolete, or whether they will turn to those in their own communities—the artists and philosophers—who have intuitively and theoretically been able to provide important clues for the ways that literacy is extending (beyond the simple addition of other media) into the electronic age and radically changing as it does. In 1964, Marshall McLuhan offered similar advice:

The power of the arts to anticipate future social and technological developments, by a generation and more, has long been recognized. In this century, Ezra Pound called the artist “the antennae of the race.” Art as radar acts as “an early alarm system,” as it were, enabling us to discover social and psychic targets in lots of time to prepare to cope with them. This concept of the arts as prophetic, contrasts with the popular idea of them as mere self-expression. If art is an “early warning system,” to use the phrase from World War II, when radar was new, art has the utmost relevance not only to media study but to the developments of media controls. (*Understanding* xi)

While many citizens consider electronic media, including the Web, in transparent, realist terms, writing studies scholarship suggests that compositionists tend to perceive electronic media in semiotically encoded ones.⁴ While this is appropriate to its specific situation, techniques for invention that are both truly innovative and anticipatory of imminent trends lie in the elsewhere, especially in the philosophical and artistic discussion that have heretofore been neglected in writing studies. For those who would

say that there is no room for art in composition studies, I quote Marshall McLuhan and Greg Ulmer:

The power of the arts to anticipate future social and technological developments, by a generation and more, has long been recognized. In this century, Ezra Pound called the artist “the antennae of the race.” Art as radar acts as “an early alarm system,” as it were, enabling us to discover social and psychic targets in lots of time to prepare to cope with them. This concept of the arts as prophetic, contrasts with the popular idea of them as mere self-expression. If art is an “early warning system,” to use the phrase from World War II, when radar was new, art has the utmost relevance not only to media study but to the developments of media controls. (McLuhan *Understanding* xi)

As Ulmer explains beyond this quote, theory is assimilated into the humanities in two principal ways—by critical interpretation and by artistic experiment. “Heuretics,” the latter approach, functions at the same level of generality as “hermeneutics.” Theorists from Plato to Derrida have influenced the making of arts and letters as much as they have their analysis and interpretation (and often have been influenced in turn by the arts as much as by argument). Recognizing this fact opens an opportunity for a heuritic pedagogy (*Heuritics* 3). New media researchers in composition and rhetoric have moved outside the physical medium of the printed book by migrating their efforts to electronic space, but have nonetheless remained “bounded” by the linear idioms associated with print. The majority of the electronic work—with some notable exceptions—has generally not realized, and many webtexts in the electronic journals *Kairos* and *The Writing Instructor* will testify to this, is that one important way technology reshapes cultural habits of thinking is that it adds an extra dimension of logic—what Ulmer calls *conduction* to the classical print logics of deduction and

induction or the semiotic logic of abduction. As it is produced in the mainstream composition studies, and as various theorists such as those mentioned above will testify, new media continues to operate in the sphere of semiotical reasoning, remediating text and visual influences and repurposing them to suit electronic discourse; nevertheless, it remains in the habit of Hayles' by now well-known though seldom deployed notion of the "skeuomorph," a "design feature, no longer functional in itself, that refers back to an avatar that was functional at an earlier time ("Boundary Disputes" 446).⁵ This is likely due, in part, to reliance on web browser technology. Electronic media, especially the Web, is a medium that fuses image, text, voice, music, and interactivity together to allow for new forms of discourse and media to function together to make meanings that we have not yet generally experienced—that is, new forms of organizing and orienting thought through new organizations and orientations of linguistic, visual, and audial interactivity.⁶ This is what Tara McPherson, editor of the journal *Vectors* and working at the intersection of critical studies, film, and popular culture calls "the immersive and experiential dimensions" of emerging vernaculars (*Vectors*).

Haptic, conductive, viral, fusion—these are the kinds of terms suitable to emerging forms of electronic writing to which those involved with poststructuralism and avant-garde art have helped paved the way. *Hypermedia evolved. Links blended into rich environments filled with transition effects, animated movement, music, uninterrupted or strategically interrupted visual, audial, linguistic, and cinematographical and architectural blended experience.* Although some of the artists/thinkers I am about to discuss here have worked primarily in the medium of

print, their insights into the ways technology and culture have constructed everything from identity to genre, offer insight and direction towards learning, thinking, and writing in transmediated forms. In other words, the concentration concerning the early thinkers to whom I will turn is not solely limited to new media but is oriented towards expanding consciousness, a necessary condition towards an unbinding of writing from the inflexibility of print-based paradigms.

In the following and concluding section, I have chosen to arrange a sequence of strategies glossed from artists and thinkers working at the intersection between theory and art as models for innovative writing (in the broad sense) that reaches to a very practical and real oncoming moment that the developing technology of rich applications are making more immanent. The goal and purpose here will be to review the methods these composers have used to advance their own work and to appropriate those works as inventional strategies to be used for research in invention for composition and rhetoric.

Here are my selection criteria:

- identify early writers who saw the literary apparatus as limiting.
- Identify post-structuralist and postmodernist writers who have looked for new ways of imagining writing in the electronic age.
- Identify current artists/writers who have sought to change typical narrative modes of expression that point towards new modes.
- Identify artists in other fields who have sought to alternative invention procedures from the inherited norm.

When people working in rhetoric and composition typically think about ways to invent writing pieces or to teach inventive strategies, they traditionally operate from two assumptions. First, that to write means to write for print. In English circles, writing usually means to write linearly, one word after another, in sentences, paragraphs, and pages. (In Journalism, the skills of the writer are similar if the purposes are different and more mechanical. The writer's skill remains separated from the photographer's or graphic artist's.) The second assumption is that procedures for invention are likewise methods from the history of linear writing, including classical topoi and their variants, rhetorical heuristics, hermeneutics-as-invention, and the disciplinary debates over heuristics and hermeneutics.⁷ This project now suggests that our assumptions towards writing studies should change: by expanding our understanding of writing to include writing in other domains (film, video, music) and by changing what it means to invent by appropriating heuristic and aleatory procedures from those working in these other fields. Thus, I would like to turn now that by investigating the methods for invention of artists outside of linear writing, what changes through practice are our traditions about writing and our habitual ways of approaching generative possibilities. It then should become possible to appropriate these unrealized methods to writing (even writing as print) and to effectively change the outcome of the kinds of writings that get produced; in addition, it also becomes possible to begin to compose in a way that exploits the innovative potential of these different media. It may be true that "exploiting the potential" of a particular medium may be something that is often repressed by the dominant mode of realistic representation of the times, but the staggering creative and

collaborative potential of new media suggests that the traditional training one brings to new media (be it writer, artist, or programmer) is not adequate by itself. If one wants to participate in new media effectively, if programmers want rhythm and visual appeal in their constructions, they must collaborate with artists; if artists seek interactive fusions among film, video games, and novels they will need to learn to program; if writers want to compose in new media (rather than remediate print) effectively, then they will need to learn the skills of experts in other fields. All of this points to traditional disciplinary roles being important in the new instauration yet inadequate for the coming community. As traditional roles breed and morph into new combinations so will we have to follow the lead of the ways that work and play are accomplished in the digital medium. As the work changes, the participants change. From the writer's perspective, these movements between design and designer, this back and forth relatedness, expands what is considered writing and points towards a collaboration among writing, art, and technical knowledge that will change what it means to write in the digital age.

While in itself, literacy—or its manifestation, what counter-philosopher Derrida in *Of Grammatology* calls *linearity*—may be defended as being responsible for many freedoms and advancements, it has *in the very least* come time to broadly recognize that literacy is a paradigm and an epistemological mode; as such, it is a manner and method of thinking that is only one among other dimensions of thought and representation. (In fact, if we turn to the avant of the 60s, loosening the constraints of syntactical structure is forty years beyond due; if we turn to the Zurich Dadaists, it has been almost a century in the making to recognize the severe limitations on thinking that the print paradigm

imposes). More recently, as Derrida has said, “The “line” represents only a particular model, whatever might be its privilege. . . . This night begins to lighten a little at the moment when linearity—which is not loss or absence but the repression of pluri-dimensional symbolic thought—relaxes its oppression because it begins to sterilize the technical and scientific economy that it has long favored” (86). The model of linearity “*has become* a model;” it was not always such, and although the book as well as disciplinary knowledge takes the arboreal form, neither does it nor the book represent or imitate, as the classical paradigm suggests, nature. Beyond linearity is a space beyond the book. If we are ready to be done mourning the end of the book and take up the task of investigating “pluri-dimensional symbolic thought,” then it is time *apply* grammatology. This next section takes its cue from Gregory Ulmer’s words in *Applied Grammatology*: “The challenge of an applied grammatology is to define how this other writing can function as knowledge *without being theoretical*” (12; original emph.).

9.1 Cut-up and Fold-in

As far as possible applications, I would like to put forward for your consideration William Burroughs’ notion of “deprogramming.” While deprogramming appears to be a loaded word, suggesting ideological hoodwinking or even “brainwashing,” a less alarmist position sees programming as related to the sequences of “programs” media stations broadcast and disseminate. Unfortunately, media broadcasts frequently follow repeating aesthetical and rhetorical patterns, literally, to use Marshall McLuhan’s word, “massag-ing” the audience. Without turning to dramatic historical and political examples, if a radio station plays the same songs day in

and out, with the same misogynistic lyrics put over and over to the same vibrations and rhythms, the listening audience might be said to have been “programmed.” For Burroughs, mainstream media is seen as a threat, and this threat extends to language itself, giving language the status of an infection. In *The Ticket That Exploded*, Burroughs writes, “The word is now a virus. . . . The word may once have been a healthy neural cell. It is now a parasitic organism that invades and damages the central nervous system. Modern man has lost the option of silence. Try halting your sub-vocal speech. Try to achieve even ten seconds of inner silence. You will encounter a resisting organism that *forces you to talk*. That organism is the word” (49-50). One might notice right away that that Burroughs’ description of the virus is *pathological*, a parasite that requires a host.⁸ In *Noise, Water, Meat: A History of Sound in the Arts*, Douglas Kahn gives a thoughtful history and explanation of Burroughs’ relationship to the concept of “language as a virus” and its relatedness to the organismic theories of Count Alfred Korzybski, the orgone (primordial cosmic energy) theories of Wilhelm Reich, and the Dianetics of L. Ron Hubbard. Kahn, Hansen, and Deleuze (the latter two in the endnote) provide helpful contextualization for this chapter. For Burroughs and for my purposes as well, the first step is to recognize how language structures patterns of thinking and perspective. Two excellent examples come from Burroughs’ *The Electronic Revolution* (1970). In the following passage, Burroughs describes the problem with the meaning of the word *or* in the English language:

The categorical THE is also a virus mechanism, locking you in THE virus universe. EITHER/OR is another virus formula. It is always you OR the virus. EITHER/OR. This is in point of fact the conflict formula

which is seen to be archetypical virus mechanism. The proposed language will delete these virus mechanisms and make them impossible of formulation in the language. This language will be a tonal language like Chinese, it will also have a hieroglyphic script as pictorial as possible without being to cumbersome or difficult to write. This language will give one option of silence. When not talking, the user of this language can take in the silent images of the written, pictorial and symbol languages. (in *Word Virus* 312-13).

So early did Burroughs recognize the oncoming moment where divisions between categories (between language and sound and image) break down. In the language of images, there is no either/or, but to get to recognize how writing can move in this direction, for Burroughs, one must appreciate that language (as for Foucault's bio-power) encodes the body at the level of cellular structure. (I choose the word *appreciate* rather than the more ideologically loaded terms *accept* or *recognize*). The level at which language operates—whether body, meme, or mind—makes little difference here; only *that* it operates, and by result, constrains perspective and thought. The point then is to appropriate Burroughs' procedures for widening perspective by exploiting the editing and selection power inherent in cameras and audio recorders. Burroughs' instructs:

Walk down a city block with a camera and take what you notice, moving the camera around as closely as possible to follow the direction of your eyes. The point is to make the camera your eyes and take what your eyes are scanning out of the larger picture. At the same time take the street at a wide angle from a series of still positions. The street of the operator is, of course, the street as seen by the operator. It is different from the street seen at a wide angle. Much of it is in fact missing. Now you can make arbitrary scanning patterns - that is cover first one side of the street and then the other in accordance with a preconceived plan. So you are breaking down the automatic scanning patterns. You could also make colour scanning patterns, that is, scan out green, blue, red, etc. in so far as you can with your camera. That is, you are using an arbitrary

preconceived scanning pattern, in order to break down automatic scanning patterns. a number of operators do this and then scramble their takes together and with wide angle tapes. This could train the subject to see at a wider angle and also to ignore and erase at will.

This paragraph locates the inspiration for the first chapter, and the breadth of Burroughs' work reveals his interest in making his methods known as widely as possible through both practice and theory. This first chapter contextualizes the procedure, shows Burroughs' own applications, and suggests variations for how "deprogramming" may be performed effectively today. The immediate exposure to different recording and capturing media as well as the work of comparing it to one's own observations begins to loosen the hold of a purely linear thinking.

Consistent with Burroughs excellent rethinking of the traditional print paradigm, I would like to also suggest what in new media circles has become the increasingly important notions of the "cut-up" and the "fold-in." Here is a clear description of the reasoning behind the fold-in, from Burroughs:

A Russian scientist has said: "We will travel not only in space but in time as well—" that is to travel in space is to travel in time—If writers are to travel in space time and explore areas opened by the space age, I think they must develop techniques quite as new and definite as the techniques of physical space travel—Certainly if writing is to have a future it must at least catch up with the past and learn to use techniques that have been used for some time past in painting, music and film . . . In writing my last two novels, *Nova Express* and *The Ticket that Exploded*, I have used an extension of the cut-up method I call "the fold-in method . . ." (*Word Virus* 272).

The fold-in, where page one is folded into page 100 and the resulting composite is inserted as a page between the two, allows the writer to employ the cinematic effect of temporal montage. By using the method of the fold-in, the writer is able to fuse two

different moments of time, processes that anticipate musical methods of sampling, remix, and collaboration that have become part of artistic culture today. Burroughs writes:

Perfectly clear narrative prose can be produced using the fold-in method—Best results are usually obtained by placing pages dealing with similar subject in juxtaposition—What does any writer do but choose, edit and rearrange material at his disposal?—The fold-in method give the writer literally infinite extension of choice—Take for example a page of Rimbaud folded into a page of St. John Perse—(two poets who have much in common)—From two pages an infinite number of combinations and images are possible—The method could also lead to a collaboration between writers on an unprecedented scale to produce works that were the composite effort of any number of writers living and dead. . . .” (274)

Deprogrammatic methods help free experience to ways of thinking that are outside of the linearity of print, and the fold-in method allows the possibility of jumping across time and using distant works to form new composites. In addition, the fold-in and Brion Gysin’s cut-up do more than allow for an “infinite number of combinations” to be produced. They also add a certain dimension of pleasure to the text and modernize writing to recognize that it is no different from painting, music, architecture, film, or science in the ways that it does, always has, and should build upon its own tradition by borrowing from the work of others. For example, in “God’s Little Toys: Confessions of a Cut and Paste Artist,” science-fiction writer William Gibson comments on Burroughs and the ownership of language: “‘Who owns the words?’ asked a disembodied but very persistent voice throughout much of Burroughs’ work. Who does own them now? Who owns the music and the rest of our culture? We do. All of us. Though not all of us know it – yet” (119). Extending the concept of what Lawrence Lessig today calls “free

culture,” going back in time, Burroughs’ method also has the advantage of realizing the effects of what Roland Barthes has called the “Death of the Author.” By separating the text from author in the operation of the fold-in or cut-up, the text is released as something that can be manipulated, built upon, and interacted with instead of something to be consumed. In addition, this method summons Barthes’ distinction between “readerly texts” (passive consumption) and “writerly texts” (active participation) and enables any readerly (“We call any readerly text a classic text”), classic text to be transformed through the *jouissance* of disruption and the transgression of limits (*S/Z* 4; *Pleasure* 62). Barthes explains:

In this ideal text, the networks are many and interact, without any one of them being able to surpass the rest; this text is a galaxy of signifiers, not a structure of signifieds; it has no beginning; it is reversible; we gain access to it by several entrances, none of which can be authoritatively declared to be the main one; the codes it mobilizes extends *as far as the eye can reach*, they are indeterminable (meaning here is never subject to a principle of determination, unless by throwing the dice); the systems of meaning can take over this absolutely plural text, but their number is never closed, based as it is on the infinity of language. (*S/Z* 5- 6; original emphasis)

In one swoop, the simple operations of the cut-up and the fold-in can unlock these theoretical possibilisms. In addition, in this kind of writing, text loses its status as an object and gains a status as a function and operation of deep pleasure, opening the chance of feeling language as enjoyable, operative, and communal.

For the current age, writing removed from its context in this way can be said to be decorporealized (in contradistinction to Hansen). In “Deconstructive Surgery: Self, Sampling, and the Question of Authority,” Derrick Rhodes explains how meanings alter

from one context to the next. “Through the process of transference from one context to another, however, the sampled "voice" not only loses the privilege of having an identifiable point of contextual origin, but the sample itself necessarily becomes the only viable referent which can act in the re-shaping of its own, independently resurrected, identity. Once a "voice" is excerpted from one context and projected into another "for transitive purposes," it necessarily discusses only itself” (in Vitanza “Potemkin Repetition”). When a voice or a text is sampled, then, disembodied from its previous text, the text cannot refer to the text to which it once belonged because the former has been rewritten by the latter, disappeared, in effect.⁹ It is false to assume that words can be taken out of their context, as words, they are always already out of context. As Derrida and Bennington say, we are in language before we speak, or as Brion Gysin said to Burroughs on the topic of plagiarism,

Brion pointed out to me that I had been stealing for years: “Where did that come from—‘Eyes old, unbluffed, unreadable’? And that—‘inflexible authority’? And that—‘arty type, no principles.’ And that—and that—and that? (*Word Virus* 343-44)

When the text is separated from the author and context, able to be sampled, the text loses its status as object and becomes for Burroughs, a virus, for Deleuze, a machine. I ask, as did Gysin to Burroughs, didn’t the text always have such a status? Wasn’t the text *always* viral, machinic, memic? If so, what needs to be asked is into what other machinic assemblages can the decorporealized language virus be plugged?

Working across various artistic intersections including Hip-Hop and the Web, conceptual artist Paul Miller writes, “so many media and cultural techniques of

interpretation coexist—reading, watching, listening, surfing, dancing—that this textual/sonic synesthesia demands a great deal from us” (157). What this means for us, as it does for Miller, is that to survive and thrive in this “textual/sonic synesthesia” is learning to become “literate” in a plurality of symbolic dimensions. This small step that begins with Burroughs is actually quite large. It gives one the ability to recognize that the word is a machine that can combine and recombine in other relationships, to ask questions along with Deleuze and Guattari:

We will never ask what a book means, as signified or signifier; we will not look for anything to understand in it. We will ask what it functions with, in connection with what other things it does or does not transmit intensities, in which other multiplicities its own are inserted and metamorphosed. . . . A book itself is a little machine; what is the relation . . . of this literary machine to a war machine, love machine, revolutionary machine, etc. . . . We have been criticized for overquoting literary authors. But when one writes, the only question is which other machine the literary machine can be plugged into, must be plugged into in order to work. (*ATP* 4)

The two pages of the fold-in serve to form a new composite and greater composites can be made by taking the principle of the fold-in and using it across larger machines.

9.2 Cinema and Writing

While there are many ways still to be discovered as to how to effectuate this practice of plugging different machines into each other to make them work, one way *not* to do so is by simply incorporating images and sounds into textual productions to make “multi-modal” texts (the sort of which may take the form of a CNN webpage). Such an operation only duplicates the logic of the media program. According to Lev Manovich, multi-modal methods follow the everyday cultural productions of the “aesthetics of

continuity,” an aesthetic or rhetoric that borrows the medium of the newsstand and ignores the more advanced elements of cinema that are becoming increasingly more ubiquitous in computer culture. Manovich writes:

By the mid-1990s, Web pages included a variety of media types—but they were still essentially traditional pages. Different media elements—graphics, photographs, digital video, sound, and 3-D worlds—were imbedded within rectangular surfaces containing text. To this extent, a typical Web page was conceptually similar to a newspaper page, which is also dominated by text, with photographs, drawings, tables, and graphs embedded in between, along with links to other pages of the newspaper. (75)

Rather than recreating newspapers, a writing for new media recognizes that the new environment requires the building of a new and suitable conceptual framework. Gregory Ulmer tells us, however, that inventing new concepts is thwarted by the scientific method and the way that model has come to dominate the humanities. Working from Paul Feyerabend’s ground-breaking *Against Method*, Ulmer affirms Feyerabend’s point that the still dominant epistemological paradigm of scientific analysis separates discovery from justification—two activities that Feyerabend tells us should have remain unified. Erected in the name of method is an abstract description (what Deleuze and Guattari call an *abstract machine*) that ignores the practical experiences of actually *doing* science, causing a rupture between the ideology of method on one hand, and the actual practice of scientific invention on the other. Ulmer writes, “Indeed, if the concept of rules and “falsifiability” at the center of logic of problem-solving were actually applied to practice . . . there could be no science. The ideology of method, that is, differs fundamentally from the practice of invention. Science, like cinema, is an

apparatus, a machine, in which ideology plays an integral part. The same may be said for the university as an education machine” (*Teleteory* 47). In other words, within the education machine and the empirical/logical/analytical methods that remain part of the humanities, a strong disconnect always exists between the ideology of method and the procedures of invention.

We might look to Deleuze in *Difference and Repetition* for further explanation.

Deleuze offers a memorable example, one that speaks to the limits of pedagogy and method:

The movement of the swimmer does not resemble that of the wave. In particular, the movements of the swimming instructor which we reproduce on the sand bear no relation to the movements of the wave, which we learn to deal with only by grasping the former in practice as signs. That is why it is so difficult to say how someone learns: there is an innate or acquired practical familiarity with signs, which means that there is something amorous--but also something fatal--about all education. (23)

Instead of ending there, Deleuze gives a glimpse into how an educator might proceed. He writes, “We learn nothing from those who say: ‘Do as I do’. Our only teachers are those who tell us to ‘do with me’, and are able to emit signs to be developed in heterogeneity rather than propose gestures for us to reproduce. In other words, there is no ideo-motivity, only sensory-motivity” (23). It is the method for the apprentice, the student who watches and follows and steps, risking, and learns. Deleuze points to the same axis Ulmer and Feyerabend allude to in the problem of the ideology of method and the practice of invention. What is needed to effectuate these hetero-generative practices, Ulmer and Feyerabend tell us, is a

dream-world in order to discover the features of the real world we think we inhabit (and which may actually be just another dream-world) . . . We must invent a new conceptual system that suspends, or clashes with the most carefully established observational results, confounds the most plausible theoretical principles, and introduces perceptions that cannot form part of the existing perceptual world. This is counterinductive. Counterinduction is therefore always reasonable and it has always a chance of success. (Feyerabend in Ulmer *Teleteory* 48; Feyerabend 32)

Doing so, however, does not come without a price. Cutting-up or folding-in means giving up the book. Ulmer explains that

Any attempt to move beyond the book must contend with the libidinal investment in the form of the book. The book is perhaps the most charged, cathected object in Western civilization, representing, according to Freud's analysis of his own dream of the botanical monograph, the Mother. Derrida's frequent allusions to the need for mourning (a process associated with the child's defenses for dealing with the loss of or separation from the mother, an essential element of the entry into language) . . . suggests that grammatological writing exemplifies the struggle to break with the investiture of the book (*Applied* 13).

In *Teleteory*, Ulmer continues the work of mourning and nostalgia by inventing a new form of historical writing called the *mystory*. This need to mourn the book, however, opens an interesting question for those generations born into a culture where the Web is not a new technology but something that has always been a part of their experience; something seen as requiring extension rather than so much reflection. If the printed word is becoming less and less important as network culture expands, will there still be a need to mourn the loss of the book? Manovich explains that in the nineties the printed word dominated the language of the cultural interfaces, but has now become less important, a move consistent with a "a general trend in modern society toward presenting more and more information in the form of time-based audiovisual moving

image sequences, rather than as text. As new generations of both computer users and computer designers grow up in a media-rich environment dominated by television rather than by printed texts, it is not surprising that they favor cinematic language over the language of print” (78). It is too easy, however, to claim that since younger generations are more comfortable using non-print interfaces that the book will only be a cause for mourning for those less technologically inclined.

At first, this may seem counter-intuitive, but the next question that needs asking is: did print cross domains and become repurposed in cinema? If we associate the classical linear-narrative structure of cinema as being associated with the novel, the answer is yes. According to film theorist Christian Metz, “most films shot today, good or bad, original or not, ‘commercial’ or not, have as a common characteristic that they tell a story; in this measure they all belong to one and the same genre, which is, rather, a sort of ‘super-genre’.”¹⁰ Imagine practically all forms of writing today to be the novel. Disaster. Or all forms of music to be Rock. Nightmares and horror. One possible way to discuss this divide, then, is similar to the difference between linear writing and the collage style advocated by Burroughs and the other theorists I have mentioned. Much of this work, including that of Burroughs, is influenced by the methods of the Dadaists and the later Surrealists. By turning to the relationship between the dominant indexical nature of cinema and the Russian montage film theorists of the 1920s such as Lev Kuleshov, Dziga Vertov, and Sergei Eisenstein, it is possible to see a similar dominant-repressed relationship in cinema and to quarry for a cinematic technique for digital writing. One major difference, however, is that these early and celebrated film theorists

saw in the infancy of film the possibility of overcoming the repressive model of the narrative line through manipulative editing. For instance, the “kuleshov effect,” a parallel sequencing effect a close-up of a single expressionless face was intercut with various shots allegedly causing the audience to identify the repeating face to be expressing different emotions, helped to spark the assumption that montage was the primary artistic device for film. In “The Cinematographic Principle of the Ideogram,” Eisenstein (although disagreeing with Kuleshov’s school) formed some of his own ideas on montage as collision and the relationship to the Japanese ideogram. Andre Bazin’s later criticisms that montage concealed the realistic recording dimension of cinema as well (as the suppression of formalism in Stalinist Russia) contributed to the rise of the narrative, novelistic form in fictional film that dominates the “movies” today. The montage tendency, exemplified by such artists as Kuleshov, Vertov, and Eisenstein (and others later such as Godard and Kubrick) is replaced by the story, or what Manovich calls the “aesthetics of continuity,” an aesthetic that carries over into virtual space (143).

I also suggest that we move from the textual medium to cinema by offering a description of Dziga Vertov’s career, a reading of his most celebrated film, *A Man with a Movie Camera*, and translating the methods of cinematographical montage for composition studies to be used in writing with images. Like Burroughs, Vertov was preoccupied with the possibilities of disrupting linear thought—montage allows the merging of different realities to form parts of a single image. Vertov explained in a 1923 manifesto that the “kino-eye” is a “mechanical eye. I, a machine, show you the

world as only I can see it.” And added later that the “kino-eye uses every possible means in montage, comparing and linking all points of the universe in any temporal order, breaking, when necessary, all the laws and conventions of film construction.” Also a fan of Vertov, Manovich explains the power of his “kino-eye” in *Man with a Movie Camera*: “As the film progresses, straight footage gives way to manipulated footage; newer techniques appear one after another, reaching a roller-coaster intensity by the film’s end—a true orgy of cinematography. It is as though Vertov restages his discovery of the kino-eye for us, and along with him, we gradually realize the full range of possibilities offered by the camera” (243). To continue the work of releasing the dimensions of symbolic thought in new media, it is necessary to plug writing into the machine of cinema but to avoid reproducing the aesthetics of continuity found in dominant television programs and feature films.

Studying montage as it works in film gives us the start to think about how to create such productions using computer applications, specifically by blending different temporal (and spatial) elements in Adobe Photoshop and offer methods for such manipulation. Echoing the fold-in from Burroughs, this suggestion brings in the multiple visual perspectives into experience that avoid the singularity of a film’s typical indexical nature. In line with Derrida, Ulmer, Deleuze, and Manovich, this suggestion includes—through practice—the necessary theoretical elements to thinking and inventing in multiple dimensions and anticipates the compositing and sampling culture of music and the larger apparatus of electracry.

Changing indexical cinematic structure does not have to occur only through the use of montage. Picking up on *temporal montage*, I would like to also suggest that we in composition studies turn towards a modified narrativity that requires intense focus to absorb all that gets missed in video or film that gets shot at typical speed (film at 24 frames per second, video at 30 fps). The complaint against narrative is not merely that the indexical nature of cinema reinscribes the linear form of the book but that continual repetition of the indexical nature, void of radical experimentation and artistic effects causes a singular way of perceiving that constrains consciousness. Keeping in the cinematic medium, video artist Bill Viola's compositions employ extreme temporal decelerations to bring forward a portrayal of the interstices and transformations between movements that may not be technically considered montage or editing but have the similar power of changing how reality is perceived. Viola's work can thus be seen as another method for learning to write in new media. In both cases, in temporal montage such as the kind made by Vertov and the reduced speeds of Viola bring together what exists in perception but can not be detected, the first employs artificial direct editing, the second artificial pacing.

In Viola's work, to achieve the desired effect of capturing more information than is perceivable, the process of creating slow-motion pieces runs counter to what the ideo-indexical nature of film would cause us to suspect. Other video artists who employ slow-motion methods such as Scottish artist Douglas Gordon or Indonesian artist Fiona Tan either slow down playback speeds (Gordon in *24 hour psycho*) or record subjects who are asked to hold still for as long as possible (Tan in *Corrections*). While these

methods are effective in causing the viewer to concentrate on what was there but went unnoticed, Viola stretches the indexical nature of narrative to the extreme, rewriting, like Ulmer's *mystory*, what it means to narrate. Similar to the montage artists Vertov and Burroughs, Viola is able to show movements that previously did not exist at all (for the human eye). To achieve the desired effect of flattening hierarchies of perception by emphasizing the unperceivable transformations between movements, Viola's method requires that he record on high speed film and slow down playback to normal speed. According to Mark Hansen, who has included a section devoted to Bill Viola in his *Philosophy for New Media*, Viola shot his well known *Passions* on high speed film at 384 fps or sixteen times faster than typical recording speed. On the supersaturation of information that Viola is able to capture through this technique, Hansen writes:

What distinguishes [this method] from any cinematic use of slow motion . . . is that Viola exploits the recording potential of film to its fullest: *each second of film encompasses (roughly) 384 increments of motion, 384 discrete captures of information!* Playing this back at normal speed (at 24 fps, though now channeled through video's 30 fps) literally exposes the viewer to the imperceptible—to incredibly minute shifts in affective tonality well beyond what is observable by (non-technically supplemented) natural perception. ("Time of Affect" 614; original emphasis)

In this *kind* of composition, the goal is not be to get writers to duplicate the work of Viola but to use his techniques as a guide in order to create something new. Of course, the technique can be employed using video and film but technical limitations could be an issue depending on the resources available at a particular program/university. With the increasing availability of high-speed recording digital video cameras, the chances

that these procedures will be available to the typical student will only become more likely with time.

Before the boom of the Web, Gregory Ulmer noticed that society was turning towards methods of sample and remix that have now infiltrated culture at every level (the most resistant being writing). In the late eighties, Ulmer explained that the synthesizer, a machine that reflected society's ability to store and retrieve information, suited as the best cultural metaphor for writing in the age of video, or what Ulmer at that called [prior to electracy] "videocy." In *Teletheory*, Ulmer writes, "The machine that perhaps best emblemizes the operations of the academic apparatus in the age of television is the synthesizer" (31). With the evolution of computer technologies and the emergence of the global network and ubiquity of mechanical reproduction, data stored in the synthesizer expands to dimensions other than sound as it finds habitation in new media objects. These objects, as Lev Manovich explains, can be infinitely reproduced without any degeneration of content (numerical representation) and that the data for any object can be manipulated so that it can be expressed in many different versions and incarnations (variability and modularity). New media is able to "exist in numerous versions and numerous incarnations" (Manovich 134). For Ulmer, the synthesizer and now, new media best emblemize the academic apparatus suitable to a culture transformed by technological reproduction in its capacity to allow teachers, writers, and artists to select and retrieve saved information. Ulmer provides us with a musical definition ("In sampling a sound is digitally encoded in the memory of the instrument and this data is manipulated so as to provide the sound at different pitches across the

span of the keyboard or controller”); he extends his definition to include the

pedagogical work with which academics have always been engaged. Ulmer explains:

It may be that as researchers committed to realism of the book apparatus academics are unreceptive to the cognition of mechanical reproduction. As teachers, however, we are in a different relation to knowledge, and this is the relation that will come to predominate in a video age in which teaching as well as research is publishable. Hasn't pedagogy always positioned itself in this "postmodern" way in relation to the past as information? Haven't teachers always ransacked the past in order to perform the simulacrum of history, in period courses for which there is no original, whose authorship we deny? Haven't we always lived by the quotation in our scholarship and lectures? Postmodernism no longer produces monumental works, [Fredric] Jameson notes, "but ceaselessly reshuffles the fragments of preexistent texts, the building blocks of older cultural and social production, in some new and heightened bricklayer: met books which cannibalise other books, metatexts which collate bits of other texts" (30).

We now have a new figure for teachers to emulate rather than that of the synthesizer.

Now there is the DJ. For Manovich, William Gibson, and Paul D. Miller, the DJ is the figure the new media age:

Manovich: "The DJ also demonstrates the true potential of this logic to create new artistic forms. Finally, the example of the DJ also makes it clear that selection is not an end in and of itself. The essence of the DJ's art is the ability to mix selected elements in rich and sophisticated ways. In contrast to the "cut and paste" metaphor of modern GUI that suggests that selected elements can be simply, almost mechanically, combined, the practice of live electronic music demonstrates that true are lies in the "mix." (135)

Gibson: "Our culture no longer bothers to use words like *appropriation* or *borrowing* to describe those very activities. Today's audience isn't listening at all - it's participating. Indeed, *audience* is as antique a term as *record*, the one archaically passive, the other archaically physical. The record, not the remix, is the anomaly today. The remix is the very nature of the digital. Today, an endless, recombinant, and fundamentally social process generates countless hours of creative product . . . Instead, the recombinant (the bootleg, the remix, the mash-up) has become the characteristic pivot at the turn of our two centuries. (118)

Miller: Sampling is a new way of doing something that's been with us for a long time: creating with found objects. The rotation gets thick. The constraints get thin. The mix breaks free of the old associations. New contexts form from old. The script gets flipped. The languages evolve and learn to speak in new forms, new thoughts. The sound of thought becomes legible again at the edge of the new meanings. After all, you have to learn a new language. Take the idea and fold it in on itself. Think of it as laptop jazz, cybernetic jazz, nu-bop, ILLbient – a nameless, formless, shapeless concept given structure by the rhythms. And that's a good start. (25)

In order to appropriate the performance methods of the DJ to writing studies, it is necessary to learn the four most important skills of the DJ: collecting, selecting, listening, and mixing. We could see how these four steps might mirror the typical explanation of the writing process (prewriting, writing, revising, editing) and there are easily codifiable affiliations. DJ-ing does not have to be limited to the formation of musical compositions, the role of the artist-DJ can be applied to any style of music: jazz, rock, ambience, techno, fusion, etc. and, as an inventional device, it can cross mediums to photography, writing, filming, programming, etc. Take for instance the revolutionary styles of people such as Grandmaster Flash, Kool Herc, and Afrika Bambaataa as well as their suggestions for listening to mixes and the technical operations known in the DJ world as blending, matching phrasing, cutting, scratching, stopping, spinbacking, beat-juggling, and experimenting by turning those operations towards written texts. As Paul D. [aka "Spooky"] Miller, says, what is most important is gaining a sense of recognition for the medium within which you are working: "Saying the people are literate means that they have read widely enough to reference texts, to put them in a conceptual framework. They are capable of creating an overview. This kind of literacy exists in the musical arena, too. The more you have heard, the easier it is to find

links and to recognize quotations” (57). Within electracy, literacy does not carry special status over that of other mediums. If the goal is to increase print literacy, then DJ methods offer a new conceptual framework with which to organize the production of written compositions. If the goal is to allow students to compose in the mediums they are most comfortable in by drawing upon their storehouse of media experiences, then the techniques of the DJ remain translatable. The chapter or dissertation that is needed is the one that illustrates DJ techniques by applying them to various media, specifically by building a collection of materials of text, sound, video, and imagery and blending them in original ways. In so doing, writing will have the benefit of moving outside of the rigid structures of print and catching up with the creative methods penetrating every level of culture.

So far, I have attempted to describe five applications that take writing to the new media age, artists working with writing, film, video, and music and methods that cut across these various domains. I have attempted to include enough theoretical background information to move the project forward calling upon the work of Ulmer, Derrida, Deleuze, Barthes and Manovich. The first suggestion uses Burroughs’ methods of taking pictures and recording sounds to widen perspectives that help writers see in ways that are no longer bound by the print paradigm. The second uses Burroughs’s work and his procedures of the cut-up and the fold-in to help rethink our relationships towards written texts as objects and to recognize their ability to function as machines that can cut across and plug into media other than print. The third recognizes the cinematographical nature of the web but also recognizes that the web follows the

“aesthetics of continuity” typical in Hollywood movie making. Using inspiration from film but working in Adobe Photoshop for image manipulation, this direction should— from my own personal perspective--I work to blend temporal elements and enforce a non-indexical procedure of making images. The fourth suggestion concentrates on the art of Bill Viola, works in the domain of video and the procedures of speeding up film and plays it back at normal speeds to emphasize what they eye cannot see. While it is possible to translate these methods to writing by playing with the pacing of narratives, what is more interesting is to play with speed in video recording and playback, not with the intention of duplicating Viola’s work but to use it as a guide to make something else, other, and dare I say, new. The fifth suggestion turns to the cultural figure of the DJ, a figure that symbolizes the writer in the new media age, one who uses everything at his or her disposal for refreshing, original, and exhausting invention. These suggestions allow a degree of participation and co-authoring never seen before, realizing the “writerly” experience of the “pleasure of the text.” Mark Amerika, Young-Hae Chang, and Erik Loyer are three talented Web artists who are redefining what it means to work on the Web. Amerika’s “FILMTEXT,” Chang’s “Dakota,” and Loyer’s “Chroma” show that the patterns of thought created by these writers cannot be achieved without seriously rethinking the role and purpose of the writer. Loyer explains:

The truth is that programming has more in common with traditional artistic endeavors than many would believe, and much of the culture of the twenty-first century is going to be shaped by individuals who possess talents in both areas--by artists who see programming technique as no different from technique in composition, and by programmers who see artistic disciplines as inspiration for logical structures. In the next 50

years, these artist/programmers are going to bear a staggering amount of cultural responsibility, whether they choose to acknowledge it or not.¹¹

Artists who have technological expertise are rapidly becoming the figures for the future digital age. Writers cannot remain bounded by the book but they will also need to leave behind the practice of repurposing old media for the web and learn to compose in purely digital environments, a condition that means gaining a technological sophistication of rich applications and computer programming. Here's Kittler description for the future:

Optical fiber networks. People will be hooked to an information channel that can be used for any medium—for the first time in history, or for its end. Once movies and music, phone calls and texts reach households via optical fiber cables, the formerly distinct media of television, radio, telephone, and mail converge, standardized transmission frequencies and bit format. . . The general digitization of channels erases the differences among individual media [including writing]. Sound and image, voice and text are reduced to surface effects, known to consumers as interface. Sense and the senses turn to eyewash . . . Inside the computers themselves, everything becomes a number: quantity without image, sound or voice . . . with numbers everything goes. (1-2)

This is already happening. The fact is that the training, time, and developmental experience necessary to develop the technical and artistic skills that Loyer and the others possess is out of reach for many working in rhetoric and composition.

Nonetheless, unless they want to be left further behind in culture than they already are, teachers and writers will need to change their working models to both train in and beyond codes such as HTML, CSS, and Flash and to collaborate with those who are knowledgeable in more powerful areas. As such, they'll need to put into effect their oldest of persuasive powers and implore others to take notice. In the future the

programmer will become both writer and artist. Without hybrids, rhetoric will die.

Convergence is now.

NOTES

CHAPTER 1: PREFACE: INSTITUTIONAL INNOVATION: AN OXYMORON?

¹ Plato wrote: “Names, I maintain, are in no case stable. Nothing prevent the things that are now called round from being called straight and the straight round, and those who have transposed the names and use them in the opposite way will find them no less stable than they are now. The same thing for that matter is true of a description, since it consists of nouns and of verbal expressions, so that in a description there is nowhere any sure ground that is sure enough” (qtd. in Hobart and Schiffman 76-77). Also, “The Limits of Representation” is the title to Michel Foucault’s seventh chapter of *The Order of Things*, 217-49.

² For a discussion of the creation of the modern university, see Mark C. Taylor *The Moment of Complexity* 233-58.

³ I’m not referring to the religious connotations of the term but to the Kantian ones.

⁴ To find examples, browse the archives at [techrhet.com](http://www.techrhet.com) located at <http://www.interversity.org/lists/techrhet/>

⁵ To consider blogs from this point of view only continues the solidification and extension of the print paradigm, and so long as our bloggers in rhetoric and composition are content to keep blogging, to keep writing in paragraphs according to the rules of our parents’ house, then blogging, even despite all its claims to community (which is essentially a reduction towards mediocrity), shores up the foundations of print, or, if not print, at least linearity that derives from it and has the same effect. Some notable bloggers in the so-called “blogosphere” include Collin Brooke, Jeff Rice, Clancy Ratcliff. For others, just click on their blogrolls. These three bloggers blog almost daily. They are committed, informative, diligent, entertaining and strong writers who have, as they have all admitted, gotten to be better writers because of their blogging. But it is these strong qualities that make them popular, and it is their popularity and the popularity of the phenomenon of blogging itself that continues to secure the foothold of the print paradigm in electronic spaces.

⁶ The lead statement from the FRE reads: “Florida Research Ensemble (FRE) is an interdisciplinary collaborative group working collectively and individually on the invention of new digital forms and the development of what Greg Ulmer, the group theorist, refers to as electracy thinking in artistic production. Electracy is to information

technology what literacy is to alphabetic writing. Over the past eight years the FRE has used Internet collaboration to produce numerous exhibitions, books, articles, CD ROMs, DVD-Data, videos, lectures, panel discussions and websites.” For more information, go to http://institute.emerson.edu/vma/faculty/john_craig_freeman/imaging_place/about/research_ensembles/fre.html.

⁷ In contradistinction to the statement about institutional discourse, in *Applied Grammatology*, Ulmer recognizes that the ultimate challenge is to “define how this other writing can function without being theoretical” (13). [check page number]. That is, the time will come when the leap of writing will have taken place.

⁸ Anyone familiar with “The Question Concerning Technology” will recall Heidegger’s notion of *Gestell*, commonly translated as enframing, which means—among various other things I promise to discuss later—that nature itself stops being what it is and becomes merely a stockpile for man’s use.

⁹ In defense of Derrida, paying special attention to the grammatological dimensions of Derrida’s thought would quickly reveal the looseness with which he ascribes to the word *texte*. Writing primarily refers not only to the structure of the trace but also to the pictographic scripts found in Freudian dream-works and Egyptian hieroglyphs.

CHAPTER 2: THE *KAIROS* CONNECTIONS

¹ Crowley’s phrasing is particularly apt once one takes into consideration the many meanings that can be extracted from these two words. *Kairos* is slippery because it is put into the service of different rhetorical, theoretical, political, and aesthetical programs. It is slippery because whenever one tries to lock it down in the service of any program, it is one of those elusive terms that continuously conjures up its other meanings. It is slippery because as it is fully involved in the slippery world of appearances.

² I will have occasion to return to this “location” of *kairos* being found in the body, particularly in the later discussions with when *kairos* is reconsidered through my interpretation of Deleuze’s concept of the event.

³ It is important to recognize a point that Smith makes concerning Greek concepts of time; that is, that the Greeks, or at least through the example of Thucydides that Smith provides, that *chronos* was modeled on the cyclical repetition of the seasons rather than on a linear model. Nietzsche, it will be remembered, attributed the notion of the eternal return to Heraclitus. Smith writes, “The ancient paradigm of this way of thinking is found in the History of Thucydides, where he claims that his work is a creation “forever”: because of the cyclical image of time presupposed throughout the book; the events will recur. This image was clearly drawn from the repetitions and recurrences of

natural processes, the procession of the seasons, the phases of the moon, and other cycles in nature” (54).

⁴ 272a-272b, part of which is quoted below.

⁵ The most recent addition to these discussions is Matthew Levy’s Dissertation from the University of Texas, Arlington, *Comp and Circumstance : Cynicism and the Rhetorical Situation of College Composition* (2005). In addition, see Biesecker, Barbara A. "Rethinking the Rhetorical Situation from Within the Thematic of différance." *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 22 (1989): 110-130; Bitzer, Lloyd. "The Rhetorical Situation." *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 1 (1968): 1-14. Alan Brinton, "Situation in the Theory of Rhetoric," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 14 (1981): 234-48; Cox, J. Robert. "Argument and the 'Definition of the Situation'." *Central States Speech Journal* 32 (1981): 197-205; Engnell, Richard A. "Otherness and the Rhetorical Exigencies of Theistic Religion." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 79 (1993): 82-98; Hoover, Judith D. "Big Boys Don't Cry: The Values Constraint in Apologia." *Southern Communication Journal* 54 (1988): 235-252; Jamieson, Kathleen M. "Generic Constraints and the Rhetorical Situation." *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 6 (1973): 162-170; Kaufer, David S. "Point of View in Rhetorical Situations: Classical and Romantic Contrasts and Contemporary Implications." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 65 (1979): 171-186; Miller, Arthur B. "Rhetorical Exigence." *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 5 (1972): 111-118; Patton, John H. "Causation and Creativity in Rhetorical Situations: Distinctions and Implications." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 65 (1979): 36-55; Rubin, Alan M., and Rebecca Boring Rubin. "An Examination of the Constituent Elements in a Presently-Occurring Rhetorical Situation." *Central States Speech Journal* 26 (1975): 133-141; Smith, Craig R., and Scott Lybarger. "Bitzer's Model Reconstructed." *Communication Quarterly* 44 (1996): 197-213; Vatz, Richard E. "The Myth of the Rhetorical Situation." *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 6 (1973): 154-161.

⁶ With the help of Giorgio Agamben, we will come to see that the relationship between chronos and *kairos* is not the problem.

⁷ i.e. the Platonic/Gorgian axis. See Steven Krause’s 1996 dissertation *The Immediacy of Rhetoric* from Bowling Green State University, especially chapter one, “The Context of Context: An Abridged History of ‘*kairos*’ and ‘The Rhetorical Situation’.” Available at <<http://www.emunix.emich.edu/~krause/Diss/>>

⁸ On the alleged “weirdness” of the Pythagoreans, see Jasper Neel’s *Derrida, Writing, and Plato* (46-50). Neel writes: “The acousmatic, primitive, magical thought of the Pythagoreans at this point gets too weird for one to know how to deal with it. Anyone interested in a brief introduction to just how weird such thought gets need do no more than read Guthrie’s explanation of why the Pythagoreans were forbidden to eat beans !” (48) It just so happens that Rostagni explains that Androcides and Anaximandes, “both

Pythagoreans of the fourth century B.C.,” interpreted abstinence from bean eating to be a political statement against the failings of the *demos*, where leaders could be elected by the incompetent by the drawing of the broad bean. On the contrary to Neel’s statement, there is no safeguard in choosing to “do no more than read” a single account. If Guthrie (and Neel) is consulted on this matter, Rostagni should be as well.

⁹ No full length studies have been done on Damon of Oa to date. Wallace is the first to do so. His book *Damon of Oa: Music, Philosophy, and Politics in Ancient Athens* is forthcoming. The essay cited here raises many issues that Wallace tells us are developed in the volume (249).

¹⁰ Including Plutarch, Plato, Aristotle, Thucydides and Demosthenes.

¹¹ This model of an unchanging Eide disconnected from the world of substances, as J. N. Findlay notes, is naïve:

It is incredibly wrong to treat Platonism as a form of dualism, as involving the postulation of a *second* world of detached meanings over against the solid world of particular things. . . . The Eide are the living Meanings or Natures whose force is felt in all instantiation, and whose sense creates all understanding, and in neither existence or experience is there anything substantial to be laid hold of apart from them. . . . The dialogue *Parmenides* goes some distance in suggesting how this can be so, and how in the most aloof notion of Unity Itself all multiplicity and variety is necessarily locked up. (29-31)

¹² In contrast to Kinneavy and Sipioria (mentioned above), *kairos* as an educational idea is not Isocratic in origin but, following Rostagni, Pythagorean. If Gorgias was indeed as heavily influenced by Pythagoras and Parmenides as Rostagni asserts (and Untersteiner confirms), then, as the teacher of Isocrates, Kinneavy and Sipiora’s claims take on a richer meaning.

¹³ In its most mature and challenging version, Nietzsche’s eternal return, the two-fold, intimately tied to fate, must pass through the ordinary two-fold movement of the ancients (fate) and the modern concept of will as free will/agency so to unite the willing of being with the becoming of the cosmos (cf. Löwith 196). This uniting is simultaneously one that works, as a two-fold, against itself. Zarathustra’s speech on redemption explains this contrariety in two movements:

First:

To redeem those who lived in the past and to recreate all “it was” into “thus I willed it”—that alone should I call redemption. Will—that is the

name of the liberator and joy-bringer; thus I taught you, my friends.
(139)

Second:

But now learn this too: the will itself is still a prisoner. Willing liberates; but what is it that puts even the liberator himself in fetters? “It was”—that is the name of the will’s gnashing of teeth and most secret melancholy. Powerless against what has been done, he is an angry spectator of all that is past. The will cannot will backwards; and that he cannot break time and time’s covetousness, that is the will’s loneliest melancholy. (139)

It is this melancholy, Zarathustra explains, that leads to resentment; it is the past, the “that which was” that is “the stone” that cannot be moved. The man of resentment, however, “moves stones out of wrath and displeasure,” and he “wreaks revenge on whatever does not feel wrath and displeasure as he does. Thus the will, the liberator, took to hurting” and “wreaks revenge for his inability to go backwards” (139-40). The eternal return, as the unification of the “that which was” with the “thus, I willed it,” in its twofold, contradictory, paradoxical, aporetic, heterological, impossible possibility, is the ultimate *kairos*.

¹⁴ The reverse, that the thinking of difference can only proceed from those who are already the same does not follow, for thinking cannot originate or proceed without difference. Thinking does not get underway without difference

¹⁵ Cf. Derrida *Dissemination* (192) on Heidegger’s “Moira”: “‘Truth’ has always meant two different things.” To simplify the analyses made by Heidegger . . . one can retain the fact that the process of truth is *on the one hand* the unveiling of what lies concealed in oblivion (aletheia), the veil lifted and raised from the thing itself, from that which *is* insofar as it is, presents itself, produces itself, and can even exist in the form of a determinable hole in Being; *on the other hand* (but this other process is prescribed in the first, in the ambiguity or duplicity of the presence of the present, of its *appearance*—that which appears *and* its appearing—in the *fold* of the present participle), truth is agreement . . . a relation of resemblance of equality between a representation and a thing (unveiled, present), even in the eventuality of a statement of judgment. (192-93).

¹⁶ Heidegger explains that modern man has lost the ability to think about what it means to forget. He writes: “But what does “forget” mean? Modern man, who organizes everything in such a way that he can forget it as quickly as possible, should surely know what forgetting is. But he does not know. He has forgotten the essence for forgetting, supposing he ever did give a thought to it, i.e., extend his through into the essential realm of forgetting. This indifference with regard to ‘forgetting’ does not at all depend on the hastiness of his ‘way of life.’ What is happening here proceeds from the very essence of forgetting, which withdraws itself and hides.

Therefore it could be that an invisible cloud of forgetting itself, the oblivion of Being, hangs over the whole sphere of the earth and its humanity, a cloud in which is forgotten not this or that being but Being itself, a cloud no airplane could ever breach even if capable of the most formidable altitude. (*Parmenides* 28).

¹⁷“We must learn to live with monsters, big ones, little ones. We must learn to live with the great excluded middle” (*Chaste Rape* 12).

¹⁸ Untersteiner writes: “Rigid logic, which lays claim to absolute truth, is not possible in a philosophical concept which dissolves the whole into indestructible antitheses. It is understandable, therefore, why in Gorgias the concept of *eikos*, 'the probable,' had no *raison d'etre*. . . (197).

¹⁹ For an excellent discussion of this paradox see Eric Charles White’s *Kaironomia* 11-43. See also Keith Simmons’s *Universality and the Liar*. Simmons has written a book length treatment on the paradox. Simmons writes: “There is nothing technical or *recherché* about the Liar paradox—it is quickly appreciated by ordinary speakers of English. This points to the significance of the Liar: It suggests that we do not have a proper understanding of our ordinary notions of truth and falsity” (1-2).

CHAPTER 3: NOMOS

¹ See Victor Vitanza “Critical Sub/Versions of the History of Philosophical Rhetoric” (1987) for an introduction.

² For this reason, Eric White forms the neologism *kaironomia*.

³ I don’t intend to argue that (or to what extent) Stein was a postmodern modernist. The last thing that concerns me is whether Stein or Joyce or Woolf or anyone else should be seen as the “ultimate” postmodern modernist or even “kairic” thinker. My concerns are hardly with who gets the credit above the others for “thinking ahead” or being “front of the class/generation.” That kind of concern is more obsessed with determining the boundaries of a canon than it is concerned with where a particular thinker or artists leads.

⁴ Christopher Miller in “The Postidentitarian Predicament in the Footnotes of *A Thousand Plateaus*” criticizes D+G for failing to take into consideration the actual status of nomadic people and their relations to the State. Miller’s argument begins where D+G’s treatise begins. If D+G argue that the war machine is a nomadic creation, Miller wants to know why D+G fail to account for the suffering of actual nomads. This criticism has prompted a response from Ronald Bogue. See Bogue’s “Apology for Nomadology.”

⁵ But it is important to be careful here concerning the word “possible” which suggests a singularity. To think in terms of plurality, we will need to think in terms of the *compossible*; more of this in the final chapter.

⁶ Isn't this Paul deMan's point in *Resistance to Theory* where he explains that the resistance to theory is actually the “resistance to the use of language about language”? (13).

⁷ Or in hearing the voice of the forest, as in the epigraph beginning this chapter.

CHAPTER 4: THE MIDDLE VOICE

¹ Note one of Victor Vitanza's favorite sayings: “*just drift!*”

² Lopate is picking up on a major argument advanced by several scholars in Holocaust studies, most notably Berel Lang. All quotes from Lopate are from his online review of Resnais' *Night and Fog* from the Criterion Collection website.
<<http://www.criterionco.com/asp/release.asp?id=197&eid=314§ion=essay>>

³ I was recently in a used bookstore, and I asked a clerk to help me locate a book on the Holocaust. Not knowing for sure where the Holocaust section was, he turned and asked a colleague, “Where have we moved the Holocaust section now? Is it in military history?” By subordinating the Holocaust to military history, this exchange (if the metonym holds) suggests that we have begun to forget, yet at the same time, the word *now* suggests that the Holocaust continually resists being forgotten.

⁴ In the “The Representation of Limits,” Lang ascribes to the chronicle the foundation for historiography. He writes: “What is validated or rejected in the form of chronicle does not, it seems to me, require contextualization or a narrative account that goes beyond its own grounds. In this sense, the chronicle remains systematically a point zero in historiography, with disagreement about any of its assertions capable in principle of adjudication in terms of the chronicle itself” (307). What goes into the chronicle is debatable, but the bare bones of history is the chronicle itself. Hans Kellner takes issue with this view in “Never Again is Now,” where he argues that the chronicle is “a result of a pre-existing narrative” (138). In other words, Kellner is searching for emplotment in the chronicle by saying that the selection and naming of events already represents and depicts an inherited cultural narrative, a well known argument of Hayden White's. In my view, there is little cause for this debate since Kellner is misreading Lang as a naïve realist who believes that the chronicle offers the final say on historical truth. While it is understandable that one may construe Lang's high moralism as indicative of this tendency, I read Lang through his discussion of “intransitive writing” in the introduction to *Act and Idea*. This reading puts a more productive spin on the chronicle, and one that, if you take a close look at “The Representation of Limits,” seems closer to

what Lang had in mind by invoking the chronicle. Interestingly and somewhat ironically, I would not have been able to make these connections were it not for Kellner. To him I give my thanks.

⁵ For a strong analysis of how Spiegelman's combination of image and text allows for a present that seamlessly "turns" into the past, see Erin McGlothlin's "No Time Like the Present: Narrative and Time in Art Spiegelman's *Maus*," especially 177-79.

⁶ For an overview of this debate, again see McGlothlin, 180-83.

⁷ I agree with this point Walter Jost makes in a recent review: "I am inclined to place [*Being Made Strange*] among those good books that would have been better had they been shorter--for it reads long. I do not say that it ought better to have been an essay, since many readers can profitably go to school on the likes of Foucault and Derrida in these pages. Rather, for other readers the thinkers featured here, and the implications for rhetoric, have been so absorbed as not to need a lengthy reprise" (119).

⁸ For Lanham, see *The Electronic Word and Motives of Eloquence*. For Fish, see "Rhetoric" in *Rhetoric in an Anti-Foundational World*, eds. Michael Bernard-Donals and Richard R. Glejzer. 33-65.

CHAPTER 5: THE GENESIS OF THE DRIVES AND A CHILD IS BEING BEATEN

¹ Craig Owens in *Beyond Recognition: Representation, Power, and Culture* defines the middle voice like this: "Both the active and the passive voices indicate activity or passivity vis-à-vis an external object or agent; the middle voice, on the contrary, indicates the *interiority* of the subject to the action of which it is also the agent" (214). What we have here is obviously a description of the reflexive form, but one that borders on the middle if one were to question yet further what could be meant by this "interiority."

² In "The Two Classes of Instincts," Freud writes: "The second class of instincts [death] was not so easy to point to; in the end we came to recognize sadism as its representative" (*SE* 19: 41).

³ Lacan writes: "Let me say that if there is anything resembling a drive it is a *montage*" (*Four* 169), but Lacan means more here than an assemblage. This montage is headless. I will come to this in the next chapter.

⁴ In a footnote to "The *Démontage* of the Drive," Maire Jaanus writes an excellent explanation of the difference between "instinct" and "drive" that I here include in part. Joanus writes:

The substitution of the word “instinct” for the German *Trieb* (when Freud also had *Instinkt* available to him had he wanted to use it, as the French has *l’instinct*) in “Instincts and Their Vicissitudes” is particularly unfortunate. *Trieb*, from the verb *treiben*, meaning to drive, push, force, set in motion, propel, impel, urge on, stimulate, promote, refine, raise (metals), put forth (leaves, branches), or carry on, practice, has many more powerful and wide-ranging meanings as well as cultural-historical ones attached to it than *Instinkt* does. *Treiben* is often used in German in connection with oneself and others, as well as nature. A mother will typically say to a child: “*Was treibst du da?*” meaning not only what are you doing there, but what are you pushing or driving, emphasizing the sense of activity. (134)

As Jaanus explains in the main body of the essay, Jacques Lacan created a “new body” by issuing a cut between the body of instincts and the body of drives. The translation of *trieb* to instincts leads to a confusion since *drive* more specifically names the processes Freud discusses. The primary difference, as Jaanus explains, is that the “body of instincts” is a “body of need” and that the “body of drives” is a “body of want, lack, or requirement,” as in a craving (120). Importantly, both have their source in the body. See also “The Deconstruction of the Drive” in Lacan’s *Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, 161-73.

⁵ In other words, object of the drive but subject of the action.

⁶ That is a given, and I expect my reader understands the double movement of this particular writing predicament.

⁷ In *What is Philosophy*, Deleuze and Guattari augment Heidegger’s formula to say instead being-*with*-the-world.

⁸ See chapter 2.

CHAPTER 6: RETROACTION; OR, THE CUT OF THE EVENT

¹ No doubt this is not solely an individual problem but a problem of academic discourse.

² See Geoffrey Sirc *Composition as a Happening*. For all the popularity of Bartholomae’s essay in composition studies, it’s important to remember Sirc’s point: students are inventing anything at all. They are merely reproducing the work of others.

³ This split between the ontic and ontological is also the split between the humanities (ontological) and the sciences (ontic).

⁴ See *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, especially chapter 2.

⁵ When I first started teaching literature and writing at a university that had feeder schools desperately lacking in funds, I noticed that many of my underprivileged and less “literate” students would refer to most things we read without attention to genre conventions. Whether the item was a novel, a poem, an essay, or an academic article, these students would refer to it as a “story,” as though even these academic truths were simply a version of what could have been written. Without prior academic instruction, their intuitions told them that they were reading “stories.” Students who were white and (more) privileged were not able to reduce everything to a “story.” Rather than correcting these students, I explained the conventions of genre classification and encouraged them to continue reading “against the grain.”

⁶ *Retroactive causation* is a term that comes from Graham Harman to whom I turn below. Žižek, in *Sublime Object of Ideology*, uses retroactive constitution. See chapter three.

⁷ The reader may be asking how, if the matter is with the drives, how is the matter *not* concerned with subjectivity. What awaits is the discussion of the *lamella*. For the time being, see chapter 15 of Seminar XI.

⁸ Consequently, I have moved in the opposite direction. Beginning with Heidegger’s culmination in *BT*, I backtrack with Harman to those instances that are most often overlooked.

⁹ Hayles, in fact, turns *back* to the linguistic turn, asserting that since code and the communication between machines opens new spaces reading and writing, it is time to rethink textuality in from the perspective of machines. See chapter 7 in *My Mother Was a Computer*.

¹⁰ From Harman’s point of view as well as that of many analytical philosophers, identifying correspondence between philosophy and psychoanalysis is overwhelmingly limiting, for (as the argument goes) it reduces the whole of human thought to the perspective of the subject, and it is this perspective that philosophy itself, and, as Harman shows, to which Heidegger himself falls prey by placing *Dasein* at the center of being. This divide, however, is primarily *disciplinary* or worse, *economical*. Psychoanalysis becomes sterile once it is reduced to the point of view that it holds only the subject “as the star of the show”—but that bias is grounded on nothing more than disciplinary prejudice.

¹¹ It is worth noting that Harman’s book has not gone unnoticed. Bruno Latour, in a paper where he openly admits reversing much of his thought concerning the language games of scientific fact, champions and dedicates his piece to Graham Harman for bringing him to “matters of concern.” See “Why has Critique Run Out of Steam?”

¹² It should be noted that Žižek in *The Ticklish Subject* faults Heidegger for his inability at reading Kant along the Nietzschean lines of *self-overcoming*; in one important sense, Harman should be read in a way that corrects this misreading; that is, Harman uses Heidegger's tool analysis to put humans back in tune with the pre-Kantian noumenal real by eliminating the distance between subject and object through the tool analysis. In effect, the blurring and eliminating the famous Kantian split between noumena and phenomena is Harman's main project. On Nietzsche's self-overcoming, see D. Diane Davis *Breaking Up [at] Totality: A Rhetoric of Laughter*, 198-205.

¹³ As mentioned earlier, the fact that the tool analysis in Heidegger allows Harman to consider language similar to object, the conflation of the Real with the Symbolic does not pose a problem for Harman.

CHAPTER 7: THE UNDEAD LAMELLA

¹ Human analogues should pose little difficulty for the reader.

² Friedrich Kittler adds that this "feedback" should not be confused with *reflection*.

³ It would not be a far stretch here to illustrate this with the phenomenon of pleasure obtained in the act of shopping in America. The phrase "shop till you drop" signifies not the number of items to be had, but the acts themselves of trying on clothes, socializing, finding great deals, having lunch, and to top it off, of the thrill of spending, even wasting, money (to be followed by guilt later and so goes the cycle). As any hardcore shopper knows, *jouissance* is not found in the blouse, pants, or lingerie, but in the experience you had with (or even, without) your friends. This is what Žižek means by surplus enjoyment, in his fusing of Marx and Lacan.

⁴ While it is likely that no mathematicians are reading this dissertation, it is worth pointing out that I recognize that on one hand Žižek is speaking about the drive of science and I am providing an example about mathematics. From my view, the mathematical example only serves to strengthen Žižek's claim since it links more closely to the mathematical formulations that Lacan was after in attempting to show that the unconscious is "structured like a language."

⁵ Science and technology "follow the drive" so that their searches can yield what is possible, not what is meaningful.

⁶ I mention these binaries as a matter of orientation. As all the media theorists/thinkers I am about to discuss, from Kittler and Hayles to Hansen and Johnston, suggest, these dualisms have been outmoded by more integrated and complicated appreciations, formations and understandings.

⁷ Hence, the title *Observing Systems* should be interpreted both as a system that observes and the act of observing.

⁸ The four modes of occasioning are Aristotle's four causes: final cause, efficient cause, formal cause, and material cause.

⁹ In citing Leibniz, I'm referring to his *mathesis universalis* or what is also known as *universalis characteristic* where Leibniz begins though does not attempt to (re)create a universal language. See Derrida's discussion in *Of Grammatology*, 70-80 in addition to Leibniz.

CHAPTER 8: RHETORICAL INVENTION FOR A DYNAMIC VERNACULAR; OR, FROM INFORMATION TO AION

¹ Already, this quote seems dated, the 2D topological maps have been replaced by 3D interactive simulations, the CRTs have been replaced by interactive digital projections, and the print-bound pages of the *BLT* have been digitized in storage.

² Anyone "going to school" on Derrida by way of Hansen would be misled. It is important to recall that *différance* is one of those postmodern concepts that are not properly concepts, so long as a concept is something understood as existing in the mind. In his explanation of what constitutes *différance* Derrida links it to the middle voice. Speaking of the middle voice, Charles Scott reminds us that we should not think of the middle voice primarily as a theory but instead as a "discursive movement," a turning or a swerve (38). Neither the middle voice nor *différance* exists in the mind or as things in nature. They are not thoughts or things. This is what neo-sophist Victor Vitanza means when he calls *différance* a "paracept" (*Chaste* 10, 12, 124). Here is one of the best passages that can be found in Derrida:

Now the word difference (with an e) can never refer either to differer as temporization or to differends as polemos. Thus the word *différance* (with an a) is to compensate economically—this loss of meaning, for *différance* can refer simultaneously to the entire configuration of its meanings. It is immediately and irreducibly polysemic, which will not be indifferent to the economy of my discourse here. In its polysemia this word, of course, like any meaning must defer to the discourse in which it occurs, its interpretive context; but in a way it defies deriving from the present participle (differant), thereby bringing us close to the very action of the verb differer, before it has even produced an effect constituted as something different or as difference (with an e). In a conceptuality adhering to classical strictures "*différance*"; would be said to designate constitutive, productive, and originary causality, the process of scission and division which would produce or constitute different things or differences. But because it brings us close to the infinitive and active kernel of deferrer, *différance* (with an a) neutralizes what the infinitive denotes as simply active, just as *mouvance* in our language does not simply mean the fact of moving, of moving oneself or of being moved. No more is resonance the act of resonating. We must consider that in the

usage of our language the ending -ance remains undecided between the active and the passive. And we will see why that which lets itself be designated *différance* is neither simply active nor simply passive, announcing or rather recalling something like the middle voice, saying an operation that is not an operation, an operation that cannot be conceived either as passion or as the action of a subject on an object, or on the basis of the categories of agent or patient, neither on the basis of nor moving toward any of these terms. *For the middle voice, a certain non-transitivity, may be what philosophy, at its outset, distributed into an active and a passive voice, thereby constituting itself by means of this repression.* (“Différance” 8-9; my emphasis).

Glossing this quote, allow me to highlight the following four points: 1) *Différance* refers to the entire configuration of meanings. Thus, it has many possible meanings that coexist simultaneously. 2) It defers to the discourse within which it occurs for its meaning but before doing so, what takes primacy is its deferral and its polysemia. Thus, it is constantly on the move and it is *principally* on the move. 3) Following the undecidability of the ending -ance, which is neither active nor passive, *différance* is neither active nor passive and has no connection to subjectivity. 4) When Derrida says that the middle-voice is what philosophy repressed at its outset, we must also read here, in light of my previous chapter on *kairos*, that *différance* re-establishes the play of radical difference of the movement of the kairic logos that the introduction of Parmenidean and Platonic thought distributed into active and passive with the introduction of negation. And even though Hansen has gained a following in rhetorical studies (see Jennifer Edbauer in “(Meta)Physical Graffiti” who uncritically accepts Hansen’s conclusions), the appropriate place for thoughtful modern engagement with embodiment is Brian Massumi in *Parables for the Virtual*. My referencing *différance* should prompt that we ask why Hansen invites a reader to drop Derrida on his lap as I have just done.

³ But we don’t need this dissertation for *that*—all we need to do is consider Kenneth Burke’s essay, “The Definition of Man.” Burke writes: “Man is the symbol using (symbol-making, symbol-misusing animal), inventor of the negative (or moralized by the negative), separated from his natural condition by instruments of his own making, goaded by the spirit of hierarchy (or moved by the sense of order), and rotten with perfection” (53-54).

⁴ Other such applications, appropriate or not, as pointed out by Mark Taylor in *The Moment of Complexity* include Pierre Levy and Ray Kurzweil.

⁵ Having every confidence that he provides an accurate and useful condensation of Lacan’s discussion of unconscious formations in Lacan’s afterward to the “Seminar on ‘The Purloined Letter,’” I draw upon Fink for ease of explanation. Although his

reduction and introduction, by definition, do not express the same complexity as the master's own, I am enamored by the small size of this particular worm-can.

⁶ Here is where Hansen, the media theorist who has written such a polemical title as *New Philosophy for New Media*, must be slapped against the knee of philosophy's Greg Harman who rapidly reduces such distinctions to the structure of Heidegger's tool/broken tool analysis. Secondly, if Kittler's vision, as Hansen says, is an "unabashedly posthumanist one" (60), then Hansen will have to explain in more detail what he means by posthumanism.

⁷ In addition, one time supporter Kate Hayles seems to reverse her endorsement of Hansen in her most recent work *My Mother Was a Computer*. Hayles writes: "Hansen's refutation [of Kittler discussed above] concerns only one line of reasoning in Kittler's extensive oeuvre, and for this reason is insufficient to discount his approach entirely, as Hansen seems to imply. (35)

⁸ Such as *kairos/nomos*, information/meaning, embodiment/disembodiment, undead/dead, causation/retroaction, etc.

⁹ As the quote shows, this gives rise to a paradox, for symbolic language, interested as it is with the truth, is privy to the myriad and endless problems of interpretation and meaning. In addition, symbolic language is necessary to explain the matheme.

¹⁰ If you have not seen the movie, I am about to spoil it. My saving it for this ending stage of the dissertation should be an indicator of how highly I recommend it (and that you go see it!). This recommendation, however, is not made on the movie as a piece of art but on the movie as a conceptual model for future writing.

CHAPTER 9: POSTFACE

¹ Lauer's categories identified are wac/wid, public contexts and cultural studies, studies of gender, race, and cultural difference; theories of technology; studies of genre; hermeneutics

² NCTE. <http://www.ncte.org/about/over/positions/category/media/114919.htm> (20 July 2005).

³ Also see Bolter and Grusin's discussion of Kevin Kelly's 1997 prediction that web browsers were becoming obsolete. Bolter and Grusin resisted Kelly's predilection, as though two or three years was enough time to assess the quality of Kelly's claim. As the Macromedia introduction video for Flex 1.5 shows, the process by which the technology evolved from networks to the internet was a step backwards for what was possible as far as distributing information efficiently. What was gained through the internet and the browser was a larger distribution space, but a reduction in processing

speed. Freligh, Libby. *Flex Overview*.

http://www.macromedia.com/software/flex/productinfo/brz_overview/ (24 July 2005).

⁴ Gunther Kress advocates interpreting “multimodal texts” semiotically. He has moved from attempting to understand his so-called multi-modality from a hermeneutical perspective to a semiotic one. He has a strong following in composition studies, as many examples of webtexts found at the online journal *Kairos* will attest. In addition, many articles cited in *Computers and Composition* on Kress’s insights.

⁵ I would not go so far as to say that most websites are not functional, only that they reinforce the apparatus of literacy.

⁶ This is already occurring. Aside from the work of Ulmer found at the Florida Research Ensemble online, consider the new electronic journal, *Vectors* at www.vectors.org as well as numerous digital media art venues.

⁷ See Gross, Alan G. and William M. Keith, eds. *Rhetorical Hermeneutics: Invention and Interpretation in the Age of Science*. Albany: SUNY P, 1997.

⁸ The theory that has been generated from Burroughs’ description of virus extends to many places and the discussions have been quite important in the fields of philosophy, cybernetics, information theory, and the study of sound. An important distinction that should be made and will more thoroughly be explained in the dissertation is the difference between Gilles Deleuze’s reading of Burroughs viral method and his own theory of a non-viral becoming. The crucial distinction is encapsulated in the following quote by Mark Hansen in “Internal Resonance, or Three Steps Towards a Non-Viral Becoming”:

As far as I know, D&G nowhere cite Burroughs’s virology as predecessor for their deployment of the virus as the model mechanism for molecular becoming [44]. Moreover, they develop their fundamental concept of the “body-without-organs” (BwO) through a quite different (literary) tradition (Artaud). In fact, if we were to contrast the two conceptions, we would have to admit the following crucial difference (already implicit in what I have said thus far): whereas Burroughs correlates the virus (language) with a host (the body, affective life) without which it could not survive (being itself only quasi-alive), D+G *decorporealize* the virus, decoupling it from any host and granting it an autonomy and agency to produce new connections, new bodies, and in fact, what D+G felicitously call “nonorganic life.” By wresting the virus from its molar correlation with a host body and setting it free within the domain of the molecular (the plane of immanence), D+G are thus able to *depathologize* the virus.

It is important to note that in *Dialogues* with Claire Parnet, Deleuze explained that he distinguished a method he called the “pick-me-up” or “pick-up” from the cut-up of Burroughs (and Brion Gysin). Deleuze writes:

You don't have to be learned, to know or be familiar with a particular area, but to pick up this or that in areas which are very different. This is better than the “cut-up.” . . . a “pick-up” – in the dictionary = collecting up, chance, restarting the motor, getting on to the wavelength; and then the sexual connotation of the word. Burroughs' cut-up is still a method of probabilities—at least linguistic ones—and not a procedure of drawing lots of a single chance which combines the heterogeneous elements. (10)

Hansen reads the distinction between Burroughs and Deleuze as an inventional topos for explanation and furthering of knowledge. I begin with Burroughs and move throughout the dissertation towards the “pick-up” Deleuze mentions (the two being different points on a rhizome) by advocating “pick-ups” through interdisciplinary and changing vernaculars.

⁹ Appropriately enough, in the case of Derrick Rhodes' own words, for instance, this situation is quite the case. Cited from Vitanza's “Potemkin Repetition,” the original essay was published on the Web some time in the past. That website can no longer be found, and for all practical purposes, has disappeared. Rhodes' words refer not to the essay but only to the words themselves in this, here (our) context. Derrida's concept of *différance* is the place to turn for these ideas. In *Jacque Derrida*, Derrida and Geoffrey Bennington write: “A statement that could not be quoted in another context would not be a statement, for a statement exists only through the possibility of repetition in alterity—iterability—on which we have already insisted for the sign in general. We say ‘quote in another context’ rather than ‘quote out of context’ to mark the fact that there are always contexts: the logic of the trace makes the idea of a sign or statement outside any context unthinkable, while making possible an exploitation of very open contexts. . . . This is again why there is no absolute point of departure: any point of departure is already in a context, as we are always already in language before we speak” (86-87).

¹⁰ “The Fiction Film and Its Spectator: A Metaphysical Study. Trans. Alfred Guzzetti. *New Literary History*, 8.1 (1976): 75-105.

¹¹ <http://www.stanford.edu/class/ee380/Abstracts/020306.html>

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BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

A first generation American, Robert Leston descends from a Galician father and Colombian mother. He was born and raised in New Jersey where he enjoyed playing the drums and middle linebacker for many years (though not simultaneously). Leston completed his B.A. in English with an emphasis in Creative Writing and a minor in Philosophy at Florida State University. He completed his M.A. in Literature at the University of West Florida, and his Ph.D. in Rhetoric, Composition, and Critical Theory at the University of Texas, Arlington. Leston's research is situated at the intersections between rhetoric, continental philosophy, and media studies. In addition to teaching courses in writing and literature, he enjoys teaching special topics courses on theory, technology and culture, and the Holocaust. He is currently teaching a Freshman Seminar on the Holocaust at Texas Christian University where he works as a Lecturer. He lives in Fort Worth, Texas with his wife, Toni, and his daughter, Alex; they enjoy mountain biking, soccer, and spending time with friends and family.