Abstract

Dr. Erin Labbie, Advisor

This thesis argues that technology is not something to be apprehended from without, but rather is something primary to our proper ontological constitution, and which needs to be re-recognized from within. Following Martin Heidegger’s line of thought, this project finds a primacy in the technology of language; and following Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s Capitalism and Schizophrenia project, it also finds a primacy in the technologies of desire (desiring-machines). In this sense, the primacy of language and desire are reflexive: there is no language without the impetus of desire; there is no “desire,” meaningful as such, without the inauguration of language. In addition, this thesis argues that both language and desire are not only primary and primarily technological, but inherently multiplicative. By way of post-structural and deconstructive semiotics, we find the multiplicity of language; and by way of Deleuze and Guattari’s schizoid-rhizomatic-becoming, we find the promise of the multiplicity of desire. Finally, and most importantly, this thesis looks towards the manner in which new media technologies, as well as trans- and post-humanist discourse, have complicated and compounded these theoretical claims and suppositions.
To the (im)possible future—
all of you,
wherever I may find you.
*Onward!*
A sincere thanks to Bret Bowers, Stacy Kastner, Dave McClure, Suzan Aiken, Scott Obernesser, Alex Monea, Stokely Klosovsky, Kevan Feshami, Kent Lenz, Olle Johanssen (my truly inspirational Nordic friend), Kellie Sharp and Leighton Evans for your intellectual friendship and conversation; BGSU-FA, for struggling to maintain a fair, just and worthwhile academic community; Lawrence Coates, for the flexibility and guidance; Mary Ann Sweeney, the unsung hero who truly helped me through all the logistics of graduate school at Bowling Green, even before I started attending; Dr. John Johnston, my PCA/ACA conference D&G comrade and mentor; Inter-Disciplinary.Net, for sustaining a high level of international conversation and debate across research areas and disciplines; Dr. Clayton Rosati, for keeping me on my toes; Dr. Radhika Gajjala, for a truly interesting cyber-intellectual experience; Dr. Vivian Patraka, for the support and well-noted explanation that viewing *everything* as a text is an expedient and narrow-minded approach; Karen Craigo, my academic and political comrade, for the pedagogical support; Chris Drain, my emotional and intellectual buffer, whose decade-long friendship exceeds language; Katie Fredlund, for her patience, love and understanding; Dr. Lance Massey, for the candid and leveled conversations, and for being there for me when I needed it most; Dr. Ellen Berry, not only for the endless encouragement and support, but for setting me loose on the D&G trail; my mother, father and grandmother, see you soon!; and most importantly, Dr. Erin Labbie, to whom I am eternally indebted, not only for a mentorship that proved to be beyond fruitful, but for instilling a scholarly sense of self that can be neither quantified or qualified—you demonstrated an academic ethos that I will carry with me not only as a student but, perhaps more importantly, as a professor one day.
## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER I. HE SAID, SHE SAID, WE SAID</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The History of/as Technology</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Inherency of Language: The Inherency of Technology</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER II. OUR BECOMING SINGS ELECTRIC</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cyber- Rhizomes</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schizoanalysis: Bodies Without Organs, Multiplicity and the Online Community</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Against Alienation and Authenticity</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Primacy of Desire: Desiring-Machines</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A SLIGHTLY LEWD INTERLUDE</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER III. TOWARDS A NEW POLITICAL ECONOMY</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The New Politico-Theological Cancer: Techno-Phobia</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cyber-Gender and the Cyber-Body</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spatio-Temporal Conditions of New Media Technologies</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beyond the Horizon: The Unknown Future</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Introduction:

One of Any Number of Beginnings\(^1\)

New media technologies in general, the internet in particular, have not only introduced new theoretical problematics, but have warranted a need to return to already

\(^1\) Any number of beginnings meaning just that: this is one start, but it could have started anywhere, anytime. An introduction only truly introduces itself, as does any point—or any point of true departure...which are all points: departures. Why not begin the first part later—or the later part first? Such is the gift and the curse of our cyber-becoming spatio-temporal disorientation.
established lines of intellectual flight.² Fundamental concepts—such as identity, space and time, communication, epistemology, ontology, memory, etc.—have been reconfigured, and even destabilized, with the advent and growth of new media. Our seemingly growing immersion in and with technology has forced us to reexamine who and what we are, as well as how we know such. But the primary error in many analyses, which follow such theoretical trajectories, is the presupposition that “we” and “technology” are mutually exclusive, that technology is something alien to our ontological constitution. What seems to be too often missed is that our primary desire to know ourselves and the world is necessarily made possible by and through technology, namely by and through the primacy of (the technology of) language. And such a technology of language, which renders all things meaningful (including Being-being-becoming, temporality, space, etc.) is sparked by desire, which is also a technology (what Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari would call desiring-machines). Thus, our very “being” (or becoming) is technē.

This primary technicity (found in the primacy of desire and language, and which opens up history, memory, retentional finitude, etc.) is not only extended and complicated by new media technologies, but is further extended into the realm of everyday meat-

² New media technology is, indeed, a rather broad and ambiguous term. For the purposes of this work, new media is not recognized so much by inherent qualities, but rather by how such media technology differs dramatically from the media technologies preceding it, especially in terms of “human” interaction. The most obvious example, of course, is the internet, as it dramatically differs in how we have apprehended previous media technologies (newspaper, telephone, television, etc.). However, new media technologies extend beyond the scope of merely the computer or the internet. While the term new media technologies is certainly fluid and debatable, it would not be difficult to argue that Blackberrys, GPS navigation systems, digital cameras, or even virtual reality (in the most general sense) are to be included under such a heading. In short, new media technologies are most often marked by digitality; however, they could include any media technology that is advancing the flattening of space and the acceleration of time, especially with regard to how such spatio-temporal reconfigurations are impacting our everyday lives, interactions, sense of selves (or subjectivities), epistemology, language, etc. New media technologies are not media technologies that are simply new; they are technologies that are contributing to a larger social, economic, cultural and political phenomenon that finds its crux in a spatio-temporal shift.
space. Trans- and post-humanism are no longer exclusively scientific and theoretical fictions, but are being realized: cameras implanted on the backs of heads, artificial hearts, organ (re)production, cybernetic arms—these make logging onto the internet look like backyard child’s antics, and they beg for the otherwise ridiculous consideration of the absurd Lawnmower Man, the anti-heroic Robocop. Indeed, how can there be poetry after our hearts go metallic? How can there not be: our hearts are machines, plugged into other physiological machines; our hands plug into keyboards, extend the already technology of language into the mechanism of written song that is poetry, which follows breath, which is afforded by the mechanism of the heart, etc. Technicity is always already, recursively so: desire prompts language; language renders “desire” iterable and meaningful; and both language and desire are not only primary, but are endlessly multiplicative in their potential and possibility. Our becoming-machinic only means that we are, and always have been, machines creating machines, producing (re)production.

Many of the contemporary debates surrounding the discourse of post-humanism and new media technologies follow a polarizing, and false, dichotomy: utopia/dystopia. Too often, one is either ready to bless and christen Technology as the saviour of all woes, human or otherwise, or one’s knee jerks so quickly in reaction to the damning consequences of technology that there is little time to discuss the issue, as there is so little time to build shelters from the impending techno-doom. Bad air! Bad air! Both stink of over-zealous, teleological expediency. Saving grace and apocalypse aside, more sober conversations regarding post-humanism and new media technologies broach the issues of embodiment, subjectivity, and the question of the (future of the) “human.” Katherine

---

3 Donna Haraway’s “Cyborg Manifesto” is truly being manifested.
4 To be sung to the tune of a free-form jazz song.
5 To be sung to the tune of a composition by—who else?—Wilhelm Wagner.
Hayles’ work on techno-centric post-humanism focuses largely on the question of embodiment, especially as our sense of being-human is transmitted and relayed over digital networks, in the form of hypertext, programming and code. Bernard Stiegler, in tracing the work of Jacques Derrida and Martin Heidegger (amongst others), examines the manner in which new media technologies and digital capitalism are creating a shift, a disorientation, which finds its initial roots in the dawn of the Industrial Revolution.

Michael Jansen’s New Philosophy for New Media attempts to figure new media technologies in the context of continental philosophy in general; Don Ihde finds an existential return in the emergence of digitality; while John Johnston, focusing primarily on a Deleuzo-Guattarian line of flight, warns of The Allure of Machinic Life. Gregory Ulmer, using various literary theorists, bridges the gap between the televisual and the digital; and George Landow gives a compelling account of how hypertext is making manifest the semiotic theories of Derrida and Roland Barthes. And these are to name only a few of the ever-growing field that is new media studies and post-humanist discourse.

This project attempts not to approach technology as that which is without, but rather to begin from within. The argument to be made here is that technology (technicity or technē) has always been not only material, but embodied. Language is a material

---

6 See: Katherine Hayles’ How We Became Posthuman, and My Mother Was a Computer; Michael Jansen’s New Philosophy for New Media; Bernard Stiegler’s Technics and Time, Vols. I-III; Don Ihde’s Existential Technics; John Johnston’s The Allure of Machinic Life; Gregory Ulmer’s Teletheory; George Landow’s Hypertext 2.0.

7 While much of post-humanist discourse is concerned with the destabilizing of the conceptual “human,” a similar logic and strategy is being exercised by those who focus on animality, human exceptionalism, the Enlightenment myth of the “human” as being “othered” from animals. Often dubbed “critical animal studies,” these theorists are very much engaged with the general conclusion drawn from many technocentric post-humanists. While Donna Haraway is a prime example of a contemporary thinker that could certainly be placed in both categories (which is not to say that the two categories are in any way mutually exclusive), it would be remiss not to note works such as Matthew Calarco’s Zoographies, Giorgio Agamben’s The Open, the various works of Cary Wolfe, or even Derrida’s later work, The Beast and the Sovereign, and The Animal That Therefore I Am, again, just to name a few examples.
technology that opens up and reveals other technologies that are (already) situated within our own corporeal machinery, such as desire (our desiring-machinery): “Everywhere it is machines—real ones, not figurative ones: machines driving other machines, machines being driven by other machines, with all the necessarycouplings and connections. It breathes, it eats, it shits and fucks.”8 Metabolic, bodily machineries operate quite similarly to more classically understood technologies: written language delays and defers, it fore-plays; the telephone interrupts our inter-courses, a flow that forces a stoppage; the screen of the film is full-frontal, a rather forceful molestation that refuses to negotiate.9 However, emergent digital technologies, though primarily ordinary, are unique in their gentle subsumption, their seductive over-taking. As Deleuze would perhaps have it: they are taking us from behind.10

And yet, as this paper will argue, language and desire are not only primary, but are primarily technological. It is, in this sense, that we are being forced to take ourselves from behind (which, as the dorsal turn suggests, is not a new technique).11 In short, it is the primacy of desire that prompts language; however, it is language that renders “desire,” as such, iterable and meaningful. As such, language and “desire” are reflexive in their primacy; they are co-constitutive and co-extensive. It is impossible to arrive at any analytic or synthetic meaning without the co-operation of the primacy of both

---

8 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, Anti-Oedipus (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1983), 1.
9 This is a gesture towards post-structural and deconstructive semiotics, Avital Ronnel’s The Telephone Book (Omaha: University of Nebraska, 1991), and a vast array of film theory, but perhaps Guy Debord’s Society of the Spectacle (Zone Books, 1995) in particular.
10 Much as Deleuze’s approach to philosophy would be “to take philosophers from behind,” it could be said that new media technologies are taking philosophy from behind, forcing a radical rethinking of hitherto conceded conquests.
11 David Wills’ Dorsality (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2008) is a novel approach towards rethinking technology in the terms of technique. One of our most fundamental techniques is vested within the dorsal turn, to be able to turn around and see what is behind us. Such dorsality offers up a new for thinking technology: technology comes from behind us, but a such a concept as “behind us” is only possible by and through the inherent technique of the dorsal turn. How this extends into the concepts of techno-phobia and anxiety will be discussed later.
language and “desire,” and their interaction therein. The reflexive and technological primacy of “desire” and language opens up meaning; and meaning opens up any sense of being and becoming, as well as punctuated temporality (event states), history. The primacy of “desire” and language is evident in its very articulation, that which makes each of us capable of “being” and “becoming(-other than)” who and what we are: (the “desire” to utter) “I am,” or, “We are.”

We are technology, then, as technology makes possible the rendering of what we are (becoming). And yet, not only does desire prompt language, which in turn, and reflexively, fills “desire” with iterable meaning, but desire in and of itself enacts machinic technologies: food-mouth-digestion-shit; mouth-breast-suck-milk; penis-asshole-friction-ejaculation, etc. Such are the operations of our desiring-machineries. Such desiring-machineries make it clear that neither our own “being,” nor the concept of “technology,” are static; they do not enact themselves in front of, or behind, us. Rather, it is the dynamic enactment in and of itself—the movement, the flow, the dorsal turn which brings meaning to “front” and “back” in the first place—that makes technology in general, desiring-machinery in particular, meaningful: the turn of the bowels to shit; the motion of the spoon to mouth to ingest food; the motion of the genitals to fuck; the concentration of the hand to write, etc. To take Heidegger from behind, it is true that the essence of technology is not technology, as Heidegger himself explains in Being and Time that technologies (in his sense, tools and equipment) are only rendered as such by their

---

12 In Chapter 1, we will discuss how such the reflexive primacy of language and desire open up memory qua retentional finitude (the imperative of to re-member is to for-get, and vice versa), spatio-temporality, history.
function, by their ability to be “used” as technologies, tools and equipment. In other words, technology has no distilled essence; it only comes into meaning through its utilized movement. By extension, just as the essence of technology is not technology, the ability to make technology visible is also not possible without technology—as such technology implicates and explicates our (technological) selves. As desire and language are primary technologies that constitute our ontological composition, the essence of our (technological) Being is not Being. It is found in the constant movement of becoming(-other).

This inevitable and oddly “eternal” slippage of “desire” and language not only besets a certain becoming but, by the extension of such logic, an inevitable and oddly “eternal” multiplicity. The myth of “eternity” can only be found in the possibility of endless multiplicity, not in the reduction towards a singularity. To this end, not only are “desire” and language primary, and primarily technological, but they are also primarily, and endlessly, multiplicative. With regard to language, we find the primacy of such through the work of Heidegger, yet we find the multiplicity—the polyvocality, the endless margin, the chain of signification—of language and semiotics in Derrida. And while we have already established the reflexive primacy of, and between, “desire” and language, Deleuze and Guattari make it clear that desire is always already primarily multiplicative, to such an extent that desire can even desire to repress itself.


14 It would be apropos to note that Deleuze would perhaps find the following pseudo-Spinozan rather congruent with the ontological arrangement established by Deleuze and Guattari in their Capitalism and Schizophrenia project: Being —being —becoming, never in a temporally linear sense, and always recursively, but also making due note that not only is “becoming” the sum-total consequence, but that we can never fully abandon the metaphysical property of Being, at least as a mere conceptual substrate.

15 See the above footnote. One method is to work backwards; another method is to work forward.
“Desire” and language are not only primary, reflexive, co-constitutive and co-extensive, but they are multiplicative: to be, then, is inevitably and always to become. In other words, the false singularity of being is appropriately replaced with the multiplicative potential and possibility of becoming. Becoming-other, infinitely, and recursively. “Desire” and language are primary; desire prompts language, yet language is what renders “desire” meaningful; by way of Derrida and Deleuze and Guattari, our very ontological constitution is mapped according to a drift, a floating center that drifts and floats from the center. Language has no precision other than in its precise generality, its chain of signification; likewise, “desire” is omni-valent, exceeding itself, at times repressing itself.

To this end, Chapter 1 will begin by analyzing the primacy of language and technology, mapping not only the history of technology, but the manner in which “history” itself is opened up and made possible by language. The relationship between the primacy of language (as a technology) and the possibility of temporality, retentional finitude and history will be highlighted by exploring the work of Heidegger, Lewis Mumford and Bernard Stiegler. We will then explore the manner in which language is undergoing a certain shift via the spatio-temporal reconfigurations of cyberspace, using Deleuze and Guattari’s work on signification as a methodology for which to approach hypertext. Lastly, we will explore how the inherent multiplicity of language creates spaces, faults, which allow for a strangeness—a strangeness that opens up the possibility for inter- and intra-active “othering.” This seeming alienation, strangeness, could very well be situated within the tension between the desire to return to the always already
fictive impossibility of the possible Being, of a singular, totalized ontological whole and our inevitable drift towards, and of, a becoming(-other).

Chapter 2 will continue to follow the work of Deleuze and Guattari in particular, examining the schizoid, rhizomatic potentials and possibilities of ontological becoming within new media technologies. By using Deleuze and Guattari’s index of concepts in their Capitalism and Schizophrenia project, as well as Derrida’s theory of semiotic drift, this chapter will attempt to demonstrate the multiplicity of becoming both on- and off-line (the emphasis will be on on-line). In doing so, we will attempt to deflate presuppositions of alienation, inauthenticity and (un)reality. In such an attempt, we will look at G.W.F. Hegel’s concept of alienation, as well as Karl Marx’s interpretation of it (as well as, though tangentially, Sigmund Freud’s and Friedrich Nietzsche’s similar concepts of alienation), Walter Benjamin’s sense of authenticity, and consider the prophets of techno-doom, all with special attention paid to cyberspace.

We will then pause for an interlude, a reflection on the body on digitality.

Lastly, Chapter 3 will look at the limits, potentials and possibilities of the future of our immersion in, and with, not only new media technologies, but post- and trans-humanist science in general. In particular, it will look towards the future and current state of both Western and non-Western political economies (as the two are becoming—or, perhaps, are—inter-connected), as illustrated by Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri’s illustration of the global economic shift towards “immaterial” labor. Moreover, it will continue by analyzing how these econo-political shifts, as inaugurated and propelled by new media technologies, affect the concepts of race, sex and gender, as well as what is means to be “human.” Finally, the chapter will conclude by reflecting upon what we may
sketch as the future, digitized “post-human,” and what social, cultural, political and economic consequences such a future might hold.
Chapter 1:

He Said, She Said, We Said: Our Techno-Lingo-Multiplicative Self-Hood

“New dreams, new dreams; there is no truth.”

—William Butler Yeats

The history of/as technology

This is a technology—not just in its mediation by and through other technologies (be it paper, ink or digital mediation)—but the very language of this (this very iteration) is a technology. The technological primacy of language is demonstrated by the very iteration of such a claim: language, and subsequent semiosis, inaugurates meaning. Thus, the always already-ness of language is implied, in the first and last analysis, in the very utterance itself.¹ It is impossible to speak or write of technology without always already referring back to language. That language is a technē is an important point, and it is one that in contemporary discussions concerning “technology” is too often forgotten. The irony of this rests in what language opens up, empties out, and reveals, not the least of which is memory and history.²

Before embarking upon a discourse that is concerned with a descriptive analysis of the history of technology, it is important to establish the manner in which history is opened up and made possible by technicity (technology). Bernard Stiegler begins the first volume of Technics and Time by noting that, “The object of this work is technics,

---

¹ To say “there is no primacy to language” is a self-negating clause. There is no meta-language.
² However, the supposed new-found possibility for artificial memory implantation complicates the concept of not only memory and retentional finitude, but of meaning, history, subjectivity, Dasein and death. Total Recall has never been so truly and totally unsettling.
apprehended as the horizon of all possibility to come and of all possibility of a future.”

The implications of such a statement are manifold, perhaps endless: the possibility of a future is dependent upon the understanding of a past, both of which are contingent upon memory (a mnemotechnology insofar as memory is a technology of recording, or retentional finitude, of being able to remember as one is able to forget). History qua memory (qua technicity) is first exteriorized with the “invention” of language; and, by extension man first finds his being in the inaugural iteration of “man/being,” as such. Or, to work backwards: man finds meaning in his constitution via language; language finds its purpose and function in/as the exteriorization of memory, which is to say history; and all of these (language, memory, history) are the byproducts of the first instance of technicity. Thus, there is the “bondoriginarily formed by, and between, humanity, technics, and language,” before which there was nothing (in way of meaning): no history, no temporal schema, no being, and thus no use in arguing which came “first,” as they all did. In consequence, Stiegler rearticulates the Heideggarian Dasein by concluding that “technics is the history of being itself.”

Therefore, it is important to note that what is being called into question here is not just technics in time, but technics as the proper constitution of time. That said, it would merely be an exercise of theoria to wholly focus on the latter; the former is what brings the praxis of technicity into a phenomenological light. To that end, even in the wake of a dramatic shift towards digitality and cybernetics (which could be called a Digital or Cyber Revolution), it is still fundamentally important to work through the shapings and

---

4 Ibid., 13.
5 Ibid., 10.
6 Ibid., 22, 27.
moldings of the Industrial Revolution. In the beginning of Lewis Mumford’s *Technics and Civilization*, he writes:

> Behind all the great material inventions of the last century and a half was not merely a long internal development of technics: there was also a change of mind. Before the new industrial processes could take hold on a great scale, a reorientation of wishes, habits, ideas, goals was necessary.\(^7\)

Pivotal here is Mumford’s attention to orientation—how technology and (subsequent shifts in) temporality orient our being; however, Mumford creates a false division when demarcating “mind” from technicity (technology). As has already been discussed, not only is a shift in technology a technical shift, but the “mind,” in any phenomenological sense, is also borne of technicity, and thus also undergoes a technical shift. Thus, there was not a change in mind and then a change in technology, erupting into what is now considered (by looking “back” and “remembering”) the Industrial Revolution, nor was there first a change in technology and then a change in mind. If one is to separate the term “mind” (as memory, which is to say, as being) from the term of “machinery,” one must, in the final analysis, gesture to the middle term, technicity, which inextricably binds the two former terms. The Industrial Revolution, then, is both and at once a shift in “mind” and “machinery;” or, rather, it is a shift in the phenomenological practice and play of technicity.\(^8\)

Both in difference and similarity to Mumford’s analysis, Stiegler writes:

> At the moment when historians of the Industrial Revolution began to consider the role played by new forms of technics, the discipline of ethnology amassed enough documentation on primitive industries for the

---

8 Mumford’s misappropriation of technics is carried throughout his work, though most notably in the opening pages, wherein one finds his thetical charges. For example, when he writes that, “Other civilizations reached a high degree of technical proficiency without, apparently, being profoundly influenced by methods and aims of technicity,” he all together misses the primacy of technicity, as expressed by and through memory, history and language. Nonetheless, his overdetermination of machinery as technicity is telling, for various reasons which would necessitate another project.
question of technical development, irreducible to the disciplines of sociology, anthropology, general history, and psychology, finally to impose its importance.

While Stiegler goes on to list Bertrand Gille, André Leroi-Gourhan and Gilbert Simondon as the theorists born of such theoretical concretization, one could also include Mumford. In short, this is because Mumford conducts not only an analysis of technics, but an analysis of the ethnographic differences in technical development. Such is an approach towards, and application of, technics that has proven philosophically and phenomenologically faulty. The fault, of course, lies in Mumford’s appropriation of technicity as demonstrative of ethnographic differences in techno-centricity, rather than understanding the manner in which technicity itself fundamentally opened up one of the initial possibilities for creating ethnographic difference. In other words, ethnography (or ethnology, to use Stiegler’s terminology) is only a possibility because of technicity; and, likewise, what is forgotten in the overdetermination of the differences in ethnographic technique is the primacy of technicity in the first place.¹⁰

Nonetheless, Mumford does recognize the relationship between temporality and technicity, even if such a recognition evades the inherent, self-referential connection between the two (temporality qua memory qua technics). Mumford indicates that “the clock, not the steam-engine, is the key-machine of the modern industrial age.”¹¹ Mumford goes on to note how the automation of the clock produces a new kind of temporality, one whose punctuation is minutes and seconds—a temporality which will later be essential not only to logic of how we “calculate” our being, but also to the logic

---

¹⁰ While heterogeneity and eternal plurality and multiplicity of technique ought to be understood, even embraced (as will addressed later when discussing Deleuze and Guattari), such should be understood only as contingent upon the initial promise of technicity which precedes and presupposes “us” all.
of wage-labor capitalism. Mumford goes on to note that, “by its essential nature [the
clock] dissociated time from human events and helped create the belief in an independent
world of mathematically measurable sequences: the special world of science.”12 This
notation is important for two specific reasons: not only does it gesture towards the
constructed nature of temporality (the alternative possibilities of which will be discussed
later), but it further demonstrates how certain constructions—or perversions,
exploitations, abuses—of technicity result in temporal schemas that are, in every sense,
oppressive.13 Stiegler reinforces this address to the clock, noting in a more abstract sense
that, “technicization through calculation drives Western knowledge down a path that
leads to a forgetting of its origin, which is also a forgetting of its truth.”14 Following
Mumford’s claim that, contrary to the clock, “human life has regularities of its own, the
beat of the pulse, the breathing of the lungs, these change from hour to hour with mood
and action [not the clock], and in the longer span of days, time is measured not by the
calendar but by the events that occupy it,” Stiegler accents the importance of the
symbolic over and above the numerative and calculative. Stiegler makes due note that
temporality—and “technical meaning” (tekhne) in general—ought not be informed by
mathesis universalis, but rather through poiesis.15 It can be easily argued that Stiegler’s
assertion is largely imported by Heidegger’s simpler claim that “scientific and
philosophical information about language is one thing; an experience we undergo with

12 Ibid., 15.
13 It is important here to note the difference between time and temporality: the former is the fundamental
consequence of technicity as expressed by and through history and memory; the latter is the manner in
which time is expressed and experienced, that is, how it comes to “mean” or be “meaningful.”
15 Ibid., 3, 9. This can also be understood as the difference between calculus and geometry. While Stiegler
covers this at length in his second volume of Technics and Time, it would be worthwhile to see Jacques
Derrida’s On the Origin of Geometry for more information on geometry, phenomenology and being.
language is another,” even though it perhaps falsely assumes a metalanguage.\textsuperscript{16} Also important to note, then, is that while Plato warned against tekhnē, especially as mimetic poiesis, Aristotle championed tekhnē as that which is symbolic and artistic; that is, he considered the very truth of tekhnē to be rooted in the concept of possibility, as that which “lies in the producer and not in what is produced”—a key phenomenological point, deeply embedded in Heidegger’s work, which we will return to later.\textsuperscript{17}

It would be remiss not to note the manner in which material conditions, as enforced by the technical logic of capitalism, inflect and inform the temporal programmatics of which we now find ourselves witness. The development of what we now consider to be our temporalization—and which is constituted not in effect, but—with what Franco Berardi calls semiocapitalism, is the theoretically false, but all too real, domination of temporality—the perversion of temporality for the purposes of exploitation.\textsuperscript{18} Mumford summarizes this neatly when he notes that:

\begin{quote}
Time was money: money was power: power required the furtherance of trade and production: production was diverted from the channels of direct use into those of remote trade, toward the acquisition of larger profits, with a larger margin for new capital expenditures for wars, foreign conquests, mines, productive enterprises…more money and more power.\textsuperscript{19}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{17} \textit{Nicomachean Ethics} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998). Also see, Stiegler’s footnote number 8 on page 9 in \textit{Technics and Time, Vol. 1}. This divergence of thought concerning tekhnē will be elaborated later in the paper: while Plato helped to create the watershed for the concept of technicity as potentially disruptive, if not alienating and inauthentic, Aristotle saw possibility and future. It could easily be argued that this polemical debate still exists today in regard to contemporary technologies: those who view digitality and cybernetics as a continued move towards alienation, inauthenticity and disruption, and those who, like Wills, Deleuze and Guattari (who will be discussed later in the paper) seek to radically rethink technology as something more in term with possibility and potential.

\textsuperscript{18} While the concept of “semiocapitalism” is particularly fitting for the time in which we find ourselves, it has always already been a certain semiocapitalism; that is, capitalism has always been underpinned by abstraction and the symbolic. Without such, we would not have the utterly abstract, symbolic and, to be sure, imaginary universal of the “dollar” (substitute other standards of currency as deemed fit).

\textsuperscript{19} Franco Berardi, \textit{The Soul At Work} (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2009) 24.
The abstraction of time so as to suit the clock, so as to suit the abstraction of money, which is to say, so as to suit the abstraction of labor, is an important consideration. In fact, Mumford is prophetic when says that “to speed up the process of production was to speed up the turnover: more money.” Such an acceleration of temporality, especially if not only through technicity, is still taking place today; and such is the basis of Stiegler’s second volume of Technics and Time, which is appropriately subtitled, “Disorientation.”

The Inherency of Language; The Inherency of Technology

In the beginning of Heidegger’s “The Nature of Language” section of his seminal work, On the Way to Language, he observes that, “To undergo an experience with language, then, means to let ourselves be properly concerned by the claim of language by entering into and submitting to it.” The concept to be underscored, here, is the necessary connection between being and experience; and while Heidegger separates terms—language and being—it is only for the sake of clarity, and such a seeming distantiation is later qualified in his section, “On the Way to Language:”

The way to language: that sounds as if language were far away from us, some place to which we still have to find our way. But is language really needed? According to an ancient understanding, we ourselves are after all have the ability to speak and therefore already posses

20 Ibid., 24
21 It should be noted that it is no “accident” that the formative part of this section dealt with the “orientation” of the Industrial Revolution, especially as the “accident” of such “orientation” always already presupposes the “accident” of “disorientation”—a condition in which we now find ourselves. Moreover, Mumford’s line of thought concerning technics, temporality and capitalism, though worthy for certain purposes, will not be pursued or extended because of his redundant inclination to separate terms. As a brief example, “Thus, although capitalism and technics must be clearly distinguished at every stage, one conditioned the other and reacted upon it” (26). Capitalism is the perverted, bastardized byproduct of technics, as has already been demonstrated. To put it succinctly, to ever move away, or separate from, the primacy of technicity, is to “miss” the “point.”
language. Nor is the ability to speak just one of man’s many talents, of the same order as others. The ability to speak is what marks man as man. This mark contains the design of his being. Man would not be man if it were denied him to speak unceasingly, from everywhere and every which way, in many variations, and to speak in terms of an “it is” that most often remains unspoken. Language, in granting all this man, is the foundation of human being.\textsuperscript{23}

We are, then, \textit{within} language and with language before all else.\textsuperscript{24}

This lengthy quotation from Heidegger is fundamental to the understanding of not only being and its inherent relation to language, but of the relation of these two to technicity. Man first and foremost—that is primarily and necessarily—finds the experiential (or phenomenological) meaning of his being by and through language; however, this phenomenological process always already implies a technique. To recall the previous section concerning the history of/as technology, the initial accident of technicity is what opens up the possibility of language, and by extension, being (as such), memory and history. Thus, language not only necessarily constitutes being in the first (and perhaps last) instance, but both are born of the initial primacy of technicity.\textsuperscript{25}

\textsuperscript{23} Ibid., 112.
\textsuperscript{24} It is also worthwhile to note here that it has recently been discovered by cognitive scientists that our ability to produce and understand mathematics is situated in the part of the brain that enables language. This not only underscores our thetical charge that language is primary, but such a discovery also becomes strange bed-fellows with Husserl’s work on the origin of geometry (as well as Derrida’s treatment of such work). In addition, it calls into serious question the claim that information supersedes language, that language is nothing but information. The difference between code/informatics and language is the difference between syntax and meaning.
\textsuperscript{25} To be just, Heidegger does not necessarily follow this claim to such a full extension. At the very least, there is cause for reservation in stating that he does. My reservation regards the manner in which, in \textit{Being and Time}, Heidegger addresses Dasein and being-in-the-world in relation to thing-ness, objects which are merely in-the-world and are ready-to-hand. It is difficult to ascertain the technical meaning of language and its relation to Dasein in that work; even more difficult to ascertain is the technical meaning of Dasein, as such. That said, it would be remiss not to note Louis Armand’s treatment of the Heideggarian approach to technology which, in one instance, is summarized: “In an important corollary, Heidegger links this two-fold movement of concealing forgetfulness with technology: ‘Technology comes to presence in the realm where revealing and unconcealment take place, where aletheia, truth, happens.’ Consequently, for Heidgger, truth assumes the form of an almost Nietzschean ‘double negative’ or unconcealment, linked to the ‘coming to presence’ of technology” in \textit{Event States} (Prague: Litteria Pragensia, 2007), 134.
That said, language is not only fundamentally intrinsic to our meaningful being, but it is a primary consequence of the accident of technicity; and technicity, as already noted (vīz á vīz Stiegler) is the promise of a future (which is to also say, a past, a memory, a history), which is the promise of continued potential and possibility. It is perhaps no coincidence, then, that post-structural and deconstructive semiotics find such theoretical import from Heidegger; that Stiegler, in both volumes of Technics and Time, finds his central points of departure in Heidegger and Derrida; and that such semiotic methodologies continue to be endless in their theoretical fruits and potentialities.

Derrida’s understanding that being is intrinsically and necessarily constituted by and within language opens up the possibility for a centering and destabilization of hitherto understood concepts of being by way of language. By unfolding what was the tightly sealed fold of being and language, Derrida’s deconstruction is an “abandonment of all references to a center, to a subject, to a privileged reference, to an origin, or to an absolute arché.” Moreover, being as constituted and emptied out by language makes way for the startling claim issued forth by deconstruction: there is no metalanguage; there is only language; understanding language entails an unpacking of inherent contradictions and endless interpretive possibilities; just as language enables man to note that “it is” (per Heidegger’s quote above), also “it is not;” being, then, is also the contradiction or negation of being; by way of language, being. Thus, the deconstructive approach to the inherent link between language and being reaffirms the initial promise of technicity

---

27 Being, or being-under-erasure, points to the manner in which deconstruction disassembles any univocal or singular concept of being, as being is always defined in difference, even in difference to itself, especially as it is always undergoing shifts in signification.
(which rendered both possible): a future, endless possibility and potential. It forces a shift from the false stability of Being towards a dynamic becoming (Being-being-becoming).

Also important to the project of deconstruction is temporality: written texts undergo delay and deferral; that is, the meaning of a text is delayed insofar as its moment of apprehension takes place after it is initially written, and in the absence of the “author,” and it is deferred in the sense that meaning is always already put-off insofar as it is constantly undergoing shifts in the chain of signification. This attention to temporality is essential to the primacy of technicity: as technicity opens up the possibility of not only language, but of memory and history (and thus an abstract, punctuated temporal schematic), then it was already long over-due that an approach towards language meaning, such as deconstruction, find investment in, and relation to, temporality. Derrida more directly addresses language and its connection to being and temporality when, in “Signature, Event, Context,” he notes that, “The sign is born at the same time as imagination and memory, at the moment when it is demanded by the absence of the object for present perception.”\textsuperscript{28} While the latter half of this notation is specific to the over-arching project of deconstructive semiotics, the formative part recalls our earlier tracing of language as the exteriorization of memory, afforded by the accident of technicity. Even with regard to vocal language, speaking and performative language, Derrida echoes this line of thought by problematizing J.L. Austin’s conceptualization of language: “Austin does not ask himself what consequences derive from the fact that something possible—a possible risk—is always possible, is somehow a necessary possibility. And if, such a necessary possibility of failure being granted, it still constitutes

an accident.” One cannot read too deeply into the implications of such a line of thought. Highlighted repeatedly in this gesture is the concept of *possibility*, as well as the consequence of *possible accident*. The accident is always already possible by virtue of the initial accident of technicity, which is also to say language; and while Derrida does not state this so explicitly in this particular instance, such can be implied (at least possibly so, by *accident*).

But just as there is a primacy of language, language is primarily multiplicative; it is polysemic, as understood both synchronically and diachronically. The Derridean *chain of signification*, though clearly at play in the meat-space arena of language (and yet always *adrift*, and thus always somewhat metaphysical), is extended and amplified in cyber-space in the form of hypertext. This extension and amplification of semiotic multiplicity is apparent in the temporal sequencing of a hypertext composition, or perhaps especially, in a literary narrative. The very spatial configuration of hypertext problematizes the temporal nature of the hypertext composition and/or narrative when transposed over and against traditional (bound books, for example) textual methods and modes of composition and narrative. The digital medium (e.g., the computer and/or internet) which facilitates the spatial condition of hypertext affects and effects not only the temporal unfolding of the hypertext composition and/or narrative, but the very manner in which such a hypertext work of composition and/or narrative is apprehended and consumed.

*The Advent of Cyber- and/or Hyper-text*

---

29 Ibid., 324.
Language as digitally mediated (often referred to as hypertext or cybertext) has not only reconfigured the face of semiotics, but has extended and further realized post-structural and deconstructive thought. On the one hand, post-structural and

---

31 Hypertext can be considered, according to George P. Landow, “an information technology consisting of individual blocks of text, or lexia;” or, as Rasmus Blok notes, “digitally and computer-based literary work[s] of art, sometimes containing graphics and sounds, designed and based on a link-structure” (from Hyper/Text/Theory, 1; and “A Sense of Closure,” in Homer to Hypertext, 168, respectively). Underscoring both of these is the concept of lexia and link-structure, both of which mean essentially the same thing. This link-structure, which forms the spatial body of the hypertext, is the very structure which engages the temporal unfolding of the hypertext composition and/or narrative. With such a temporal unfolding in mind, hypertext is not only synchronically multiplicative and polysemic (as language always already is), but is diachronically non- or mani-linear.

But none of this is necessarily anything new, as Ransom Blok notes that, “Jacques Derrida and Roland Barthes had been describing digital literature without knowing it” (Ransom Blok, “A Sense of Closure,” in Homer to Hypertext, 172). That is, much of their writing, which pre-dates hypertext theory proper, anticipates a medium which would fully realize their theories. To a large degree, hypertext takes their theories and runs with them; or, as Landow puts it, “critical theory promises to theorize hypertext and hypertext promises to embody and thereby test aspects of theory” (George P. Landow, Hypertext, 3).

Hypertext creates a medium by which narratives (created as they are consumed) truly test the limits of deconstructionist and post-structural thought; they beg for interpretation from the foundations of these theoretical queries. Hypertext writing not only begs for analysis that seeks to investigate the breakdown of context, centering and stabilization, but also one which truly eradicates not only the primacy and authority of the Author, but the Work as well.

In a very literal sense, Derrida anticipated hypertext when he wrote of assemblage: “The word ‘assemblage’ seems more apt for suggesting that the kind of bringing-together proposed here has the structure of an interlacing, a weaving, or a web, which would allow the different threads and different lines of sense or force to separate again, as well as being ready to bind others together” (Jacques Derrida, Speech and Phenomena, 131). But hypertext is far more congruent with Derridean thought than a seeming literary prophesy of sorts. Because of the spatial conditions of hypertext in form, the temporal sequence of the narrative changes with each consumption, creating in effect a continual shift in narrative context with each new consumption (i.e., a chain of signification in the narratological sense). The form which dictates the unfolding of a hypertext narrative realizes Derrida’s conceptions of delay and deferral, ploysemia, deconstruction, etc., both in form and content. In this sense, the center of the hypertext narrative is transient: “the center is not the center” insofar as the center is “not a fixed locus but a function” (Ibid, 248). The eradication of the semiotically violent and tyrannical center-as-being (a process actualized in hypertext by its link-structure) engenders an arena of infinite play. Moreover, the spatial configuration of hypertext by its very form allows the content to function in a manner that makes a once latent Derridean notion of a remainder or a chain of signification manifest: “the context is never absolutely determinable” (Jacques Derrida, “Signature Event Context,” Margins of Philosophy, 310). That is to say, not only is the contextual form of the hypertext in a constant drift, but the narrative content is as well. The hypertext narrative becomes, by and large, a function, a play.

To an equal degree we find a similar relationship between hypertext and the work of Roland Barthes. Again, in quite a literal sense, Barthes anticipates hypertext when he notes that:

In [an] 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...we gain access to it by several entrances, none of which can be authoritatively declared the main one; the codes it mobilizes extend as far as the eye can reach, they are indeterminable.

Roland Barthes, S/Z, 11-12.
deconstructive semiotics in general, their extended digital potential in particular, have not only been useful in paving the way for feminist thought (especially when considering many of the French feminists), post-colonial studies and queer theory (to name just a few), but are very much in tune with Deleuze and Guattari’s over-arching project of schizoid rhizomatics. In hypertext we find an acceleration of decoding and deterritorializing possibility: through the play of the chain of signification that is especially pronounced through the link structure of hypertextuality, we find a destabilization of otherwise homogenous identity markers. With the retraction of “either/or” linguistic violence, we find an expansion of the liberatory, conjunctive “and:” especially on-line, I can be this, and that, and this, and that, and.... And yet, the promise perhaps exceeds itself. As Deleuze and Guattari note when speaking of the operation of the assemblage, for every decoding and deterritorialization, there is nothing more than an opening up of space, a greater possibility for over-coding and reterritorialization.

In other words, while the understood polyvocality of language has further opened up the potentials of becoming (especially as presented in digital mediation), it has not (and perhaps cannot) fully absorb or dissolve the inherent violence of language as a marking, coding, naming mechanism. Just as much as language is primary (and primarily technological), as well multiplicative, even with the promise of the conjunctive “and” lies the inevitable tyranny of difference, inclusion/exclusion. Language is not only primary, Hypertext, then, comes as close as possible to Barthes’s notion of an ideal text. Furthermore, and as already demonstrated, hypertext does not have a correlative work; as hypertext, it is hyperplay” (Roland Barthes, “From Work to Text,” in The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism, 1470).

In this sense, and perhaps more importantly, one then has not only already established the Barthesian death of the Author, but the death of the Work also. Hypertext is not only “eternally written here and now,” but the very narrative or rhetorical gesture which emerges from such a text is, and can only be, read in the here and now (Roland Barthes, “The Death of the Author,” in The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism, 1468).
but as such it inevitably becomes a flow of power, as Deleuze and Guattari note: “Language is made not to be believed but to be obeyed, to compel obedience.” In this sense, the multiplicity found in post-structural and deconstructive semiotics, even within hypertext, also opens up a horrifying possibility: eternal exclusion and exile, initially provided by the otherwise liberatory executor, the conjunctive “and” (exclusion and exile, in this sense, to be marked by the semiotic of violence of being “othered” for this mark, and that mark, and this mark).

Hypertext, then, offers up a precarious multiplicity, especially in political terms. The emphasis that hypertext places on the concept of a center without a center extends the concept of meaning adrift, but dangerously toys with the idea of meaning abandonment (especially with regard to identity politics). This new spatio-temporal configuration of language decodes and deterritorializes to such a degree that there is a hitherto unseen potential for over-coding and reterritorializing violence. As has been seen with cyber-bullying, the move towards a body-without-an-image is not necessarily a move that can be (or even ought to be) actualized easily; instead, it renders the body even more of a blank slate, by which one can be branded all varieties of “and” exclusions, many of which would perhaps be prohibited in the realm of meat-space. In other words, because hypertext offers up an immediate temporal presence that spatially is not (a certain body-in-absence), the absence of my coded body allows me to be further coded, to be reterritorialized in ways that that my otherwise already territorialized, corporeal body would not have permitted.

---

32 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 76.
The primacy of language, then, which opens up the possibility for understanding our being, our becoming (as well as temporality, retentional finitude, history, etc.), is complicated by hypertext in the most severe of ways: not only does it open the space for schizoid multiplicity, but in such an opening it presents the opportunity for a new power neurosis. Hypertext makes possible a schizoid multiplicity, it shifts the “I” to the “we;” and in doing so it exacerbates a rupture that is more of an anxiety than a fear. The very destabilizing potential of post-structuralism and deconstruction, especially in light of hypertext (and especially in light of the larger project of Deleuze and Guattari), is also the very destabilization that has created a neurosis. In the destabilized multiplicity of our becoming, we find an anxiety, a neuroses, that is both and at once internal and yet exteriorized, projected onto the “other,” as such. In other words, the project of exclusion and exile which is built into the very fabric of language is not only to make strangers of “others,” but to find a discomfort in the fact that, in our multiplicative ontological constitution, we are often “strangers to ourselves.”

In the strictest sense, language is primary, and primarily multiplicative; however, it is this primary multiplicity of language that manages our ability for continued inclusion/exclusion (even in the wake of the promise of hypertext, especially as afforded by post-structuralism and deconstruction), which is always a question concerning the political. The inherently exclusionary possibility of language as a marking mechanism, and as opened up by hypertext, is seen most prominently in what we conceptualize as the “alien”—the foreigner, the exile, the “othered” outsider. The recent spark of anti-
immigration rhetoric, both within the States and in Europe, is in no doubt, to a certain degree, part and parcel of globalization, especially with regard to the spatial flattening and temporal acceleration which accompanies it (found most prominently in new media technologies, and more specifically and conceptually in the semiotic breach that accompanies post-structuralism, deconstruction and hypertextuality). While the initial germination of any xenophobia first extends from an anxiety over the destabilized whole (from which a people's attempt to gather a false unity, which always implies a necessary exclusion)—underscored by post-structural, deconstructionist and hypertexual thought—such a whole was never stable from the outset.35 It is only the product of a fetishistic myth—the myth of the un-alienated self which, when endangered, creates the alienated self. This is so in the strictest and loosest senses of multiplicity: both in the collective of each other, and the collective multiplicity of ourselves. The concept of the “alien” is inaugurated by our anxiety over our schizoid becoming, our inherent multiplicity (as guaranteed by the primacy of language, extended by the hypertexual), and is only in the second instance exteriorized and transformed into a fear of the external “other.”

And yet, we have come a long way since the Invasion of the Body Snatchers, where truly evil outsiders are trying to turn us into alienated automatons; or worse, as the socio-political context of the time invites, Soviets! To a large degree, then, the fear of the “other” (immigrants and exiles, political enemies, animals, even) is intimately connected to the fear of “becoming-other” (cultural pollution, machinic transmogrification, animality), and yet to become-other is perhaps more in tune with our techno-linguistic

35 In other words: The initial and primary technology of language is also the initial and primary fault which renders us, as Kristeva has it, “strangers to ourselves.” Meaning as afforded by language comes with a hefty price tag: its inevitable drift, slippage, marginality is what prompts the reactive search for ontological stability, maintenance, a totalized textual framing. The impossible possibility of true Being is a snake-oil sold to us by language.
ontology than the vain attempt to maintain Being (which is nothing more than the
reaction to the action of the initial fault line of fluid language. Now, especially with the
advent of new media technologies, we are rethinking our relationship with the “alien” in
dramatically new ways, even in the discourse of popular cinema. In District 9, we find a
hard-lesson learned in the repetition of history: extra-terrestrial aliens are being kept in
what could otherwise be considered World War II internment camps. In Avatar, we
discover the true brutality of “othering” when exercised to full extension—nothing short
of (post-)colonial tyranny. What is presented in both of these films, though in Avatar in
particular, is the need to rethink our phobic apprehensions when entering into the
potentials and possibilities of new media technologies, trans- and post-humanist science,
rather than a means by which to reinforce them. And while some of these claims by seem
expedient, it is important to remember the too-often forgotten intimacy between
language, multiplicity, and the potential for violence therein.

Above and beyond the potential and possibility of the extended multiplicity of
language as seen in hypertext, as well as beyond our apprehension and understanding of
the branded “alien other,” we find the assemblage of language illustrated in the film
Surrogate: the unfortunate return to a singular notion of appropriate identity, beauty and
aesthetics. What this film discovers is the anxiety regarding discovery (arguably a central
trait in nomadic becoming): even with the possibility of having a surrogate body that is
capable of being/becoming anything, everything, people still choose the warm safety of
over-coded aesthetics, the dominant discourse which still dictates beauty even in the very
event of its potential disintegration. In short, the decoding of bodies by way of being able
to construct new bodies of smooth space only results in a further over-coding of bodies,
of an increased spatial striation. Everyone chooses to look like Barbie and Ken. Why be an anthropomorphic, mythical creature (or any endless number of other possibilities) when you can finally be the plastic cut-out the logic of dominant discourse and ideology have always sold? Such dominant discourse and ideology is only the success of one end of the assemblage, that of totalization, over-coding, reterritorialization, as rendered increasingly possible by de-coding and deterritorialization. However, the success of dominant discourse and ideology is primarily hinged upon the violence of the mark (a true *branding*) which initiates and besets such discourse and ideology, which affords the assemblage as meaningful in the first place.

In closing, the always already mobility of language (especially as demonstrated in hypertext) and thus, meaning, demands a rethinking not only of our sense of spatio-temporality (or even memory and history, as language inaugurates and opens up such possibilities), but of our very ontological constitution (which is also rendered meaningful by and through the primacy of language). In other words, understanding that language is a technology, and that language is primary, hypertext not only replicates the theoretical proclamations of post-structural and deconstructive thought (in its play, decenteredness, polysemy, etc.), but begs for an ontological turn. Hypertext, as a body of networked assemblages, flowing in multiple directions, endless in possibility and potential, should also be examined through the lens of rhizomatics and schizoanalysis.

Before delving into the dense and complicated terrain that are Deleuze and Guattari’s topographies in the Capitalism and Schizophrenia project, it is important to note that we are not trying to lay claim that language precedes us, that it is something implanted within us and that we slowly discover over time. Rather, as Deleuze and
Guattari note in A Thousand Plateaus, language is a “thing,” but it is that thing which makes “things,” as such, possible. The point is not necessarily linguistic or scientific (as in the case of Noam Chomsky or Stephen Pinker, respectively), but strictly logical and conceptual: the multiplicity of desire and becoming ordains, is ordained by, the multiplicity of language. Hypertext is merely a form which makes such a content more readily visible and apprehensible; and schizoid, rhizomatic desire then, in turn, is also more pronounced in the digital medium. Language is technology, and primary—hypertext extends the multiplicative potential and possibility of language, and is thus closer to the schizoid, rhizomatic possibility detailed in the Capitalism and Schizophrenia project.

As Manuel De Landa puts it:

Our languages may…be seen over time as momentary slowing downs or thickenings in a flow of norms that give rise to a multitude of different structures […] [E]ach articulation includes both forms and substances: sediment is not only an accumulation of pebbles (substance), it is an accumulation distributed in homogeneous layers (form); in turn, cementing these pebbles together establishes spatial links among pebbles (form) and creates a material entity of larger scale, a sedimentary rock (substance). The same holds true for institutional entities, such as hospitals, schools, and prisons.  

36 In other words, the difference could be seen in the sense that what is at stake here is not the “universality” of language, but the “primacy” of language, insofar as “meaning” (or “desire,” articulated as such) is concerned. As Deleuze and Guattari put it in A Thousand Plateaus: “Our criticism of these linguistic models is not that they are too abstract but, on the contrary, that they are not abstract enough, that they do not reach the abstract machine that connects language to the semantic and pragmatic contents of statements, to collective assemblages of enunciation, to a whole of the social field…. [T]here is no language in itself, nor are there any linguistic universals, only a throng of dialects, patois, slangs, and specialized languages. There is no ideal speaker-listener, any more than there is a homogenous linguistic community. Language is, in Weinreich’s words, ‘an essentially heterogeneous reality.’ There is no mother tongue, only a power takeover by a dominant language within a political multiplicity” (7). Certainly, by detailing language as primary, we are not attempting to essentialize or naturalize language, to make it universal, or to mandate there is proper or a linear path to a proper language. Roland Barthes’ Empire of Signs, various works by Derrida, French feminists, queer theorists, post-colonial theorists, etc., have commented on the inherent inclusionary/exclusionary nature of inscription, on the semiotic violence of “naming,” as such. Language is, thus, always already a political project, but language is also simply always already.

Language, especially when digitally mediated in hypertext, functions most punctually in the form of assemblage. And while the socius maintains sociopolitical molarities and collectivities, language cannot escape that which desire prompts. And yet, just as we cannot escape the desire which prompts language—and the multiplicity therein—we cannot escape the reflexive nature of language and desire. We are always already multiples: desire: language: hypertext. In short, just as desire inaugurates language and language inaugurates “desire” as such, the multiplicative nature of the two should come as no surprise.

What is important to consider here is that language is primary, and language functions as an assemblage (which we will touch upon more closely in Chapter 2); and yet, this assemblage is most evident in the form of hypertext. Our very rhizo-schizoid becoming is most pronounced in the assemblage of language as mediated through digital machineries—technologies which have always been inherent. As De Landa points out, the very sociopolitical machinery which compacts us is undergoing both a cosmetic and invasive change. The form complicates the substance, and vice versa: molarities and molecules abound, our ontological becoming is always already such, multiplicative. The underlying multiplicative desire that prompted technology only made technology possible; and yet, the multiplicity of the technology of language has rendered “desire” meaningful, especially in the multiplicative sense.
Chapter 2:

Our Becoming Sings Electric: On the Technological Primacy and Potential of Desire

“God becomes man becomes fish becomes barnacle goose becomes featherbed mountain.”
—James Joyce, *Ulysses*

Just as language is primary (and a technology)—and just as its always already polysemic, multiplicative nature is merely rendered more visible via digital mediation—the same could be said of desire, our desiring-machinery, the endless potential of becoming-other. Taking Deleuze and Guattari’s Capitalism and Schizophrenia project as our central point of departure, we will find many of their concepts inflected and punctuated by cyber-space and online, networked interaction: nomadology, rhizomatics, schizoanalysis, assemblages, body without organs, becoming(-other), desire (in quite a particular sense), etc. As in the case with language and hypertext, the spatio-temporal conditions of cyber-space, and cyber-engagement, bring us closer to the fulfillment of the ontological promise set forth by Deleuze and Guattari.¹

And yet, it is important to note that, within the context of our theoretical scope, cyber-space and cyber-engagement do not bring us anything new. The cyber only extends the always already multiplicative lines of flight of our desiring machinery, the potential future of which is already being prophesized and realized by the maddest of post-

¹ Cyber-space is both smooth and striated: it carries the potential for decoding, deterritorialization and rhizo-nomadic movement, for a librating asignifying (from the despotic forces of singular signification) for the “subject;” and yet, it also carries the potential for an over-coding, a reterritorialization, a vast reinforcement of the signification regime—for an e-panopticon of sorts that can shut itself down when its method of surveillance fails (See: Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 474-500). The political potentials, possibilities and ramifications of such spatio-temporal conditions will be further explored in Chapter 3.
humanist and trans-humanist scientific endeavors.\textsuperscript{2} Cyberspace is merely another plateau of the potentiality of our rhizo-schizoid becoming—in short, of our desire. To be as emphatic and clear from the outset, this is what we ought to tab as our refrain: \emph{more important than current plateaus is the endless potential of the horizon}. From the endless potential of our cyber-plateau—as all plateaus before it—let us not forget to look into the endless potential of the becoming distance….

But for now, it is important to deal with the proximities offered up by our newest map: cyberspace. A unique \textit{space} which is, in many ways, \textit{without}.

\textit{Cyber-Rhizome}

The cyber is a rhizome seed, planted—the cyber-rhizome.

To write of the cyber-rhizome is difficult: though admittedly enshrouded in seeming ambiguity, one hesitates to code, trace or signify-enclose a concept whose function is to break down such practice. Safely, then, it can be said that the cyber-rhizome is différance, which is also to say that it is not: the germination of the rhizome seed is what explodes différance, emptying out the entrapment of reversality for the opening up of recursivity, moving from (infinite) linear possibility into the always already multiplicative movement from and towards every- and any-where.\textsuperscript{3} The endless

\textsuperscript{2} Genome mapping, cloning, artificial hearts, cybernetic limbs, cameras implanted on the backs on heads, cryogenic freezing, brain transplants, etc., to name a few of those that have been prophesized and realized. Can you guess which are which?

\textsuperscript{3} D\&G implicitly clarify this notation of difference: “There is a primacy of the machinic assemblage of bodies over tools and goods, a primacy of the collective assemblage of enunciation over language and words[\ldots] That is why a social field is defined less by its conflicts and contradictions than by lines of flight running through it” (Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, \textit{A Thousand Plateaus}, 90). In other words, Deleuze and Guatarri are attempting to separate the concept of language as meaningful in and of itself, and language which constitutes meaning by and through its utterance, enunciation, performance. Such is how and why the primacy of language and desire are both primary: their reflexivity demands such. That said, the enunciation or enactment of language is what opens up and renders meaningful the social field—or what
interpretive branches which stem from post-structural and/or deconstructive trees assume a base, a trunk, an originary moment, even if the originary moment is destabilized and decentered. Rhizomes are subterranean, moving horizontally; their movement is spontaneously multiplicative, as is their moment of conception. As Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari put it succinctly: “any point of a rhizome can be connected to anything other, and must be;” and the same could be said of the cyber: cyber-rhizome. The cyber-rhizome is a becoming-everything, an $n - 1$ system, endlessly producing multiples, asignifying and uncoding its apprehensions along its course of flight along smooth, flat lines. The cyber-rhizome is and not (n)either/or.

And the project, then, is not to trace the cyber-rhizome (as such a tracing would lead us to everywhere at once), but to map it. Of central importance to this mapping: the spatial and temporal configurations of the cyber-rhizome, as well as the manner in which the cyber-rhizome sub-ject-ifies, the former implying, informing and guiding the latter. That said, the sub-ject-ivity, or sub-ject-ification, being referenced here is not that of a fixed position, a situating. Instead, it is a constant and virtual “becoming-other;” or, as André Nusselder puts it: “Deleuze teach[es] us that the multiple ways in which the virtual can actualize itself (‘what man is depends on what becomes of him’) differ profoundly from the teleological striving of the possible that wants to realize itself in a certain predetermined manner (‘the seed and the tree’).” That is, the sub-ject is not thrown under that which eventually and inevitably stems upward, though diffusing into nodes they would perhaps call the socius in Anti-Oedipus. But this significant social field is not only about conflicts and contradictions—staples of differerance—but also of potentials and endlessly multiplicative lines of flight.

---

5 Emphasis is added on the ject to emphasize the etymology of the word (thrown [ject] under [sub]), and to better clarify the extent of its semiosis.
and knots that form branches (which form nodes and knots, and other branches); rather, the sub-ject remains thrown under (subterranean) according to a network that horizontally moves in all possible directions at all possible moments. In other words: the cyber-rhizome-sub-ject.

There are many designations that extend from the cyber: cyberspace, the worldwide web, virtual reality, the internet, digitality, etc. It is, to a large degree, the technology (or technic) that has most significantly come to immerse, mediate and inform sub-ject-ification. Like orthography, morse, telephone, radio and television that preceded it, the cyber is a technic that functions in the mediation of communication; however, unlike its predecessors, the cyber not only distorts presence as such, but it reconfigures spatio-temporal organizations and facilitates formations of what one could call e-being. E-becoming. And this e-being—as being-under-erasure, better suited as e-becoming—is the infinitely multiplicative potential of its technical, (and) systemic “value:” always (and) everywhere, and.

And cyber-space and cyber-engagement facilitate such a multiplicity, both in the sense of a certain phenomenological connectivity and interaction, as well as in the sense of an ontological becoming-other. What do we talk about when we talk about e-identity, e-becoming; how do we talk as e-identities (whatever they may be in their further opened multiplicity), e-becomings: “All we talk about are multiplicities, lines, strata and segmentarities, lines of flight and intensities, machinic assemblages and their various types, bodies without organs and their construction and selection, the plane of

---

7 Or, being-under-erasure, is being used here to reinforce the notion that not only does being detached from the cyber lack singular stability, but it (perhaps further) lacks it when attached to the cyber. Being-in-constant-difference, as the proper constitution of Being: becoming. Being-being-becoming.
With regard to cyber-space, this can be summed up neatly by the New Yorker cartoon: “On the internet, nobody knows you’re a dog” (says one dog in front of a computer to another dog). And yet, for all the time Deleuze and Guattari spend on analyzing faciality and its relation to gesture, speech and language—and in a method and mode that is strikingly and hauntingly similar to the “analysts” they so violently critique—they seem to forget about the possibility of communicative immediacy without the body, or with a body-in-absence. Dare we say: a body-without-organs. It is this (human) body-in-absence (in the spatial sense) conjoined with the unique communicative immediacy of cyber-space that renders (more) possible the potential of becoming-other, becoming-animal, becoming-intense—becoming-dog. They note that, when speaking of “linguistic models [it] is not that they are too abstract but, on the contrary, that they are not abstract enough….” In other words, theoretical thought has sold itself out to its own devices: looking for univocal answers instead of new problems and challenges; seeking concrete verifiability instead of abstraction; scavenging for singular resolve rather than multiplicative potentiality. But where else can we find such a line of flight towards this ontological wish and promise: the cyber-plateau, the horizon of which is built into it, and extends from it.

As Deleuze and Guattari put it:

Multiplicities are rhizomatic, and expose arborescent pseudomultiplicities for what they are. There is no unity to serve as a pivot in the objector “return” in the subject. A multiplicity has neither subject nor object, only determinations, magnitudes, and dimensions that cannot increase in number without the multiplicity changing in nature (the laws of

---

combination therefore therefore increase in number as the multiplicity grows). \(^{11}\)

Taken to its full extension, then, there is no objectification, no subject-object dichotomy at all; there is no eternal return, no Oedipal light at the end of the tunnel. There is no reification or alienation, authentic self, or even, as Deleuze and Guattari’s put, ideology. \(^{12}\) There is only an ontological becoming, if one could qualify it as such, and that ontological becoming is of many; it is multiple. It is rhizomatic. It is becoming(-other). This is the ontological potentiality inherent in the rhizomatic model, which is very much afforded by cyber-space and cyber-engagement. This—the digital medium which you are most likely using to view this—is the further splitting of an otherwise despotic signifying regime. Here you can become almost anyone and anything—or nothing at all.

And while the rest will flesh this out, so to speak, it is as such:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Being: And} & \quad \text{Being} & \quad \text{———: ————} \\
\text{[Conjunction]} & \quad \text{[(Im)possible Absence]} \quad \\
\text{Becoming becoming becoming} & \quad \text{Negation of negation} \\
\text{To decode: possibility and potentiality} & \quad \text{To overcode the gap, the blank} \quad \text{\(^{13}\)}
\end{align*}
\]

---

\(^{11}\) Ibid., 8.

\(^{12}\) Ibid., 4.

\(^{13}\) D&G write: “There has always been a struggle in language between the verb être (to be) and the conjunction et (and) between est and et (is and and [which in French are identical in pronunciation—Trans.] (Ibid., 98). Meaning, the concept of being is more closely tied to conjunction—to the “and”—than it is the univocal, singular framework in which it is often presented. In other words, Being is not so much an “is” or an “I am,” as much as it is an “(s)he is and,” or “I am and.” Thus the seemingly essential nature of becoming: such is the essential networking of us all, within and without ourselves, internally and externally—multiplicative. And yet, the nature of the rhizome, as an assemblage, is what marks a certain tension: between coding and decoding, deterritorialization and reterritorialization, decoding and overcoding. The preferred line of flight is obvious—but how we get there is important, as an ignorance of such may deceptively situated us within the opposing polarity, which is merely an opposing flow, dynamism, repressive intensity.
In other words, *what’s flesh gotta do with it? What’s a body gotta do with it? Who needs a body when a body can be broken?* The continual breaking and reassembling of the body, the decoding, recoding and overcoding of the body, literally understood as such, the re- and de-territorialization of semiotic de- and re-in-scription—this is the conventional wisdom of the assemblage, as explained by Deleuze and Guattari. So what does a body have to do with it? Everything and nothing: the corporeal body is still a contested site of inclusionary and exclusionary semiotic violence, a means for marking and tagging (the unfortunate baggage of language—which we may as well start marking as the Apple); but also a site of dispersal, relief, passing, even becoming—especially as made possible by and through cyber-space. Conceptually and ontologically speaking, a body is meant as,

a regime of…kind, any new body requires the erection of an opposable form, as well as the formation of distinct subjects; death is the general incorporeal transformation attributed to all bodies from the standpoint of their forms and substances (for example, the body of the Party cannot come into its own without the formation of new activists, which assumes the elimination of the first generation.\(^\text{14}\)

In this politico-conceptual sense, and in a certain Heideggerian turn, there is always a being towards death (Dasein, which Deleuze and Guattari shorthand as becoming), a flux or flow of intensities. In the ontological sense, a body, however it is to be apprehended or understood, is never static; it always dynamic and fluid, creating an ebb and flow in the assemblages of power. It is the possibility of rhizomatic movement, especially as demonstrated within the arena of cyber-space, that hitherto best allows for a liberatory multiplicity of subjectivity. This is but part and parcel of a holistic project that also involves desire and desiring-machinery, schizoanalysis, and the sense of self/subjectivity.

----

\(^{14}\) Ibid., 108.
In its connected lines of flight, shoots and flows of intensities, the internet is a rhizomatic technology, just as we, as desiring-machines, also contain the potential of rhizomatic becoming and nomadology. After all, roaming the space of the internet is rather nomadic: to wander often aimlessly, to “surf,” clicking on a link that is provided from another, but never in a certain linear sense. And the multiplicity of subjectivity—e-becoming—is (further) opened up: the space of an internet profile (such as on Facebook, for example) is much smoother than the more striated space of the (otherwise culturally constructed) of the body. If one does not want to be a dog, one can be a female (even if they are otherwise culturally considered to be a male)—the changing of such an appearance is much easier in cyber-space than in meat-space. Such is the endless potential of becoming-other in e-becoming, of the rhizome.

_Schizoanalysis, Bodies without Organs, Multiplicity and The Online Community_

Before attempting to investigate relationships between Deleuze and Guattari’s schizoanalysis and cyberspace, it is important to first attempt to unpack the concept itself. Schizoanalysis is, in many respects, an attempted reclaiming of schizophrenia from Oedipal psychoanalysis, which framed it as a clinical defect. It is a kind of championing of schizophrenia-as-process, as dynamic, rather than schizophrenia as a static illness. Deleuze and Guattari make this rather clear when they demand that “a revolution—this time materialist—can proceed only by way of a critique of Oedipus, by denouncing the illegitimate use of the syntheses of the unconscious as found in Oedipal psychoanalysis, so as to rediscover a transcendental unconscious defined by the immanence of its criteria,
and a corresponding practice that we shall call schizoanalysis.”¹⁵ In short, Oedipal psychoanalysis is qualified as such because it is not psychoanalysis in general that Deleuze and Guattari are attacking; rather, it is the totalizing triangulation of the Oedipal complex, which situates the foundation of Freudian psychoanalysis, that troubles Deleuze and Guattari.¹⁶ To this end, Freudian psychoanalysis finds “everything is ground, squashed, triangulated into Oedipus; everything is reduced to the father,” to such a degree that Oedipus and the father—literally or signified and culturally inscribed as the Law of the Father or the “lack” (in Lacanian psychoanalysis)—take on a an irreducible, transcendental shape. Much as in the case of God, the Oedipal myth becomes bigger than what it is—myth. Thus, the importance of schizoanalysis in relation to Oedipus is similar to the relationship between the Nietzschean turn and God: it not a moving past Oedipus that Deleuze and Guattari are suggesting, but a detailed declaration that Oedipus never was what it was purported to be in the first place; it is not the death of God that should be striking, but “that the death of God is of no consequence.”¹⁷

Let us pause here for a moment and reflect on a rather important problematic, that of desire and online phenomenon and interaction. Not only is desire-as-primary one of the central theoretical charges of this work, but it is also at the heart of both Deleuze and Guattari’s *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* project and psychoanalytic thought in general. It should be no surprise, then, that psychoanalysis has been invested in cyberspace and cyborganics as much as any other school of theoretical thought. Jerry Aline Flieger’s *Is

---


¹⁶ It should also be noted that *Anti-Oedipus* is also a not-so-thinly disguised attack on the Lacanian “lack” and “signified Phallus.” In fact, the very concept of “lack”—especially as primary, and as the central driving force of desire—is antithetical to Deleuze & Guattari’s project of positive addition, of the schizoid “and.” With regard to Freud, Deleuze and Guattari find that Oedipal psychoanalysis works in tandem with capitalism (particularly burgeoiose culture) and patriarchy, and, to some degree, conceptual fascism.

¹⁷ Ibid., 107.
Oedipus Online? is just that—an interrogation into the relevancy of Oedipal psychoanalysis in the digital and posthuman age. While she addresses Deleuze and Guattari throughout the book—particularly Anti-Oedipus—she makes one truly salient and remarkable point: “Anti-Oedipus may not be as anti-Freud as it might appear, or even as anti-Oedipus as it purports to be.”18 The point being made here is paramount to a just reading of the Capitalism and Schizophrenia project: schizoanalysis, in particular, is rather obviously not a total rejection of Freud or psychoanalysis, nor is it an absolute dismissal of Oedipus. Such a reading is unfortunate, as schizoanalysis is a rethinking of desire and psychoanalysis, not an outright abandonment of it. Instead, “Oedipus is clearly classified as a resistance, a constraint imposed on the infinite combinations of desire. To be anti-Oedipus is to be pro-desire, plain and simple.”19 However, it is not that plain and simple. To be anti-Oedipus is to be pro-desire because Deleuze and Guattari see desire as a productive force, not as something that is borne of a complex that represses, that inseminates itself latently within the unconscious and then finds masked manifestation in one’s desiring or sexual conduct. Again, one does not desire because of a primary repression (I want to fuck mommy; I want to kill daddy; I am afraid of being castrated), or a “lack” that derives from the signification of a phallus that none of us have (or are), but which we all move towards. Schizoanalysis declares desire to be infinitely positive; thus, endless potential and possibility, an always already possibility of becoming-other. The inherently nomadic soul.

Andre Nusselder’s Interface Fantasy: A Lacanian Cyborg Ontology also touches upon the tangential points of psychoanalysis and schizoanalysis, especially with relation

---

19 Ibid., 94.
to cyberspace, digitality and the virtual. While much of *Interface Fantasy* concerns itself with the concept of Lacanian desire as demonstrated and cathected online via the medium of the screen, Nusselder does make an invaluable point: “[Pierre] Levy’s Deleuzian inspiration resides in this focus on the creative process of ‘becoming other,’ or heterogenesis, which is enabled by virtualization.”

While it is difficult to briefly explicate Deleuzian virtuality, it is important to note that it disfigures the “real,” or makes the “real” other than its pre-existent assumption. Virtuality, then, is not exclusive to digital or new media technologies; it has always preceded them. However, new media technologies in general, the internet in particular, have opened up virtuality which, in turn, has opened up new potentials for becoming-other, for schizoid meaning and potential.

The exaggerated fluidity of e-becoming, in the true and ideal schizoid sense is made clear: “if there is one problem that does not exist in schizophrenia, it is the problem of identifications.” This is because identity, for the schizo, is not singular or even necessary. As a schizoid “subject,” one can easily proclaim, and all at once: *I am mountain, I am tree; I am couch, I am rock; I am a shifting glacier, I am a rolling wave.*

As such—a mountain, a rock, a rolling wave—the schizoid “subject” does not need Oedipus or traditional psychoanalysis, let alone the notion of a singular, tried and true (human, filial) identity. It only needs its multiplicity—a multiplicity of becoming(-other). The manner in which virtuality in general, the virtuality of the internet in particular, makes such a becoming more realizable is well-illustrated in the (supposed) documentary, *Catfish.*

---


The film begins as an account of an artist, Nev, who by happenchance befriends an eight-year-old artist, Abby, over the internet. As their relationship develops, he also becomes friends with the mother, Angela, as well as serious romantic friends with Abby’s older sister, Megan. However, as quickly as these fabrications are developed, they begin to unravel: Nev slowly finds out that one of them is all of them, or none of them, or some of them. Such an identity dis- and con-junction is what moves the (supposed) documentary along. As it turns out, Angela is the artist, not Abby (who is just an everyday eight-year-old); there is no Megan—she was invented by Angela as a ploy to get Nev to continue communicating with her, as well as to stimulate her own desire. But what is the point, what is at stake? With regard to the concept of ontology and identity—everything. Let us consider that Angela was/is both Abby and Megan, just as much as anyone else was/is not. In such a final analysis, what we find is not Angela as fraud, as clinically schizophrenic, but rather as an individual becoming-other. Without the concluding confrontation between Nev and Angela, Angela would have remained Abby and Megan—and even with such a confrontation, Nev, probably would have agreed that Angela was, and always would/could be Abby and Megan. Angela actually did not have any identity problem—she was not clinically ill or have any psychological defects; rather, she was an artist who cathected her desire by being other people, which is to say, herself. And this was truly afforded by the internet and social networking sites.22

This brings light to the concept of schizoanalysis, to schizophrenia-as-process via digital, online mediation: she was not herself, which was a different self, which was another self, which was herself and…. And that was, always has been, and always will

---

22 It should be noted that, while the internet has furthered schizoid potential, it has been with us in the literary sense for quite some time: from William Burrough’s cut-up method, to Kathy Acker’s shifting of point-of-view; from Artuad’s subjective poison to Samuel Beckett’s un-nameability.
be, Angela, and. And “everything divides, but into itself. Even the distances are positive, at the same time as the included disjunctions.”23 It is as such that we have “transpositional subject[s]”—those who, in the midnight mad-dance, will not or cannot configure to the signifying regimes of typifications: husband, lawyer, cockroach, uprooted aged-oak, falling, fumbling keys in nervous gesture.24 They—Angela and whomever—are not necessarily one, but multiples upon multiples. This may have always been the case, but such a case was potentialized by the internet—Angela’s many’s really became many’s, at least in the virtual sense. And this virtuality, which was afforded by digitality and cyberspace, is what made possible a certain e-becoming, a true schizoid unveiling.

Avital Ronell, in her *Telephone Book*, attempts to address technology, schizophrenia and electric speech, primarily through, and within, the integration of Derrida and Heideggeder.25 But the formidable relationship between schizophrenia and technology are actually markedly absent in the work, and she only explicitly mentions Deleuze and Guattari once. With regard to Capitalism and Schizophrenia, she notes that, The restrictions placed on schizophrenia seem strangely under capitalism’s sole surveillance, in a constricticting space “artificial.” We view the phenomenon as being largely ascribable to technology in general, and not solely to capitalist production, though these often present invaginating rather than opposing structures. 26

Ronell is rather correct when noting that there is a correlative call and answer, so to speak, between technology and schizophrenia; however, it is our primary technicity—be it desire (as desiring-machines), language, speech (electric or otherwise)—that is

---

23 Ibid., 76.
24 Ibid., 77.
25 If one truly wants a lesson on technicity and language, via Derrida and Heidegger, one ought to begin with Bernard Stiegler’s *Technics and Time*.
inherently multiplicative and which opens up the potential for multiplicative subjectivity, schizophrenia. In other words, we are not becoming more schizophrenic in the vulgar sense by and through technology; we are not moving towards a clinical defect that is being ushered in by the advancement of that which is always already situated within us—technicity. Prometheus and Epimetheus have long drawn such a fault: to re-member is the consequence of to for-get, and vice versa. To draw fire—perhaps one of the most basic technologies—is not only to warm and make “visible”, but to make the night “invisible.” Such is the fault, literally and figuratively. Schizoid subjects merely find themselves within the quivering shakes of such a fault line, with the current earthquake giving a seismic gesture towards cyberspace. What else do faults do but destabilize? It is important to understand that we are only attempting to move towards stability, not starting from it (as the great Philosophical myth might have it).

This is the “fault” of Slavoj Zizek’s indictment of the Capitalism and Schizophrenia project (which is, he notes, the demonstration of a “bad” Deleuze under the academic peer pressure of Guattari). Noting that Zizek is a Lacanian scholar, and rather interested in the politics of everyday life, he writes: “The more cyberspace brings us together, enabling us to communicate in ‘real time’ with anyone on the globe, the more it isolates us, reducing us to individuals staring into computer screens.”27 In the first analysis, this seems rather poignant—we are isolating ourselves, removing ourselves in the name of connectivity. In the second analysis, one begins to question the spatio-temporal paradoxes of such a claim—we are brought together and yet further pulled apart? In the final and most thorough analysis, we find a fundamental error in the reading of Deleuze and Guattari, especially with regard to schizoanalysis and the body without

organs—one is always already many, multiples, and the internet merely facilitates such a re-cognition, rather than re- and over-determining a singular displacement and confusion. What such a line of thought does is not only always already place us back within the univocal, singular trappings of the dusty philosophical box (under which you must find an answer), but it grossly ignores and/or undermines the very premises of Deleuze and Guattari’s work—that we are always already multiples upon multiples, never ceasing to become(-other), to (further) become rhizomatic and schizoid. It is in this sense that the internet has not isolated me, but has enabled my many selves to shake hands with my many selves. And along the way, we do meet a few partners across the globe in “real time.”

It is in this sense that cyberspace is smooth, and functions as a medium by which we can find our bodies without organs. If “the schizo’s withdrawal to the body without organs” is true enough, then it is no accident—perhaps only (within) a “fault”—that the schizo has potential within the cyber-arena. Ian Buchanan, one of the leading Deleuzian scholars thinks likewise, writing, “This is the Internet’s body without organs: the great and unquestioned presupposition that it is an agent of freedom.” Of course, there is some sarcasm there. Looking at cyberspace or the internet as a purely liberatory, de-territorializing device ignores the fold of Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of the

28 Let us add that, if there was one symptom that Oedipal psychoanalysis axiomatically always had right, it was paranoia: afraid not so much of being castrated, of loving mommy, but of realizing there is no castration to fear, no mommy to love. We are not alone, ever (even though, as Marcel Proust would have it, “each of us are truly alone”). And the issue of subjective, identity multiplicity is not absent in the work of psychoanalysis, especially within the double negative sphere of the unconscious: I am; I am not.; I am…. But the admission of doubles ignores the potential of multiplicity. In other words, perhaps, even in the final analysis, I am not either/or, but rather, this and that, and that and this, and that and, and, and,….

29 Cyberspace also has the capacity for becoming striated. It has the potential for becoming repressive, fascist. We will discuss this further in the next chapter.


31 Ian Buchanan, “Deleuze and the Internet,” Online.
assemblage, especially in (and perhaps only in) the context of capitalism: the potential and possibility of over-coding and re-territorialization is only matched by the potential and possibility of de-coding and de-territorialization. The latter—that of smooth space, of the nomadic journey of the schizoid becoming—is the only guarantee of freedom. And there is no guarantee. To say there is would be much like the issuing of false, yet securing and singularizing, myths: Oedipus, God, Christ, Science. Excess contained, rather than endlessly flowing over. Perhaps capped in a little pill: the Purple Excess to deal with the excess. The schizo refuses medication, as (s)he has no need for it.

*Against Alienation and Authenticity*

What is more alienating than the concept of *alienation*? What is more inauthentic than the concept of *authenticity*? These questions are not merely meant as rhetorical strategies, but rather as serious interrogatives that seek to fundamentally call into question our prevailing notions of self-hood and subjectivity. Of course, it would be faulty to imply that alienation and (in)authenticity can be conveniently conflated; and it would be moreover faulty to assume that these two concepts have set, fixed theoretical histories, that they are univocal in their meanings. By looking deeper into the varied and layered theoretical histories of these concepts, and by keeping in mind our previous discussions concerning not only the primacy of technicity (and its relation to being, memory, history and language), but also the consequential thought of post-structural and deconstructive semiotics, it should not be all too difficult to problematize and destabilize these false and self-imposed conditions.
With regard to alienation, the Nietzschean turn is, in many senses, perhaps the most sober and disciplined. According to Nietzsche, alienation is the result of a slave mentality that results in bad conscience (or guilt): the “slave,” finding herself incapable of effectively orchestrating aggression against the “master,” instead inverts such aggression against herself, causing the formation of guilt. In this sense, alienation is not self-removal or a distantiation of the subject from herself, but rather the process of the self inflicting harm upon the self, or the subject attempting to negate her own subjectivity.\footnote{See: Fredriech Nietzsche’s \textit{The Genealogy of Morality}.} In another instance, Marxism situates alienation within the proletariat worker: the exploited, wage labor proletariat is alienated from her work and activity (and by extension, her very being) on account of the fact that she does not “own” such work and activity (nor the production or products therein), but is rather compensated for them by means of “pay.”\footnote{See Karl Marx’s: \textit{The German Ideology}.} Lastly, psychoanalysis is not free from the fettered complications of alienation, either: in the language of Freudian psychoanalysis, one is alienated by one’s removal from the oceanic, or the womb—that original place of preconscious and precognitive tranquility which we endlessly attempt to return; and in the language of Lacanian psychoanalysis, the mirror-stage enacts a rupture, a splitting, a fragmentation of the self, producing an imaginary conception of the ego-ideal which can never be consummated or completed, especially by very fact of its symbolically inscribed lack.\footnote{See: Sigmund Freud’s \textit{Civilization and Its Discontents} and Jacques Lacan’s \textit{Ecrits}.}

While Capitalism and Schizophrenia is mostly concerned with rethinking and rewriting psychoanalysis, it also has a serious stake in traditional Marxist thought—not only ontologically, but practically (especially in the wake of the failure of May 1968). Not only are labor, class and political economy being reconfigured by the spatio-temporal
consequences of new media technologies in general, the internet in particular (which we will cover in chapter 3), but the ontological notion of “alienation” is highlighted by the inauguration of such technologies. The dystopic phobia of new media technologies is made possible by Marxist thought (which, to be candid and fair, is an extension of Hegelian thought), not only in the socio-political sense, but in the ontological sense: we are being alienated, from each other and ourselves. As unfortunate as the concept of alienation may be, at least Nietzsche, Freud and Lacan have some narrative to unpack such an ontological claim (whether it be an inversion of aggression or a psychical, and spatial, removal), while Marx, in his supposed strict materialism, actually returns to a certain ideology and metaphysics which he purportedly disavows.

Marx’s concept of alienation undergoes stages: man is alienated from that which he produces; man is thus alienated temporally, in that he does not “own” the time spent producing that which is not his; man is therefore reified; thus, man is not only alienated from his fellow “man,” as well as the very concept of “man,” but also alienated from himself. The initial germ of Marx’s “alienation” is found in his “Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844,” and which spreads, rather infectiously, throughout the rest of his work. But the final analysis of Marx’s “alienation” presupposes an un-alienated ontological whole; it pre-conditions our being, as such, as moving from and into a univocal, singular center. Marx notes that, “In alienating nature from man, man from himself, his own active function, his life activity, alienated labor also alienates the species from him; it makes species-life the means of individual life.”35 But this quest to be scientific is nothing more than an ontological mishap. It is only by presupposing a certain

ontological condition of being—a centered, univocal species of sorts—that he is able to arrive at the conclusion of the alienated man. And this germ(ination) has been infectious, viral.

And what a better virus than man—without! Hegel took Marx from behind as much as Marx attempted to take Hegel from behind: at the end of the day, there is a solidified “(hu)man” that is exceptional and which needs historical conditioning. But such is not, and must not, be the case, especially in the strictest of materialist and vitalistic terms. The ontological premises of alienation have given birth to a mutant variety of negative and expedient claims regarding man and his relationship to technology: in the words of Paul Virilio, technology is “kept afar, or beyond our grasp,” to such an extent that we are only the “powerless witness;” or, under Jamesonian logic, “nothing can change any longer.” These assumptions—as (pro-)humanist as they intend to be—are actually built upon a necessarily anti-humanist logic. What these lines of thinking do, is remove man from technology and temporality (the two being one in the same); they create a false opposition between man and technicity. Not only are Virilio and Jameson not ancient Greeks, but their techno-dystopia narrative reads as though the Terminator actually killed John Connor’s mother. It is technology, in the most fundamental sense, that opened the space for man, temporality, history. Thus, man, time and technology cannot be in diametrical opposition. To this end, to fear spatio-temporal shifts, especially as initiated by technology, is to fear ourselves, and such a phobia is only being exacerbated by digitality and new media technologies.

The Platonic discourse concerning technology is extensively found in Heidegger and Hegel, Marx and psychoanalysis, Virilio and Jameson—but technology is not external to us. It is the very exaction of techne that internalizes and makes possible our ontological constitution, the very splitting that renders internal and external possible in the first instance. To answer Plato: writing is not a perversion of speech anymore than speech is a bastardization of our Truth and Form. To be lost in history is to be lost in language, which is to be lost within and amongst ourselves, as all these terms are inherently and reflexively technological. New media technologies in general, the internet in particular, have made this clear: a fear of technology is a fear of the false singular self. Not only are we inherently technological, but such a technicity is multiplicative, as demonstrated by the primacy of desire and language. “I am” is only the myth afforded by “to become.”

To become(-other) is compounded by the internet, and as an endlessly recombinative “other,” as an endlessly multiplicative desiring-machine (understood as such via language and the multiplicity therein), we are not what we are not. We are more: this and that and that and this and [……]. The notion of the authentic or un-alienated self is the fictive eternal return—eternal only because of its fiction. We can only conceptualize authenticity and un-alienation because such does not exist outside of concept. Such is the grammatical imperative of our ontology, “and:” we and we, us and us, continually and recursively. On the internet, we cannot only be a dog, but many dogs. Such is our implicit bark.

Perhaps more difficult—or at least more problematic—is the concept of (in)authenticity. The debate concerning (in)authenticity is not only squarely rooted within
ontological discourse (especially, in the contemporary and, dare we say, posthuman moment of digitality and cyber-immersion) but also in aesthetics. To this end, Walter Benjamin’s piece, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” serves as a useful piece from which to find our point of departure. For example, he notes: “Since the eye perceives more swiftly than the hand can draw, the process of pictorial reproduction was accelerated so enormously that it could keep pace with speech.” Such begs one to ask, in the most historio-materialist sense, why one ought to privilege “art” over “speech.” Thus, even in the formative portions of Benjamin’s critique, one is forced to wonder whether or not Benjamin every had any real concept of the technicity that produces, and is derivative of, our very being. In other words, the “gap” (or, to use the language of Lacanian psychoanalysis, the “lack”) which art seeks to fill only fulfills it in the sense of fulfilling the promise of such a “gap,” of such a “lack.”

Of course, Benjamin goes on and on, about the concern for the authentic; about the perversion and subversion of the aura; of the potential of film. However, it is never clear what he means to say: should we embrace the “authentic” portrait in its mythical rain-dance of desire-cum-cathected, and thus discard the superfluous, and “inauthentic,” copy-residuals; or should we embrace the “inauthentic” copy-residuals—those pesky reproductions of, let us say, the Mona Lisa—insofar as they enable every man to apprehend such (reproduced) beauty? To both questions, Benjamin would likely say “yes, yes,” and “no, no,” as well as any combination between.

This is due, in fact, to one of the most commonly over-looked passages in his article: “Precisely because authenticity is not reproducible, the intensive penetration of

---

certain (mechanical) processes of reproduction was instrumental in differentiating and grading authenticity."38 In other words, precisely because of this line of logic (per our previous discussion concerning language, technicity and being), there is no “authentic.” While the “inauthentic” inaugurates the meaning of the “authentic,” as such, such meaning does not come to mean without language. In short, we cannot “express” our “desire,” without the potential of such “desire” repressing itself. That is, by the very technicity which brings meaning to our being, we are always already distaniated from ourselves; that is, we are always already alienated. That is, there is no “aura,” no “authentic,” at least not in the essential sense.

But what is authentic? *We* have always been machines. This is part of the reason why the concepts of alienation and (in)authenticity are so self-alienating and self-inauthenticating: we are inherently technical (via the introduction of memory and history, by way of language, which inaugurates our very meaning), by virtue of our being able to continue our existence, which necessitates exchange (i.e., at the least, communicative exchange and sexual reproduction). Thus, our very being is predicated upon, and derivative of, a certain and definitive distantiation, and any gesture towards a some-thing outside of ourselves that runs counter to our essentialness is inherently problematic. There is no god to whom we can thank for the cyborg revelation: the boundary between organic and created is fictive. The Heideggerian notion that Dasein is a being-towards-death is to introduce the ability of Dasein’s capability of becoming-other: the ability to recognize one’s own negation and erasure is to—lest we forget—also include the inevitable middle term: becoming-other. The logic of capitalism long ago recognized and exploited the inherent machinery of the human and, in the face of such aggression, we

38 Ibid., 243, fn., 2.
debate whether or not we are actually technical, machinic subjects/objects, rather than looking for ways to contradict such logic with such inherent technicity and machinery (as the lesson of Marx should provide).

We are always already machines, desiring-machines, at least once removed: as Deleuze and Guattari would note, *we eat, we shit, we fuck*. Most importantly, our machinery runs on the cathexis of desire. How our “bodies” might be conjoined with, or superseded by, “technological machines” is thus a mute point; what is the point is how we direct our desiring-machine(s). It is no longer a question to those well-versed in Marxist thought (be it Benjamin or otherwise) as to whether or not class struggles exist, or whether or not the state has been subsumed by the logic of capitalism, or whether or not we are repressed, oppressed, exploited peoples. Rather, the question is to seek how to, finally, disengage the grip the logic of capitalism has on our desire—the most primary sense of our becoming. Our shift towards intellectual and affective labor, towards posthuman subjects—these cannot be viewed as accidents. These are the legitimate enterprise of capitalism, as well as its contradictions. It is only by ceasing to deny these shifts (by uprooting ourselves out of the old guard of Marxism, much as Marx did in the way of Hegelian thought), that we begin to produce real, rhizomatic movement (which we will discuss further in Chapter 3).

*The Primacy of Desire: Desiring-Machines*

Desire is primary, and desire is a technology: desiring-machines. Yet “desire,” articulated as such, is an extension of the technology of language, which is also primary: “I am,” “I want” or “I desire” is not possible without such an iteration, and such an
iteration is not possible without the impetus of desire. Desire is not only that which makes (other) technologies possible, it is a technology—eating and subsequent shitting; plugging in and fucking, reproducing; mouth to breast, lactating. We are desiring-machines, and our machinic desire is endlessly plural: we and we and we and…. In other words, I: we, with the false “I” only being rendered imaginable via the technicity of language.

The connection—or disconnection, depending on which theory one applies—between ontology and technology is historically extensive, and complicated at nearly every turn. With regard to the Heideggarian turn, we find an interesting intersection: in one direction, there is the claim that language is primary and marks “man,” as such; in the other direction, there is the claim that Dasein, in Dasein’s self-conscious closure of being-there (being-in-the-world), is necessarily removed from tools and technology. Following the manner in which we have been discussing ontology, language and technology, in the first analysis Heidegger seems to be constructing a paradox at best, a contradiction at worst. In the second analysis, we find that Dasein’s Being-in-the-world is necessarily a constitutive conjunction—neither Dasein’s Being nor in-the-world alone form a proper analytic of Dasein. Dasein’s self-referential recognition that “Dasein exists[, that] Dasein is an entity which in each case I myself am,” Dasein’s moment of realization of Dasein (of both Being and in-the-world—Being-in-the-world, and as Heidegger later explains, the subsequent fault of Being-towards-death) necessitates language-not-as-tool or technology, but language as co-extensive and co-constitutive with the proper apprehension of Being and in-the-world, as that which opens up a self-
consciousness of Dasein’s Being-in-the-world. Thus, in the final analysis, language neither precedes Being nor is it discovered in-the-world, as other objects and tools are, but is rather that which marks the possibility of recognizing Being and the world, of Being-in-the-world.

In order to properly understand some of Deleuze and Guattari’s more salient points in Capitalism and Schizophrenia, especially before departing into the nuanced complications of new media, it is important to understand the Heideggerian apprehension of language and technology. In a rather vulgar materialism, Heidegger notes that Things—or, better yet, tools or equipment—are those which are found ready-to-hand, their meaning as tools or Deleuze and Guattari’s equipment being revealed by their function (i.e., “the hammering itself uncovers the specific ‘manipulability’ [Heandlichkeit] of the hammer”). What is problematic—both for this work and for —is that, by declaring that the “hammer” becomes meaningful as a “tool” through the act of

40 It is important to note here that while we are attempting to argue that there are inherently technological, machinic qualities to Dasein (especially as found in the primacy of language, which opens up punctuated temporality—and, thus, history—and makes possible Dasein’s Being-towards-death) we are not attempting to completely flatten subjectivity, to conflate and make symmetrical becoming and the machine (as it is often understood). Just as a bicycle is different from a combustible engine is different from a computer is different from an atomic bomb, the “human” is, likewise, different from all of these. Similar to all is the property of machinic technology.

Admittedly, this is a delicate and precarious line on which to balance. Dorothea Olkowski makes clear that Deleuze and Guattari’s model of dynamic evolution “underscores the difficulty if not impossibility of distinguishing object and world or subject and object” (Deleuze Studies, Vol. 5, No. 1, 127). This difficulty has been extended by actor-network theorists, most notably Bruno Latour (who once wanted to call such theory, actant-rhizome-ontology), who finds the relegation of objects as static, and which are only meaningful by way of our subjective apprehension unacceptable. And yet, again, there seems to be little point in outright dismissing the concept of “quality” (for which, again, we are very much indebted to Heidegger). Perhaps one of the best representations of the difference between the robotic and the “human” is found in the film Terminator 2, when the Terminator does not understand why John Connor cries. It is in this bonding moment of dialogue that Connor explains the concepts of emotional grief, loss and the frustration of the recognition of death. There is, indeed, something machinic about the process of crying, vested within the technologies of the eyes, but such a machinic technology is lost on the robotic Terminator. Nonetheless, this is merely a difference in quality.

41 Ibid., 98. It is here that we perhaps also implicitly encounter Heidegger’s claim that the essence of technology is not technology. In other words, technology only becomes such through our apprehension and phenomenological use of it and interaction with it. Moreover, it is important to note that central to Heidegger’s concept of technology is that of movement and proximity.
“hammering,” is to not only place an emphasis on movement and proximity, but to privilege language as something beyond a primary technology. Thus, language, according to Heidegger, is not a technology because of a fundamental split between the ontological constitution of Dasein and the world out there: the former constitutes and is constituted by language, the latter is meaningfully opened up by such. The division, then, becomes less of one concerned with primacy, and more of one concerned with essence; it is an ontico-verbal difference: Being and becoming(-other).

This ontological difference in thought between Heidegger and Deleuze and Guattari and its relation to technology, is also a spatio-temporal one. It has very much to do with proximity and movement, with the concepts of with-in and with-out, of division, change and the potentiality therein. Deleuze and Guattari find technology and machinery as much of and within ourselves as they find it outside of ourselves—and they find such a function within the primacy of desire. Just as a “hammer” becomes a meaningful tool through its “hammering” (as well as the language which initially opens up such a meaningful possibility in the first instance), a “mouth” becomes a meaningful tool through its “sucking” of a breast. In both cases, there is the primary necessity of desire. To desire to hammer, to suck: such is the true promise of phenomenology.

In this sense, “everything is a machine;” our “desiring-machines [are each] one machine…always coupled with another”—and another, and another, and.  

42 The endless connectivity of desire is found within its desiring-machinery, with such endless plugging in making the schizoid promise of becoming(-other) possible. The material connections of and within our bodies are extended by other technologies, also driven by the primacy

of desire, whether it be the schizophrenic nature of Ronell’s telephone or the logging on
to the internet and the becoming(-other) of an e-persona or producing-e-identity. In
contrast to Heidegger’s concept of tools and technology, Deleuze and Guattari’s desiring-
machines are not interested in the question of either inside (or ontologically within) or
outside (proximally in-the-world). Such a false dichotomy is dissolved by the endless
connections of desiring-machinery: I am hungry; I put food into my mouth; my machinic
intestines digest the food; I desire to shit, and I do, pleasurably. Desiring-machines
demonstrate, in the first and last instance, that technology is, and never has been, an
“either/or question,” but a positivity of “and.”

And yet, Deleuze and Guattari are concerned with presence/absence (as it relates
to desire and desiring-machines), as was Heidegger.43 How else could one approach the
notion of the ideal (decoded, deterritorialized) desiring-machine—the body without
organs? The spatio-temporal conditions of the internet allow for desire to cathect and
counter-cathect in a decoding, deterritorializing, asignifying manner has been hitherto
unwitnessed. The body without organs as a body-in-absence, as “the body without an
image” is possible via the internet: beyond the telephone line which peculiarly “holds
together what it separates” and connects by disrupting, cyber-space is more of a non-
linear web that envelops, opening up the possibility of desire to become(-other).44 The
multiplicative potential of desire and the endless production of becoming(-other) fulfills a
unique goal of Deleuze and Guattari: “introducing desire into the mechanism, and

43 Martin Heidegger notes in Being and Time that, “we not only come up against unusable things within
what is ready-to-hand already: we also find things which are missing—which not only are not ‘handy’
[‘handlich’] but are not ‘to hand’ [‘zur Hand’] at all.
44 Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, Anti-Oedipus (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985), 8;
introducing production into desire.”45 In other words, “schizo has no principles: he is something only by being something else”—and the internet facilitates such an ontological quest.46 If you do not believe me, ask my mutant, hermaphroditic, anthropomorphic Second Life self.

The primacy of desire is found in the technological apparatus of desiring-machinery, which is multiplicatively extended by new media technologies. Even in one of the most fundamental examples, our desire to see what is behind us, what is absent, is fulfilled by the technique of the dorsal turn.47 Tools are not out there and rendered such by our productive apprehension of such; they are within us, in both our language and desire. The articulation and function of “desiring-machines.”

46 Ibid., 87.
47 See: David Wills’ Dorsality.
A Slightly Lewd Interlude:

Your Body and Digitality

*Anus*: Milan Kundera makes clear that, *If shit is unacceptable, then human beings are unacceptable.*¹ This is true, and yet Freudian psychoanalysis finds a means to essentially disfigure such an otherwise organic relationship, to invert an otherwise natural stasis so

---

¹ Milan Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being.*
as to naturalize a general, psychical discontentment. As Norman O. Brown writes: “The whole problem of the human body, as well as the whole problem of living and dying, is involved in sublimation; and yet psychoanalysis inexorably insists that there is a special connection between sublimation and anality.”2 Thus, similar to Oedipal triangulation, Freudian psychoanalysis creates a cultural problem concerning anality so as to provide a solution for another problem, neurosis. The logic of this extends itself: “the real point is that property remains excremental, and is known to be excremental in our secret heart, the unconscious.”3 Here we find the totalizing entrapment of Freudian psychoanalytic anality: since it is not directed towards the genital region, gratification in or of the anus is clinically fetishistic; desire for property, money, capital is the mere sublimation of a repressed desire for excrement and anality. Brown’s claim that modern, capitalist history is driven by neurosis is correct only in the most circular logic: insofar as anality symbolically circumscribes the logic of capitalism and the circulation of capital (excess, excrement, shit) creates a problematic of which there are only a few dire, revolutionary possibilities of escape: psychosis or schizophrenia. And in the context of Freudian psychoanalysis, if such occur one is in need of even more therapy. It is in this short example of the anus that we find Deleuze and Guattari’s claim that psychoanalysis and capitalism shake filthy (lucre-intensive) hands.4

But what of the schizoid anus? Judge Schreber knows: it is a solar plexus, full of sun-beams. Such is the unfortunate tragedy of Schreber’s schizoid becoming: “[his] destiny was not merely that of being sodomized, while still alive, by the rays from

---

2 Norman O. Brown, Life Against Death (Wesleyan, 1985), 292.
3 Ibid., 293.
4 Is this not, in many respects, the punch of the punch-line of Portnoy’s Complaint: the therapy has yet to begin, even after it has seemingly ended? There is always more therapy needed, more money to be made.
heaven, but also that of being posthumously oedipalized by Freud.” Schreber’s asshole was fine—in fact, more than fine—until Freud got ahold of it.

We find ourselves at a similar cross-road, plugging into the modem-anus, and having our modem-anus plugged; clenching our own modem-anus, we are afraid of both a digital penetration and/or a defecation of something we believe is a part of us. If the phallus ever were culturally and symbolically signified, and if it is truly coupled with the threat of castration (or of an always already “lack”), then the phallus has at least become reflexive with the symbolic and also mythical “human.” Thus, there is a need for a cleansing: releasing our tightly-sealed modem-anuses and allowing all such repressive mythology to escape once and for all.

After such, we should all Facebook friend Judge Schreber—and his cosmic asshole!

**Metabolic and Psychological Addiction:** The ability for desire to repress desire is seen in the everyday logic of “addiction:” drug addiction, alcohol addiction, caffeine addiction, sex addiction, porn addiction, ad nauseum. Institutional discourse in general, the discourse of psychology in particular, have made significant strides since Foucault’s *History of Sexuality*, now finding a way in which to mark the very practice of sex as not only clinical, but addictive. Now, not only do regulatory institutions (schools, churches, doctor’s offices) endlessly calculate and monitor sexuality (ironically, they want to go on and on about that which they also wish to regulate, if not repress), but if you have too

---

5 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press), 57.
6 The modem-anus: full of pixels and (un)wanted connections. But more to the point: what is to be considered here is the theory that the child resists shitting into a toilet because they feel as though she is losing a part of herself. The fecal phallus. In other words, one of the often-cited cautions of “posthumanism” is found in the very term: our modem-anuses our shitting away our “humanity.”
much sex, then there are also places—support group meetings, medications, the chair of the psychoanalyst. In short, if one’s desire for, and consumption of, sex exceeds itself, then one can desire and consume “treatment” for such consumption. Therein lies the potential of desire to repress desire. And what a brilliant enterprise in which psychoanalysis and the logic of capitalism have partnered: addiction treatment as commodity for the over-consumption of commodities.

It should be seen as no accident that the discourse and rhetoric of addiction has reached a certain apex in the wake of the internet explosion. With all the potentiality of deterritorialization and the smoothing of space that the internet has to offer, there comes with that the reterritorialization and striating of space. Not only has the internet ushered in new clinical dysfunctions (namely, “porn addiction,” which is freely available on the internet, but also “internet addiction” in and of itself), but it opened the floodgates for marketing possibilities. On the internet, not only can you freely be a dog, so to speak, but you can advertise depression, at an expense close to free (for pharmaceutical companies). In many respects, then, instead of going onto the couch to talk about mommy and daddy in relation to such supposed addictions, such addictions (and their solutions) are now marketed in the format of a simple pill. In other words, not only is the internet slowly choking the life out of television (which killed the radio star), but is allowing for capital-intensive psychology to kill the Oedipal star. The new internet is replacing poor Oedipus with a purple pill.

7 Foucault’s not-so-thinly-veiled attack on psychoanalysis with regard to the discourse-formation of sexuality is witnessing new possibilities: we have effectively moved from the psychoanalytic theory and discourse concerning sexuality to the clinical and medical treatment of too much sexuality. What a truly fortunate enterprise!

8 While marketing depression and subsequent medication is perhaps now seen largely as a television crusade, it is no coincidence that it came on the heels of the successes of even less reputable campaigns: spam e-mails, internet cookies and web banners (advertisements) that sold generic and herbal Viagra, penis enlargement pills, herbal ecstasy (a rather expensive cocktail of various herbs and roots, and B vitamins).
Mouth: Like the mouth that moves and speaks when picking up the phone receiver, but the phone which keeps ringing, we find a new sense of linguistic immediacy and presence/absence. Perhaps Plato’s distrust of writing as nothing more than a bastardization of the true (and truthiness of the) immediacy of speech (neatly elaborated upon by Derrida’s deconstruction, delay and deferral, chains of signification, etc.) was slightly alleviated with the advent of the telephone. No more letters; the telephone (as well as live television) enabled us to speak in a temporal immediacy with a certain spatial absence. The mouth became vital, once again. More letters; the internet allows for a temporal immediacy, as well as a spatial absence, but in the figure of writing, once again. E-mails, for example, are sent and “received” practically immediately, and in the spatial absence of the sender, but they are not truly “received” (in the sense of reception) until the receiver chooses to open and read them. Even instant messenger—which supposedly operates in “real time”—is not of the same temporal variety as speech itself. Thus, we have the inevitable and necessary return to Derrida, as well as the return of Plato’s linguistic sadness.

But what are we to make of this insistence on speech and the mouth which utters it? Is the concept of “voice,” for example, something confined and quarantined to the area of the mouth? Do we not speak of developing a “voice” in writing? Besides, the days of e-mails, chat rooms and instant messaging are being subsumed by new online technologies—skype, video messenger and webcams, for example—which reintroduce our perhaps fundamental longing for facial recognition and the true immediacy of speech itself. We find this in linguistic online phenomenon of emoticons: : ) ; ) : p. In such we
find markings which, ideographically, attempt to replicate mouth gestures. The mouth, even when “online,” is inescapable, whether via new technologies such as Skype, or through symbols (which are surely writing as well). The Ideal Body-Without-Organs (a body-in-absence, a body without an image) aside, the mouth is still a fundamental part of our desiring-machinery, especially with regard to speech.

Genitals: While in the internet, as a true Harawayian cyborg, we have no genitals (no natural sex, no necessary gender); while on the internet, we of course have genitals (otherwise, of what reason the proliferation of online pornography?). Cyborganic androgyny aside, and to return to Deleuze and Guattari, Zizek contends that Deleuze “was practicing fisting: is fist-fucking not the sexual invention of the twentieth century, the first model of postsexual eroticism and pleasure? It is no longer genitalized but focused on the penetration of the surface, with the role of the phallus being taken over by the hand, the autonomized partial object par excellence.”9 There is some truth in this, in both cultural form and structure, especially in online culture. With the proliferation of pornography, as facilitated by the internet, fellatio is quite passé, and even a Bataille narrative would probably not shock. Not only are we structurally and formally becoming gender-neuter(al)ized as cyborganic specimens, but the pornographic contents of cyber-space are following suit. Cyber-space is littered with what the strictest of Lutherans would not even be able to enunciate as “garbage.” But one man’s garbage is another man’s treasure: the increasingly hyperbolic and exaggerated nature of pornography, especially as opened up by the internet, is forcing a reexamination of not only the dominant, hetero-normative understanding of genitals, but of sexual engagement in

---

general. The online pornographic site, Freak Fuckers, for example, makes campy light of our over-determination of the genitals by creating figures such as a man with penises for hands, a woman with labias for lips, and a woman whose entire abdomen is a giant vagina. Other online pornographic production sites, such as Insane Cock Bruthas and Monsters of Cock, destabilize the myth of the African American penis by over-exaggerating it—men with obviously faux-penises that extend well beyond a foot long. Thus, while Zizek, being a true-blue Lacanian scholar, would see fist-fucking as a sublimated phallus, as a fetishistic substitute gratification, fist-fucking is virtually co-inaugurated with internet pornography, and all of the campy ways in which it is deterritorializing hetero-normative inscribed genitals, as well as the racial, gender and sexual connotations that come with it. It is not either the phallus, or the fist, or something else; it is an endless possibility of and, and, and: the phallus and the fist and the stomach and the plastic and the otherwise false and. . . . It is not that the phallus is now the fist, but that the becoming(-other) multiplicative sexualities in cyberspace are the phallus, and the fist, and the. . . .

*Body-without-Organs:* To say that the internet is a body without organs is to grossly misunderstand and misrepresent Deleuze and Guattari’s line of thought. To even say that the internet is becoming a body without organs is equally suspect. However, to say that the internet has the potential—in its possibility for deterritorialization, decoding, smooth space, schizoid enabling, rhizomatic movement, etc.—for becoming a body without organs is perhaps as close and optimistic as we can get. Not only do we have some way to go in order to achieve that fully liberated, asignified body without image—as the
above examples illustrate—but cyberspace (in its very deterritorializing, decoding, smoothing potential) likewise carries the possibility for reterritorialization, re- and over-coding, the striating of space. Such is the dialectical ebb and flow of the assemblage, and this will be covered more extensively in the next chapter.

Even the becoming of a body-without-organs (fully decoded, deterritorialized body-without-image) opens up and presents, in such a movement, the potential for an over-coding and reterritorialization that perhaps surpasses and exceeds what we find with our image-body. Have we not seen this in the film, *Surrogate*, where given the choice to have an image-body of one’s desire, everyone chooses to look the same? Are we not already on this path considering the direction of plastic surgery? Have we no real monsters?
Chapter 3:

Towards a New Political Economy: The Possibilities and Consequences of New Media Technologies and Posthuman Science

“Dear Mr. Bukowski: don’t you write about politics or world affairs?”
M.K

“Dear M.K:

“What for? Like, what’s new? — everybody knows the
is burning.”

—Charles Bukowski, “Politics is Like Trying to Screw a Cat in the Ass”

“Petition the Lord with prayer. *Petition the Lord with prayer*. Petition the Lord with prayer? You cannot petition the Lord with prayer!”

—Jim Morrison

First and foremost, it is important to remember that Deleuze and Guattari’s *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* project was meant to be not only a conceptual tool-box for which to fundamentally rethink our notions of desire and revolution, but also a project of ethics and new political economy and ecology. Written largely in response to the failure of the May ’68 revolution, the project is suppose to exceed not only psychoanalysis and traditional Marxist thought (and their evident failures in securing radical change), but to also exceed pure philosophy in general, as it had hitherto been understood.¹ The tragedy of May ’68—not only in the deaths, subsequent economic despair and culturo-political depression, but also in the fact that the left essentially sold out the left—necessitated a radical reformulation of revolutionary thought. To have truly new bodies and new souls

¹ When speaking of pure philosophy, we are not only speaking of pure philosophy as it is ordinarily understood, but also of pure philosophy within the context of thought in general, including science. For example, Henri Bergson’s *Creative Evolution* could be considered both pure philosophy and a science. It depends upon reception. This is one of the disciplinary faults which D&G attempted to expose: that to separate pure philosophy from the other disciplines was the impurify philosophy. We will touch upon this later with regard to Jean-Francois Lyotard’s *Postmodern Condition*. 
required a rethinking of bodies and souls: instead of labor and capital, desire; instead of psychoanalysis, schizoanalysis; instead of Marxist dialectics, assemblages; instead of labor movement centrality and collectivity, rhizomatic dispersal and attribution, etc. For Deleuze and Guattari, it was not a matter of whether or not we could fix what was broken; it was a matter of the question as to why we should try to repair, fix or reform it in the first place. Why not build an entirely new machine (perhaps beginning with the premise of desiring-machines)?

New media technologies, particularly the internet, have forced a new spatio-temporal turn which have complicated and problematized all of these concepts (as has been previously discussed). Issues such as labor, gender and the body are being reconfigured via the relationship between online spatio-temporality and late capitalism. And the question of politics and ethics are being resituated by a new scientific paradigm and informatics of knowledge, that needs not an indictment nor a celebratory parade, but a close analysis. However, understanding that language is not only a technology, but primary, and that science is not just an external technology, but is built upon language games; and understanding that desire is also a primary technology, we receive a choice, not an ultimatum: a continued reliance upon a very technicity which we also allow to reterritorialize and over-code our very being; or, a grasping of technicity which could account for a certain deterritorialization and de-coding, the beginning roots of real rhizomatic movement and schizoid becoming.

_The New Politico-Theological Cancer: Techno-Phobia_
Following our line of logic that language and desire are primary, and that both are technics, it should be clearly understood that a “manifest” fear of technology is merely the “latent” fear of ourselves. David Wills notes that technology comes from behind us, and such could not be more true: not only does technology come from behind us in the sense of historicity (always already informing our being, our conception and meaning of ourselves, and our ability to “forget” that which we necessarily must “remember”), but such a behind look towards technology—which is, to be exact, ourselves—is a fear and paranoia. For example, the looking over one’s shoulder. Therefore, such a fear and paranoia is directed not only against technology, but against us, through our primary capability of being able to turn our bodies in technique. To this end, when speaking of technology, as such, we are not only turning around, in fear paranoia and fear, to look at (ironically, perhaps) ourselves, but the “other:” “if we are to allow that other to be the absolute other, the foreigner, then we might more faithfully conceive of the other as coming from behind.”

To this end, technology is the other, which is the capable (and culpable) technique of ourselves. Thus, to fear technology is to always already fear ourselves (as produced as others, and as only possible through the mechanism of technology); and to fear alienation and inauthenticity is to subscribe to a line of theological that still always finds its remainder in excess, i.e., technology.

Thus, our turn is the eternal return: just as “the human is therefore receiving a definition from a technologization of the body, in a becoming-prosthesis or a becoming-dorsal,” (9), the “human” is also programmed by the technologies which make such a term possible: technology (the iteration of such makes such possible), and thus, fear and paranoia (looking around one’s shoulder). The fear of the “other” is, by its technical

---

2 David Wills, *Dorsality* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 46.
primacy, a fear of ourselves. Wills goes on to note, then, that “for beyond the simplistic
oppositions between text and word, thinking and acting, intellectual and political
activity,” there still exists difference. And how could it not: by our very act of turning
around, we qualify the “other,” as such, and an “inability” to always turn around creates a
fear, a paranoia, which always comes from behind. To be sure, technology makes
apparent what does not appear; that is, our ability to rationally qualify what cannot be
seen, i.e., what is unseen, is related to technology qua a turing-around.

Indeed, there has been a fascination with time, space and being which has “always
been with respect to technology, behind, turned about, late, and bewildered, but
nevertheless constrained, indeed shackled there, like Prometheus, bound from behind to
the time of the Titans.”3 To frame this in phenomenological terms, “the essence of our
Being thus reads as coextensive with [and revealed by] the essence of technology.”4 That
is, if we are to take the notion of being seriously, then we must understand that such
difference arises through the complication of technique, a turning around. In other words,
one of our most primary natures is orchestrated by movement, the turn; and, in this sense,
as well in the sense of language which brings such turning to meaning, we are always
already technical. We are machines.

But have not Deleuze and Guattari already demonstrated that we are machines,
that we are always already desiring-machines? The primary technicity of our being (in
more appropriate terms, becoming) makes such the case: the technique of language
renders us meaningful; however, our technical being is situated first and foremost within
the essence of desire. Desire is what engages our most primary and fundamental actions:

---

3 Ibid., 16.
4 Ibid., 27.
eating, shitting, fucking, etc. To this end, we find a phenomenological rearticulation of language: though language endows use with a meaning, it is only desire that forces the accident of the technicity of language (and thus memory, history). That is, while there is a primacy to language in the sense that it creates the inauguration of meaning, such meaning-formation will not sustain itself without the primacy of desire. In other words, the “event” of language which determines any sense of being, of becoming, is only endlessly maintained, redoubled and reproduced through our desire (a concept whose existence, nonetheless, is in great debt to language). While the possibility and promise of our becoming-other is secured in the fold of language, such a fold only finds its maintenance and continuation through the primacy of desire.5

It is desire that advances language, although language—to perhaps answer the initial question and point of departure—is what makes this possible. We can only desire this possibility; and this desire of, and for, possibility is what, both and at once, controls and liberates us. And yet, more often than not, we have cinematically witnessed the dangers of technological over-immersion. In David Cronenberg’s Videodrome and ExistenZ, we see human being taken over by machine, in the true variety of Virilio. We see a sense of technological control that has not been witnessed since The Running Man game show, the truly Total Recall. We have not seen this—and perhaps we never will—but let us suppose the danger is still there, especially as Hayles would have us think. In cyberspace, we run the supposed danger of losing our subjectivity, humanity and embodiment. The cooked question is: why not? Why not destabilize and deterritorialize the “human?” Why not shift the geographies of subjectivity? Why not rethink the concept of the body?

5 See: Deleuze and Guattari’s Anti-Oedipus and A Thousand Plateaus.
That said, technology—whether it be the endless excess of desire, or the constant remainder of language—distills a certain Judeo-Christian ethic, but not in the truly vulgar sense presented by Norman O. Brown. We are finished with retaining the otherwise hated body.

Surplus value can be read not only in the symbol of the monetary—the big $ that results from M-C-M’—but in the exchangeable excess that figures Christ, of God. In Biblical language, our very being is predicated upon such sacrifice; however, such sacrifice is equally predicated upon the primacy of language, which is to say, technology. A reiterative example of this is found in Dante’s *Inferno*: The constant referral to the soul, for example, as being (un)worthy of significance (a mark, a name, an iteration, etc.) indicates that Dante’s conception of the soul is directly linked to technology (insofar as writing, or inscription, is considered a mode of technology). For example, when confronted with The Opportunists in Canto III, the Guide advises the narrator to “not speak of them: look, and pass on.”6 To refuse to name something, as such, is not only to deride it, but to exclude it—it is to render it absent of the worth of signification. It does exist; however, it is not worth acknowledging. In the same Canto, when approaching Charon, the Guide says to him: “Charon, bit back your spleen:/this has been willed where what is willed must be,/and is not yours to ask what it may mean.”7 The emphasis on language and semiotics here is paramount: the meaning and intention of such a performative act is intentionally meant to be lost on Charon. Such is an act of techno-exclusion, force and removal. We find this again in Canto XIII, when a subject-soul, who

---

7 Ibid. 3.91-93.
had committed suicide in his mortal life, tells Dante, “I am one who has no tale to tell: I made myself a gibbet of my own lintel.”

However, the technological act and gesture of naming and signifying is not exclusive to souls; it is also found when Dante refers to “a Great Tower that has no name.” This is interesting, considering the technological schematic of Hell: it is not something purely metaphysical, timeless and/or spaceless; rather, it is a well organized system of layers, levels and passages. The dead can see the future but not the present; The Lady of Permutations works in gears; those who abuse the potential of technicity (as Art, as mimesis of Nature) are cast into one of the deeper levels of Hell. Thus, the asignified nature of the damned is emblematic of an (inevitable) gesture towards technology; and the concept of technology appears to be something deeply invested in the progress of, and towards, God. Technology for Dante, it seems, appears to be something that can reflect and celebrate God (except when done otherwise, as mentioned above), and such technology (even as simple as marking, naming, iterating, narrating, etc.) is removed from those who have been damned.

To this end, religion is not only the impossible possibility of fulfilling our always already lack, but a means by which to inscribe our being with stable, fictive, singular and whole meaning: Being. It is in this fundamental tension between the attempted eternal return to Being (a return to the Garden, to be sure, to recover what was always already lost) and the anxiety regarding becoming that we better understand that the Apple was not just forbidden desire actualized, but the fruit of language. The excesses of our desire, as described by Deleuze and Guattari, bore the excesses of language; and, as such, the

---

8 Ibid., 13.151-152.
9 Ibid., 8.131.
suspended fall of our Being is nothing short of a damned becoming. *(So learn how to quit worrying and love becoming)*. It is, in fact, the logic of original sin that renders God irrelevant, as dead: forever falling from Being (in the transcendental sense the term seems to have always somewhat implied) by way of the excesses of desire and the consequence of the excesses of language, we are forever falling *into* becoming. To be intentionally redundant, the name of this theological game is excess. After all, excess is Christ; it is sin; it is excrement, to be sure, *shit*. The figure of Christ is only a stand-in, then, for the larger configuration of excess, and excessive language (technology): as it is told in Biblical language, God had to sacrifice his only son so as to redeem man. The theological problems of such an injunction make readily apparent the “truth” of such an injunction: Christ christens the excess of language, the excesses of our very being (becoming, desire, etc.). And he does so through his sacrifice. As the great tale goes, He died for our sins (excess of desire; excess of language). Indeed, *my cup spilleth over*: Christ as excess (God’s unfortunate “human” incarnation) forgiving the original sins of excess—excess sacrificed to forgive our original sin of excess. Thus, in Bataille’s terms, he *had* to be sacrificed, brought into immanence and returned to the order of things. This *Sacrifice* takes place every day, and will continue to take place. We have built a (cyber)space that arguably rivals the achievements of the Egyptian pyramids, but will slaves build ours? And if so, what shape will our Moses take, and will he lead us on a nomadic journey that never ends (becoming), or will it merely reach unfortunate apex to be found at www.mountsinai.com?\(^\text{10}\)

\(^{10}\) Do we not find a certain schizoid becoming in the madness of Arthur Rimbaud’s vacation for *A Season in Hell*? Does the magical, poetic journey not begin with the gentle reflection of how—if his memory serves correct—his life was once bountiful, excessive even. And yet, is it not this excess that inevitably leads him towards a rupture, a painful breaking of his Being, an implosive becoming? Is it not in *A Season*
If technology is the endless prosthetic production of excess, or the elusive semiotic, transcendental eternal remainder, then to be God-fearing is to be techno-fearing. We learn from this by sacrificing an otherwise latent concept of God, the manifest Christ, which is always already the excess, excrement, shit. Disgust and self-hatred. The parable is true enough: God sacrificed his only Son so as to save the rest; that is, the latency of God was manifestly sacrificed so as to sustain that false impression of whole salvation. Such begs the question—not if Oedipus is online, but—if Christ is online. Sure, in every self-sacrificing martyr, banging a louder drum of victimization and persecution than the last one. Christ is very much online. Just enter a chatroom and see for yourself.

_Cyber-Gender and the Cyber-Body_

Let us begin with a general contestation: many feminists maintain pointed degree of reservation regarding Deleuze and Guattari. Elizabeth Grosz neatly outlines some of the more resounding concerns and salient points leveled by feminists in response to Deleuze and Guattari’s project:

First, the metaphor of ‘becoming woman’ is a male appropriation of women’s politics, struggles, theories [and] knowledges…. Second, these metaphors not only neutralizes woman’s specificity, but, more insidiously, they also neutralize and thereby mask men’s specificities, interests, and perspectives. Third…Deleuze and Guattari confirm a long historical association between femininity and madness which ignores the sexually specific forms that madness takes. Fourth…Deleuze and Guattari, like other masculinist philosophers, utilize tropes and terms made possible only through women’s exclusion and denigration.…

In addition, it should be added that there is an anxiety towards projects such as this that seemingly neglect the material, corporeal body—the culturally marked body that,

—in Hell that we encounter the true meaning of his declaration that “the only unbearable thing is that nothing is unbearable?”

11 Elizabeth Grosz, _Volatile Bodies_, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, ),163.
regardless of a growing immersion in digital networking, in- and circumscribe women (as well as all marginalized, minoritarian groups) every day. As Aris Mousoutzanis reminds us in his work, “Cybertrauma and Technocultural Shock in Contemporary Culture,” the cyber-rhizome does not displace ideology, nor does it displace the all too real problematic of trauma. And this seeming neglect of the everyday ideologies and historical traumas that situate the material body (even in its cyber-mediation) appears, at first glance, to be an avoidance of the hegemonic constructions that haunt the physical self. To this end, it could be said that not only is the cyber-rhizome, in theory, incapable of liberating the self (or e-becoming), but that it falls into the very trap which it attempts to destabilize: the insidious forms of everyday totalization, the regime of signs, fascism. However, Deleuze and Guattari’s project, as well as this project of cyber-modality, are not attempts to negate the corporeality of the material body any more than projects concerning the corporeality of the material body are attempts to negate the complications and potentials of digital immersion. The cyber-rhizome-becoming-subject is capable of a rearticulation of the self rather than a mere reproduction; that is, immersion in the cyber-rhizome opens up possibility and potential for subjectivity, a becoming(-other). It rethinks the hitherto understood significance of the corporeal body, and presents a spatio-temporal reconfiguration that makes available a radicalizing of identity politics. As David Wills notes, “Phillipe Lacoue-Labarthe defined fascism precisely as ‘the mobilization of the identificatory emotions of the masses,’ and for Deleuze and Guattari, ‘certain assemblages of power require the production of a face…The face is a politics’ that requires another politics of dismantling the face.”

---

13 David Wills, *Dorsality* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 164
cyber-rhizome is capable of producing the paranoiac symptomology—the insidious everyday fascism—which already frames the sub-ject-ivity of what could be considered everyday life; however, the opening up of possibility and potential, the deterritorialization inherent in the cyber-rhizome, makes the converse equally possible for the e-becoming, the cyber-rhizome-sub-ject.

While discussing Deleuze and Guattari, Rosi Braidotti details Grosz’s concerns: “The starting point for most feminist redefinitions of subjectivity is a new form of materialism, one that develops the notion of corporeal materiality by emphasizing the embodied and therefore sexually differentiated structure of the speaking subject.” But “firmly implanted in the tradition of materialism, Haraway reminds us that thinking about the subject amounts to rethinking his/her body.” In other words, the issue of gender lies not in thinking it through and through (which is tantamount to (re)producing the very gender binary which many feminists—perhaps save the French feminists—purportedly disavow), but in truly and necessarily rethinking it. It is the very concept of gender that needs to be dismantled, deterritorialized, not the inequalities of an already over-coded gender binary construction (in which woman stands as the relative negative—*not-man*).

Cyborganics offers us just that. Braidotti, paraphrasing Haraway says:

---

fe
recep
rela

It is within this framework that Haraway proposes a new figuration for feminist subjectivity: the *cyborg*. As a hybrid, or body-machine, the cyborg is a connection-making entity, it is a figure of interrealtionality, tivity, and global communication that deliberately blurs categorical distinctions (human/machine; nature/culture; male/female; oedipal/nonoedipal). It is a way of thinking specificity without falling into tivism.  

---

15 Ibid., 103.
16 Ibid., 105.
Such is the potential of the desiring-machine cyborg in cyberspace: the disintegration of not only the human-machine dichotomy but, consequentially, of the male-female sex/gender distinction. As cyborgs have no mommy-daddy, cyborgs do not have the stain of Oedipus. They are not “human” (in the squarely situated, univocally understood sense); they have no gender.

Spatio-Temporal Conditions of New Media Technologies

Recalling our discussion of Mumford in Chapter 1, the historical introduction of industrialism truly ushered in a new history, a new temporality: time is money. But, as Stiegler would have it, such a temporal orientation has undergone a (spatio-)temporal disorientation. New media technologies have reconfigured and disfigured the previous spatio-temporal standard. Supposedly, the motion of new media technologies are so quick that there is no movement at all: as Fredric Jameson puts it, change is so rapid and frequent that “nothing can change any longer.” But is such a declaration not a temporal singularity in disguise? In a paradoxical manner, Jameson is merely per-verting an otherwise Hegelian notion of time: instead of dialectics and tension being the driving force of history, it is the lack thereof. But both are attempting to essentialize and naturalize temporality. Jameson’s Cultural Turn sounds oddly similar to Fukuyama: we have reached the end of history.

But is this true? Is temporality not marked by difference, by constant change? With regard to spatio-temporality, Deleuze and Guattari are not exclusively claiming that there is an only and “and;” rather, they are noting that we need move away from the

---

either/or dialectical concept of history. In other words, “The new is not ‘merely different,’ but the differenciating.”19 Change (i.e., difference) is what punctuates—and makes meaningful and possible—temporality in the first place. It is not so much a linearity or even a bi-linearity (perhaps as the condition of difference would imply) as it is a concept of omni-linearity. Eternal difference: eternal possibility. Cyberspace is a perhaps a step towards that direction.

And yet we are witnessing a cultural turn—that of digitality and new media, namely the internet. The spatio-temporal conditions of new media technologies have offered up not a seeming liberation, but a mechanism of control disguised and offered up as a seeming “liberation.” For example, working-from-home may seem like a liberatory relief; but it extends the workplace spatially and temporally. No need for the punchcard. You are always in the office. Internet, cell-phones, GPS—you are always reachable, even when you are not—or should not—be in material, proximate reach.

As Arthur Kroker and Michael Weinstein note, regarding new media technologies and their veiled promise, “Marx understood [that]…every technology releases opposing possibilities towards emancipation and domination.”20 To be more specific, Ian Buchanan writes:

As Marx himself emphasized, and Deleuze and Guattari reiterate, this process contains a double movement—on the one hand, it creates new investment opportunities by breaking with convention and entering new territory, which in the early 1990s the internet was (deteritorialization); but on the other hand, as these opportunities peter out and return dwindle it falls back on tradition and resurrects images of the past in an attempt to maintain momentum (reterritorialization).21

---

19 Ian Buchanan, Deleuzisms (Durham: Duke University Press), 183.
21 Ian Buchanan, Deleuze and Guattari’s Anti-Oedipus (New York: Continuum, 2008), 56.
Therefore, it is best to err on the side of caution, restraint and skepticism, and to detail the manner in which new media technologies *reterritorialize* the emerging spatio-temporal configurations of the digital medium. Though not specific to intellectual labor—as many labor forms are becoming subservient to the machinery of digitality—Berardi asks, “Today what does it mean to work? As a general tendency, work is performed according to the same physical patterns: we all sit in front of a screen and move our fingers across a keyboard. We type.”²² In short, the supposed distance achieved is the deceptive conceived: *of course you can work from home, no need to clock in and clock out, but you will always be on call*. The flattening of space fully opens up the temporal entrapment of the worker. Such is truly the soul at work. It is in this sense, capitalism striates cyberspace as much as cyberspace contains the potential for smoothing space.

To this end, Haraway’s warning of an informatics of domination, Virilio’s technophobic fear-machinery of dromology, phenomenological concerns of the “inauthentic” human, Fredric Jameson’s hesitation over the temporal perversion and bastardization of postmodernity, etc., there are ways in which the very spatio-temporal configurations of new media technologies, especially with regard to informatics, are flattening power relations. As duly noted by Bengt Carlsson and Paul Davidsson, in their “Surplus Value in Information Ecosystems,”

The improvements of the exploiter and user groups may result in an arms race. A virus collecting login names may be spread as a program among a group of hacker agents. This will cause the users to install protection software recognizing this type of virus. One improvement by the hacker

---

²² Franco Berardi, *The Soul at Work* (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2009), 74.
agent is retorted by a counterimprovement from the anti-virus agent, so in the long run the hacker will meet a better-protected user.²³

This should not necessarily be read in a militaristic sense, but rather in the sense of how a surplus of information, per the logic of capitalism, actually works against, and in contradiction to, the power relations that are supported by the legs of the very same logic of capitalism. For example, while hackers have normally been understood as those who install spyware, malware bots and viruses into your computers, steal your identity and credit data, they are also those are capable of functioning in a revolutionary manner against the machinery of capitalism. That is, they are also the ones, in the present moment, who install spyware, malware bots and viruses into the databases of Mastercard and Amazon—corporations who refused to continue to lend financial support to Wikileaks. Thus, the “arms race” is not just one that situates one human user-agent (with viruses) against another human user-agent (with virus protection software), but one which again calls forth the contradictions of capitalist logic. It indeed points to the manner in which new media technologies are capable of both, and at once, domination and emancipation. Indeed, we have just recently witnessed the revolutionary possibility of social networking via Facebook in Iran and Egypt.

_Beyond the Horizon: The Unknown Future_

Zizek perhaps asks the most poignant question (rather than professing digital prophecy) concerning the future of the cyber-rhizome and e-becoming:

---

What would the digital virtualization of our lives, the shift of our identity from hardware to software, our change from finite mortals to “undead” virtual entities able to persist indefinitely, migrating from one material support to another—in short: the passage from human to posthuman—mean in Nietzschean terms? Is this posthumanity a version of the eternal return? Is the digital posthuman subject a version (a historical actualization) of the Nietzschean “overman”? Or is this digital version of posthumanity a version of what Nietzsche called the Last Man? What if it is, rather, the point of indistinction of the two, and, as such, a signal of the limitation of Nietzsche’s thought? 24

Important here is Zizek’s closing remark on the dubiously dubbed “posthuman”—the unthinkable possibility of there being no distinction between what is firmly held fast to as “human” and what is approaching synthetically as posthuman. But this lack of distinction predates the concept of not only the posthuman but the human itself; that is, the lack of distinguishing features that mark some-thing as human have always been fictive, invented, and in no way tied to any necessary or fundamental real-ness or Truth. It is no coincidence that, in the same manner in which techno-centric “post- and trans-humanists” are looking for-ward at relationships between the body and technology (tek-niks), others are looking back-ward at already assumed distinctions between human and animal. It is, and always has been, a certain human exceptionalism, stemming from Western Enlightenment thought that has produced far too many myths that, in turn, have legitimated far too many practices and are now, in consequence, producing far too many anxieties and mournings. Though Haraway disagrees with Deleuze and Guattari’s rhizomatic function in full extension (as it is demonstrated in *A Thousand Plateaus*), she commends the text in that “it works so hard to get beyond the Great Divide between humans and other critters to find the rich multiplicities and topologies of a

heterogeneously and nonteleologically connected world.”25 And with such we reach not only the limits of Nietzsche’s thought, but perhaps our own: the loss of our much-coveted concept of human-ness is a loss whose impact cannot be fully predicted or measured. And yet it has always been lost in the rhizome—the rhizome that is part and parcel of the cyber-rhizome—which is where it will continue to be lost, and lost again.

To be sure, the question extends beyond cyberspace into the realm of post- and trans-human sciences in general. Zizek makes good note of this when he writes, “with the prospect of biogenetic interventions opened up by the access to the genome, the species freely changes/redefines itself, its own coordinates; the access to the genome effectively emancipates humankind from the restraints of a finite species, from its enslavement to the ‘selfish genes.’ This emancipation, however, comes at a price.”26 This price has been captured in recent films such as Moon and Never Let Me Go, both which touch upon the startling psychosis and horror of cloning. In the former, an astronaut discovers he is only a clone and that all his memories are artificial, with this “true” self back home with “his” wife. In the latter, children are cloned and raised for organ farming (their bodies plucked and ravaged, their life span not exceeding more than thirty years. Naturally, both films illustrate the scientific benefits of biogenetics for the general socius; however, such benefit comes at the cost of the individual, which is to say, the individual without.

---

25 Donna Haraway, When Species Meet (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 27.

26 Slavoj Zizek, Organs Without Bodies (New York: Routledge, 2003), 123.
Bibliography


Cameron, James. *Avatar*. Film. 1990.


— * Videodrome*. Film. 1983.


— *On the Origin of Geometry*.


Plato. *Nicomachean Ethics*. 


