Rhiz\comics: The Structure, Sign, and Play of Image and Text

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation combines Gregory Ulmer’s post-criticism with multimodal composition resulting in a work that critiques the medium of comics in comics format. Six traditional text chapters forge a theoretical and practical foundation; punctuated within and without by occasional visual interludes and three comic sections. I advocate teaching multimodal composition through comics’ interplay of image and text.
DEDICATION

To Meaghan, *sine qua non.*
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“This book is not a good book.”
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uestes erant tenuissimis filis subtili artificio indissolubili materia perfectae, quas, uti post eadem prodente cognoui, suis manibus ipsa texuerat; quarum speciem, ueluti fumosas imagines solet, caligo quaedam neglectae uetustatis obduxerat. harum in extremo margine Π graecum, in supremo vero Θ legebatur intextum atque inter utrasque litteras in scalarum modum gradus quidam insigniti uidebantur, quibus ab inferiore ad superius elementum esset ascensus.

Her clothing was wrought of the finest thread by subtle workmanship brought to an indivisible piece. This had she woven with her own hands, as I afterwards did learn by her own shewing. Their beauty was somewhat dimmed by the dulness of long neglect, as is seen in the smoke-grimed masks of our ancestors. On the border below was inwoven the symbol Π, on that above was to be read a Θ. And between the two letters there could be marked degrees, by which, as by the rungs of a ladder, ascent might be made from the lower principle to the higher.

Boethius, *Consilatio Philosophiae*, 1. 3-4

As one of the first texts I read in Latin, Boethius’ *Consolatio* has had a great influence on me. I remember when I first saw Lady Philosophy, decked in her homespun robe. In my elementary knowledge, I imagined the two letters as the walls of a ladder, the steps

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1 References to *Discours, Figure* will be abbreviated *DF* and by followed by the page numbers of the original French edition.
moving back and forth from practical to theoretical knowledge. Comparing my own translation to others, I realized I had made an error. Practical knowledge lay at the bottom of the garment, waiting to be overcome by one who would climb toward theoretical knowledge. Philosophy banishes those meretricious muses, calling them scenicas meretriculas (drama queens), knowing that only philosophy can heal the sick. They are far too base for her higher theoretical knowledge.

I still like my first reading better.

Boethius is much more ambivalent than the informed (and oversimplified) reading presents him. Certainly, he loves philosophy, his consolation, but he also loves poetry and muses. The Consolatio’s prosimetrical form offers (in)[decon]struct-able/d binaries, theory and practice, poetry and prose. The steps that join theory and practice are productive (poesis). What Aristotle theorized, Boethius practices: knowing, doing, and making.

I took these lessons with me in choosing a graduate program. I loved theory, but I loved making things out of it. I loved teaching, but too many pedagogues tended to fear either thinking about their work or using it to produce anything of worth; far too often they avoid both. Clemson’s PhD program in Rhetorics, Communication and Information Design stresses theoretical, practical, and productive knowledge. It offered me at once a place to reflect and learn, while forcing me to teach and reflect, to create and again to reflect. It struck me quickly that the warp of the weave was reflection. Shuttling back and forth from production to practice to theory, reflection made it all work.

This dissertation was produced out of a desire to weave these three. In seeking to theorize multimodal composition, I realized a truly multimodal text would be made of knowing and doing. Comics appeared first as a way of discussing the marriage of
words to things, of theory and practice. Whereas much of multimodal composition theory has stressed one medium over another, I found in comics a medium that operated quite self-consciously on the hypostatic union of semantic and sensory that all media always engage. Rather than offering comics as the supreme medium or a meta-medium or a container medium, I find they perform the same basic operations all other media do, but more obviously, more basically.

It is this obviousness that first presented comics to me as an object of study. On every page of a comic, readers are forced to move rapidly, recursively from text to image. Comic readers consciously and unconsciously read images and see text (and vice-versa). The infinite gulf between plastic and print is routinely bridged in a medium rarely considered beautiful or sublime.

Comics also offer a way of performing post-criticism, Greg Ulmer’s term for using the medium to critique the medium. Ulmer advocates working in other media rather than attempting to critique from the outside (text).\(^2\) Previously, I’ve employed this methodology to create video games, comics, and videos. For the dissertation, comics was an obvious choice. As the only print option, it seemed the most likely to be accepted by the graduate school.

Early on in my research Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari provided me an opening and a caveat. The notion of Rhiz|comics transports the rhizome into multimodal composition. I firmly believe that comics and composition need the figure of the rhizome desperately. Deleuze and Guattari present the Rhizome in opposition to the classical tree model of the book (exemplified most notably by Peter Ramus, on whom more later). Rather than constantly subdividing or obeying the species-genus-differentiae model of definition, rhizomic writing moves up, left, east, out, down, through, over, against, \emph{et semper cetera}. My students had spent too long internalizing the five-paragraph essay.

\(^2\) \textit{Il n’ya pas de hors-texte.}
It gave them indigestion. Worse, I had to read their five-paragraph essays. A rhizomic model of writing recognizes what composition teachers have known for so long: writing is recursive, communal, fictional, multiple, nonlinear.

To this list I add that composition is always already multimodal. And here we come to Deleuze and Guattari’s caveat:

Each plateau can be read starting anywhere and can be related to any other plateau. To attain the multiple, one must have a method that effectively constructs it; no typographical cleverness, no lexical agility, no blending or creation of words, no syntactical boldness can substitute for it. In fact, these are more often than not merely mimetic procedures used to disseminate or disperse a unity that is retained in a different dimension for an image-book. Technonarcissism. (*A Thousand Plateaus* 22)

*A Thousand Plateaus* is multimodal only in this philosophical, “always-already” sense I used above. Certainly their text has a sensory nature, appearing as marks on a page or illuminated pixels, but they took very little advantage of this property, almost ignoring it completely. For them, such calls are mere technonarcissism.

Multimodal composition seems to draw technonarcissists. I’m probably the chief offender. I love making my students download the latest open-source software and create something new and exciting. I worry that I sometimes use Photoshop just because I’ve got it. I fight against those who think that writing must always be (or ever was) just words on paper. Technology is neither an end to itself or a destructive force.

Flipping the quote around we get the strange claim that their book may be read out of order, for it is rhizomatic. Jean-François Lyotard made the same claim about his *Discours, figure*. He called such a book, “a good book.” This is not such a book. It has an order. It has rhizomic moments, but it is for the most part a traditional dissertation (albeit
The dissertation is divided into three sections: knowing, doing, and making. Part one, knowing, takes up the first three chapters. Part two, doing, consists of chapters four through six. Making twists across the entirety. Three comic excurses punctuate my overall argument, acting as notes toward a supreme composition (borrowing their titles and much of their title pages from Wallace Stevens’ “Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction”).

With its focus on theory, the first half may feel a bit heavier than the second. Chapter one, “The Structure of Comics: *Ut Poesis Pictura,*” begins by querying Derrida’s infamous *hors-texte.* It offers possible outsides while attempting to avoid the inside/outside binary. In contrast to current definitions of comics, based either on the movement across the gutter or on historical/generic contexts, I decenter comics around the image-text binary. This focal point allows an expansion of comic theory into other media and fields such as hypermedia. The subtitle inverts the typical order, *ut pictura poesis,* showing that the play between image and text is bidirectional.

Excursus one, “It Must Be Abstract,” advocates a return to dialogue in composition. It attempts to show rather than tell the advantages of a multimodal composition always in conversation with itself.

Chapter two, “Signs of the Times: Figure, Discourse,” repeatedly deconstructs the sign searching for a third way between discourse and figure. Close readings provides ample evidence that the categories of image and text refuse to stabilize. Texts are seen and images read. For the first time comics become the objects of criticism, but artifacts traditionally considered texts leap alongside them to complicate the medium.

Chapter three, “Playing It Cool: Reflexive Multimodal Composition,” interrogates possible syntheses for discourse, figure, finally finding the synthesis in the reader. The reader’s participatory synthesis of modes remediates hot media towards cold. The chapter
itself relies heavily on a reader’s synthesis of multiple texts: both the main text and that of three tangents on Greek philosophical terms. Finally, I advocate a reflexive multimodal composition, the focus of the second half of the dissertation.

Splitting the two halves we have the second excursus, “It Must Change.” This comic triangulates a future for composition based on design. The iterative design model (design, test, analyze) offers old ways of new writing and vice versa. From the first excursus’ dualism, we move towards possible third ways.

With the second half, the heady theories of the first half are brought to ground in practical application. In Chapter four, “Restructuring Writing: Hypermedia and Rhiz|Comics,” I begin my analysis of Rhiz|comics, a composition between and across media and modes. Bernard Stiegler offers a complex, nuanced historical understanding of technology and our relationship with it. The history of rhetorical theory can be read as a marginalization of the canon of delivery. Recent technological advances have drastically changed the importance of delivery, yet the academy seems oddly isolated from many of these changes. Ignoring the importance of delivery, students and scholars have become alienated from their labor.

Chapter five, “Plays Well with Others: Rhizcomics in the Classroom,” refocuses my argument on teaching composition, explaining how comic composition teaches electracy and rhizomatic thought in productive ways. Compositionists have recently returned to delivery in document design and multimodal composition. Reflecting on various teaching experiences in my Technical Writing classroom, I show the resistance to new thought and the breakthroughs that Rhiz|comics can offer. In a technical writing course, I assigned Greg Ulmer’s mystery, a project which fuses professional, popular, and personal narratives into a single multimodal text. A student of mine prepared this short comic relating the discovery of structure and equilibrium in his love for records to his
chosen career as a civil engineer. Another student answered the Mystery assignment with a single poster, integrating popular, personal, and professional.

I add to this a final tool for pedagogical self-awareness and for constructing a multimodal classroom: augmented pedagogy. In efforts to teach (with) electacy, I have used Adobe Connect and traditional lecturing to achieve an augmented pedagogy. Adobe Connect offers webinar modalities: chat space, video conferencing, collective notepads, polling devices, and shared control of screens. By using emerging software like Adobe Connect simultaneously with a traditional lecture we create an augmented classroom. Students are free to engage in chat based conversations while the teacher lectures and to engage the material in multiple representations. Augmented Pedagogy brings what I theorized of multimodal composition in the first half together with the delivery of composition.

The final excursus, “It Must Give Pleasure,” calls play back in from recess. The prescription for student narcolepsy is playful pedagogy. We as scholars and teachers have forgotten Sidney’s twofold use of poesy: to instruct and to delight. If we are to join poesis to praxis and theoria, play must provide the glue. In order to enact such play, I practice the comic art of the fugue, a braiding of meaning across various registers.

The critical reader may already have noticed patterns in the organization of the chapters and in their titles. These patterns will continue throughout the dissertation, especially as I multiply modes in subsequent chapters. This weaving across chapters follows the general arthrology first termed by Thierry Groensteen, and most notably used in Vladimir Nabokov’s prosimetrical Pale Fire. In Pale Fire the weaving of prose and poetry, text and commentary, reader and writer, constructs a single object, a multiplexed text. At one point a character seems to discover the text around him and the artist who has constructed it:
But all at once it dawned on me that this
Was the real point, the contrapuntal theme;
Just this: not text, but texture; not the dream
But topsy-turvical coincidence,
Not flimsy nonsense, but a web of sense.
Yes! It sufficed that I in life could find
Some kind of link-and-bobolink, some kind
Of correlated pattern in the game,
Plexed artistry, and something of the same
Pleasure in it as they who played it found. (ll. 806-15)
Plexed artistry, then. There can be no more beautiful term for the reflexive, multimodal composition I advocate. I offer it then as an homage to its greatest practitioner since Boethius. May this work offer you the same pleasure as I found in playing it.

For now, abide these three: *theoria, praxis, poesis*, but the greatest of these is *poesis*. 
the Structure of comics

ut poesis: pictura
I begin then with the eye, and all will spread from the initial insistence. There are two aspects of the eye’s physiology with which I will erect a structure for the playing out of interconnections.

First, there is peripheral vision. The distribution of rods and cones on the back of the eye makes peripheral vision more acute at seeing difference — black and white — and narrow vision more acute at seeing continuity — the range of color. While looking at stars, for example, the periphery is far more able to distinguish these small balls of light against the dark sky, and every stargazer must learn to look near but not directly at.

Second, there is the parallax view. Three dimensional space is a mental construction based upon two conflicting interpretations of the world — those of the left and right eye. Keeping these two figures in mind, I will proceed to discuss comics, through the two lenses of philosophy and art, but also as a center I must walk around. This first chapter then may seem to have little to do with comics per se, but recognize that they are evident in each assertion I make.

If we are to discuss the eye, we must begin with its story’s teller, George Bataille:

The point of view I adopt is one that reveals the coordination of these possibilities. I do not seek to identify them with each other but I endeavor to find the point where they may converge beyond their mutual exclusiveness. (Erotism 7)

Bataille’s figure of sex and death is at once parallax and peripheral, combinatory and superficial. My task concerns concepts no less important to a unified description of being: image and text, coupled with perception and action.

The discipline of optics takes the actual object and the virtual image as its starting-points and shows in what circumstances that object becomes virtual, that image actual, and then how both object and image become either actual or virtual.

(Deleuze, “The Actual and the Virtual” nt. 9)
We are told everywhere that there is a change underway. The digital revolution, the advent of visual literacy, it is called by many names. Sometimes it is a technological renaissance, other times a paradigm shift. I however am interested not in defining this change, in finding its limits, but rather in decentering it, both laying down and (re)moving its center. As may seem obvious, the center lies in the middle, between; not with a finis on each side, the limits waiting to be defined, but between other, older centers.

I will choose two centers and watch them move: visual and verbal. These are not chosen at random, but as a means of approaching the question sidelong. This division may indeed be hardwired into our brains, the verbal left hemisphere coupled to the visual right hemisphere by the corpus callosum. Thought exists in the communication across this fissure. Neuroscience teaches us that ideas are not localizable within the brain but are created by neural connections (Damasio). Similarly, words are almost meaningless without context. Meaning is created through connections. New media make this more explicit as context becomes removable.

Just as context and text are no longer easily separable, visual and verbal modes have become inextricable — rather have been revealed to have always been the same thing. I am not the first to argue this. W. J. T Mitchell implies that the division between image and text has always been illusory (46). Each new medium uses these two modes in one way or another. Film and television greet us with moving images coupled to an audio track. The average magazine today contains more space devoted to images than text, and page layout itself has always been a visual mode. Digital media marry image and text throughout. The DJ spins in front of old kung fu and blaxploitation flicks. If there is a new paradigm, it is not a stable position but a method: interconnectivity of various modes. This interconnectivity must embrace its own inherent reflexivity.

For example, there is the contextless lolcat meme. Originally a look inside the dubiously grammatical world of cats, the meme has circled the internets subsuming culture and creating its own context along the way. The context of the greater meme of imitation lolcats becomes inseparable from the original. Context itself becomes inseparable from the text, in which case it is not context. In new media context is (re)producible.
From defining to decentering

If it is everywhere, why start with comics? One measures a circle starting anywhere (Charles Fort or Alan Moore, I can never remember) so we might as well start there, at the periphery, in that marginalized medium. However, they also seem to evidence this multimodality more explicitly than any other medium. The metatextuality of multimodal texts forces self-reflection, and this is a good thing. Before we continue then, allow me a digression on the indefinability of comics, bringing us closer to decentering.

We must start where every scholarly work on comics starts, with Will Eisner and Scott McCloud. Eisner pioneered comic theory, beginning with comic strips, creating the Graphic Novel, and finally offering book length treatises on what he called “sequential art.” This term is important for Eisner and for the field because it set in stone a specific definition for comics: the interrelationship of panels to create a narrative. Between one panel and the next, the reader creates closure, a sense of narrative and connection. Art Spiegelman calls this “time mapped across space” and he too recognizes it as the quintessential comic moment. Marshall McLuhan saw in this moment comics’ participatory power – the reader is forced to interact with the comic more consciously than with a traditional text. This then is Eisner’s definition of comics: sequential art.

If Eisner is the Plato of comics, McCloud is the Aristotle. He took Eisner’s definition and systematized it. His definition of comics follows Eisner’s, becoming more explicit as it does: pictorial and other images placed in deliberate sequence. McCloud also notes a productive inconsistency in this definition: it applies to things we would never think of as comics. McCloud finds sequential art in the Bayeux Tapestry, Trajan’s Column, a Mayan Codex, even cave paintings. And herein lies the problem. Scholars have since tried desperately to pin down the finis, the limit of comics, in their definitions, mostly with little success.

Aaron Meskin’s 2007 article, “Defining Comics?” provides an erudite description of the issue. Meskin’s problem with most definitions is that they offer an ahistorical account of comics, which leaves their account open to plausible counterexamples from the prehistory of comics. . . . One obvious response to this problem would be to incorporate a historical condi-

1. Don’t listen to him, it’s Fort.
2. I realize the problems inherent in the term Reader, but I will complicate it in later chapters to the degree that it is applicable to comics.
The problem could be put more succinctly: we all know what we are referring to when we say comics, and it has nothing to do with cave paintings. By defining comics historically, Meskin evades this problem elegantly. The art of comics, which began in the middle of the nineteenth century and developed largely out of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century caricature and mid-nineteenth-century British humor magazines such as Punch, can and should be understood on its own terms and by reference to its own history. However, this definition obliterates comics’ uniqueness and potency. If comics are defined solely historically, they can only be studied through historical modes and have little to say to contemporary issues across disciplines. Meskin recognizes this flaw and seeks to evade it by questioning whether we actually need a definition. I follow Meskin to a certain degree but am unable to avoid defining comics by the same means. I have no definition I could give that would surpass the efforts of scholars who have come before me, yet I cannot leave the term hanging and build an entire structure on it. Rather than defining, I seek to decenter comics. The de of define entails laying down, in this case a limit. Here decentering takes on this meaning as well as the more traditional meaning of destabilizing. On the one hand, laying down the center entails focusing on what comics do more explicitly than other media; for me this is the combination of the visual and the virtual. On the other hand, moving this center means moving terms, from comics to rhizcomics. Throughout the rest of this chapter I will attempt this first move, laying down a center and leave the decentering until the next chapter.

The Center which is no Center

Image and text, visual and verbal have been separated for as long as there has been language. Saussure’s sign itself speaks to this division, on one side an image of a tree, on the other, the word “tree” itself. Homer signifies a distinct moment in the history of this division. While the original Iliad and Odyssey were presented multimodally through oral presentation (gesture at this moment inextricably tied to speech), the moment it is written down it becomes something else. Homeric scholarship has since been an archaeology of what was lost in translation from speech to writing. The division has existed since the birth of ekphrasis and the notion of ut pictura poesis, echoing down through the history of art. W. J. T. Mitchell’s Iconography provides a
route in to art criticism for those of us who are on the outside. The second half of his book provides a historical overview of the imagetext division through four major critics. First, we have Edmund Burke’s distinction between sublime and beautiful. The sublime always signifies a depth of feeling greater than signification can signify. It could be viewed as the love and fear wrapped up in the supplement. For Burke it exists only in language, for painting cannot signify more than what it is. Instead, its worth lies in beauty, in designating rather than signifying. Kant’s aesthetic theory depends heavily upon Burke.

Gotthold Lessing built upon Burke’s work, further elucidating the relationship between painting and poetry. For Lessing, the relationship comes down to space and time: painting is atemporal representation within space; poetry is temporal representation divorced from space. Lessing abhors (a la Burke) any mixing between the two. His simplistic definition is complicated through various examples. Keats’ “Ode upon a Grecian Urn” is the classic refutation of Lessing, but comics work just as well. Like Keats’ ode, comics signify and designate simultaneously. On every page the visual and the verbal invert each other, from the onomato poeias delivered in textured fonts to the designation of movement and emotions in emminata.

Ernst Gombrich known for his embrace of the Nature/Convention binary. Gombrich wishes to erect a strict barrier between art and literature on the basis of this distinction — art is natural, literature is conventional — but finds that the binary deconstructs itself before his eyes. For Mitchell, Gombrich lacks the naivety of his predecessors to think he could ever maintain this distinction, but he has inherited their desire to do so. Gombrich, at once enamored by nature and skeptical of its universality, chooses a Platonic dialectic between phusis and nomos.

Nelson Goodman reacts to Gombrich’s omphaloskepsis with an almost scientific rigor. He divides between picture and paragraph but allows that the distinction is relative to interpretation. One may read a picture and see a paragraph. However, our readings are preconditioned. Contrary to his predecessors, “Hybrid texts are not only possible but are entirely describable in his system . . . The only question is whether the results are interesting” (Mitchell 70).

However, preceding all of this historical narrative, the first half of Mitchell’s book begins with definitions of image and text. Mitchell’s definitions suffer from the same problems that we have seen in definitions of comics. We all know the difference between image and text, but in attempting to clarify this distinction we realize it is no nearly as stable as we assume. Mitchell ends this first section of his book with a summary. Perhaps the redemption of the imagination lies in accepting the fact that we create much of our world out of the dialogue between verbal and pictorial representations, and that our task is not to renounce this dialogue in favor of a direct assault on nature but to see that nature already
informs both sides of the conversation. (46) This interplay between image and word comprises our experience with the world, and we cannot evade it in some attempt to access the real, but instead must look at the conversation going on between the real, image, and word. While Mitchell insinuates that Structuralism may provide a way around this binary (47), I will now elucidated my reasons for thinking that poststructuralism can provide a form of indirect assault on nature through a peripheral parallax, around and through, both and always another. Mitchell, it should be noted, does not come down on the side of the structuralists but rather hypothesizes that this binary will continue to resist our theories. Žižek would remind us that this resistance proves the center’s reality. It is the no which says yes, the repressed continually reasserting its power. Perhaps the peripheral and the parallax of poststructuralism can bring us closer to the decentering I have promised.

We move now to Jacques Derrida and to a proviso: I cannot wholly embrace Derrida’s theories of language but I must utilize his methodologies of research and theory. My issue with Derrida’s theory of language may actually be illusory, but I think it worth stating. In Of Grammatology, Derrida explicates the differences between speech and writing, arguing brilliantly and against common sense that the latter may precede the former. The entire argument depends upon the play of presence and absence, explicated in a truncated form in “Différance.” Finally he brings us to his boldest and most controversial move: “There is no outside-text” (158). Much ink has been spilled in the argument over exactly what this may mean. It certainly argues for an immanence which recognizes that there is no metalinguistic position while maintaining an interest in metatextuality. However, the battle depends more upon what is meant by text in this formulation. Derrida has already complicated its definition throughout this work (and others). Suffice to say, I am uncomfortable with the word because I fear it might return us to a kind of logocentrism; however, I also embrace its evocation of textile weaving, folding compi-

**Etymology Fun**

This network of word descends from the Latin *plectō*, meaning “to plait, braid.” Its sister, *plicō*, means “to fold,” and descends from the same Greek verb: *πλέκω*, which means, “to plait, twine, twist, weave, braid...metaph[orically] to plan, devise, contrive.” The original Greek verb, *πλέκω*, split into two distinct meanings in Latin, but rather than differentiating the metaphorical from the literal, each word retained both aspects. From *plectō* we get “plexus” and “complex”, whereas *plicō* yields both “explicate” and “explicit.” This particular lexical node entails the concepts of planning and folding. When a critic explicates a passage the author’s original complex plans are unraveled before the reader – the latently metatextual becomes patent. All future puns may be inferred by the reader with the author’s willing consent.
Like the first word, the first pictogram is therefore an image, both in the sense of imitative representation and of metonymic displacement. The interval between the thing itself and its reproduction, however faithful, is traversed only by transference. The first sign is determined as an image. The idea has an essential relationship to the sign, the representative substitution of sensation. (282)

We saw this in Saussure's sign. The signifier and signified are divided by an insurmountable gap. As we move to accept Derrida's play along the chain of signification we find that the gap itself is where his interest lies. Différance is not in the gap but rather is the gap. One more example from Of Grammatology before continuing with différance:

But the catastrophe that interrupted the state of nature opens the movements of distancing which brings closer; perfect representation should represent perfectly. It restores presence and effaces itself as absolute representation. This movement is necessary. The telos of the image is its own imperceptibility. When the perfect image ceases to be other than the thing, it respects the thing and restores original presence. Indefinite cycle: represented source of representation, the origin of the image can in turn represent its representers, replace its substitutes, supply its supplements. Folded, returning to itself, representing itself, sovereign, presence is then—and barely—only the supplement of a supplement. (297-8)
Here we see différance, the differentiation that is at once a schism and a deferral. The difference of différance becomes entwined with the dual eyes of the parallax, while the constructed absent reality present within the mind figures deferral. We also have the notion of a center which is no center. This center cannot be seen directly, but only peripherally. The structure depends upon it. The sign gives it meaning (so long as we forget the play along the chain of signification). Play swirls us back toward this center, at times moving the center itself. This mode of periphery, of a center which is no center may be seen in the trace, the origin which is no origin:

...differences appear among the elements or rather produce them, make them emerge as such and constitute the texts, the chains, and the systems of traces. These chains and systems cannot be outlined except in the fabric of this trace or imprint. The unheard difference between the appearing and the appearance (between the “world” and “lived experience”) is the condition of all other differences, of all other traces, and it is already a trace. This last concept is thus absolutely and by rights “anterior” to all physiological problematical concerning the nature of the engramme [the unit of engraving], or metaphysical problematical concerning the meaning of absolute presence whose trace is thus opened to deciphering. The trace is in fact the absolute origin of sense in general. Which amounts to saying once again that there is no origin of sense in general. The trace is the différance which opens appearance and signification. (65)

And with the trace we come to comics. I too am merely a tracer, adding depth to the work of one who has gone before me. I have here traced he who traced the trace. Derrida’s methodology then comprises periphery and parallax, but it also gives me a more practical mode:
If the simulacrum is ever going to occur, its writing must be in the interval between several styles. And the insinuation of the woman (of) Nietzsche is that, if there is going to be style, there can only be more than one. (Spurs 139)

This simulacrum, the forgotten umbrella, calls for an interplay of styles and modes, of image and text, I would argue.

The Given Is Not a Text

Jean-François Lyotard’s figure looms large here as does his discourse. His frustratingly untranslated Discours, Figure offers a much more sustained deconstruction of image and text than Derrida. Individual chapters have been translated, and Geoffrey Bennington’s colossal chapter on Discours, Figure in Lyotard: Writing the Event provides a complex reading of the entire work, a reading upon which I depend.

In the first chapter of Discours, Figure, Lyotard lays out the stakes of his argument: This book protests: the given is not a text, there is a density to it, or rather a difference, a constitutive difference which is not to be read, but to be seen, this difference, and the immobile mobility which reveals it, is what is continually forgotten in signifying it. (“Taking the Side of the Figural” 34, DF 9)

Here my reasons for not completely siding with Derrida become evident. The given is not a text. The (originary) act is not reading but seeing, of which reading is only an aspect. Think of reading as a fold of seeing, one of the folds of which earlier Derrida spoke and of which Deleuze would soon speak. The fold however has grown strong while the THIS out of which it folded has been left to atrophy. We see this particularly in the way images are now read while text is rarely seen.

When referring to “originary” thus far, consider it to have been placed between paranthe-
it is time for philosophers to renounce the production of a unitary theory as the last word upon things. There is no arche, but nor does the Good appear as an unitary horizon. We never touch the thing itself except metaphorically, but this laterality is not, as Merleau-Ponty believed, that of existence, which is much too close to the unity of the subject, as he finally recognised; rather, it is that of the unconscious or of expression, which in one and the same movement opens and reserves all content. This laterality is difference or depth.  

(“Taking the Side of the Figural 42, DF 18-19)
bolic, and Real. In my example the imaginary and the symbolic occupy the places of each eye, while the real is that which is perceived and constructed through their mediation. Image and text in conversation with the apeiron.

The interplay of figural and discourse leads us toward Lyotard’s later development of the libidinal band. The libidinal band is a single surface, like a Moebius strip. We might imagine this as an origin, but only a hypothetical and impossible one. One of the interesting things about the Moebius strip is that when cut it does two different things. First, if we cut it along the middle, we get one very long strip with two sides. Second, if we instead cut it along an imaginary line a third of the way from the edge, we get two new strips, one with two sides and one new moebius strip, both strips being interlocked. This second cut signifies Lyotard’s formulation of the relationship between the disjunctive bar and the libidinal band. It also signifies the relationship between discourse and figure. Discourse is two-sided, binary, predicated by différance as Derrida has shown us. The figural, however could be likened more closely to this libidinal band.

Finally we have Lyotard’s Differend: an imagined conversation across languages. My own panmodal rhetoric signifies bearing witness to new idioms. Parallax and periphery finally come into conversation in Lyotard, resulting in something new which is always something old.

Gregory Ulmer has hovered behind and above this dissertation since its inception. His concept of post-criticism birthed my rhizcomics. Now he can provide the glue (Ulmer’s Glue™) between grammatology and hypermedia. In some ways, the glue exists between books. Applied Grammatology asks the question of how a deconstructive pedagogy would proceed. That question is answered by the rest of Ulmer’s canon: hypermedia.

Ulmer devises new rhetorics and new logics based not upon the word but upon new media. Parataxis becomes the new movement, always “and/and/and” rather than “or.” Concepts from disparate levels of our logocentric hierarchy become parallel. How does he accomplish this? Through a grammatology of hypermedia; said another way, through Derrida. But this is still not enough, “Not to follow in the footsteps of the masters, but to seek what
they sought.” Ulmer takes Derrida’s concepts and applies them in new ways. Something old, something new, something borrowed, something true. Sampling the old, folding it in on the current, revealing our now in the currents of the ancients. Here my earlier claims at reflexivity and metatextuality begin to come into focus:

The mise en abyme (sic) is a reflexive structuration, by means of which a text shows what it is telling, does what it says, displays its own making, reflects its own action. My hypothesis is that a discourse of immanent critique may be constructed for an electronic rhetoric (for use in video, computer, and interactive practice) by combining the mise en abyme with the two compositional modes that have dominated audio-visual texts — montage and mise en scene. The result would be a deconstructive writing, deconstruction as an inventio (rather than as a style of book criticism). (“Grammatology Hypermedia” 4)

The notion of metatextuality, of a text which is concerned with its own textuality, its own metaphoricity, belongs not just to hypermedia and postmodern metafiction, but to comics. Here we replace the mise en scene/abyme with the mise en panel. “To count as an abyss, resemblance must be literally manifested across the levels of the text. In short, one part of the text must literally (at least in part) as well as metaphorically reproduce the other” (Heuristics 147). This comes very close to McCloud’s description of the interrelationship of image and text in comics. They may reproduce each other or merely converse with each other. Both acts point towards an outside of the text (here used as the woven object that is comics) and towards the question of that outside’s validity, leading us readers to question the gap between, on the one hand, ourselves and the text and, on the other, ourselves and our own metanarratives. It is also important to note that comics cannot become merely a new type of writing, but must move beyond. The goal is not to create a hypertextcentrism to answer logocentrism (or logocentrism), but rather to move backwards, to intervene. Writing speaks to comics and comics speak back to writing, each to each. Comics occupy this combination of grammatology and hypermedia, but rely upon interventions for their dissemination.
Ulmer returned us to the metatextuality I referred to in my opening. That comics tend toward self-referentiality has been noted before (cf. Thierry Groensteen, “Bandes Désignées: De la Réflexivité dans les Bandes Dessinées”), but the importance of this fact has been overlooked. Comics tend toward self-referentiality because of their multimodality. Hence, McCloud’s straightforward Understanding Comics belies its postmodern presentation. McCloud appears throughout the book, often standing in one panel and referencing another panel. This is crucial. He references, not the ideas or contents of another panel but another actual panel.

The importance of such metatextuality reveals itself through the theorists I have mentioned, Derrida, Lyotard, and Ulmer. Working backwards, Ulmer stresses reflexivity most explicitly, calling for a mise en scene that would always already be a mise en abyme. Remember, Ulmer is speaking of the composition classroom here. The purpose of such reflexivity would be to cause students to reflect on their own process, to become aware of the available means of persuasion they utilize, rather than just utilizing them. Metatextuality makes rhetoric patent.

Stepping out of order, Derrida introduces metatextuality as inherent to text. All text is always already about metaphoricality, textuality. But if there is no outside-text, what are we left with? What is the point? In the cramped abyme of Derrida’s grammatology, we find no space for reflexivity to reflect.

Lyotard offers us this space, this density and difference that enables reflexivity and gives it purpose. Reflexivity is the ultimate taboo in the text. Text presupposes a transparency without which reading would be too laborious: one would have to reflect on the shape and appearance of each individual letter. Derrida does not deny this by stressing text’s inherent concern with metaphoricity. Rather, Derrida points us towards something like the return of the repressed. Figure provides a way out of this over-oedipalized cycle. Figure demands opacity. When looking at an image, one may indeed see through it, to the signified, but one’s attention is also rapt by the signifier itself. This is the strength of figure, and its weakness. Figure demands reflection and seems almost abused when forced into the textual preferences of clarity brevity and sincerity.

If we take these two axes then, discursive
and figural, and multiply them by themselves, we get a table which might describe four ways in which these paradigms greet us.

First there is the figural figure in which the surface becomes focal, think of the paintings of Mark Rothko or any painter interested in the flatness of the canvas. In the discursive figural, we find figure in the service of discourse: the airplane safety manual being the classic example. In the figural discourse, Nabokov’s Pale Fire presents a plot dependent upon its own reflexivity. In the discursive discourse we are left with the zero-degree writing of Immanuel Kant or Lyotard’s style in The Differend.

Lyotard’s concepts of discourse and figure provide us with a way of having our cake and eating it too. We live in the world of the disjunctive bar where signifier and signified are always already separated by a vast chasm. But, we are not completely without access to the libidinal band. Reflexivity allows us to move from one side to the other, moves us through the band and around until we realize that discourse and figure have always been one sides of the same coin.
It must be abstract.

The weather and the giant of the weather,
Say the weather, the mere weather, the mere air:
An abstraction blooded, as a man by thought.

It feels good as it is without the giant,
A thinker of the first idea. Perhaps
The truth depends on a walk around a lake,

A composing as the body tires, a stop
To see hepatica, a stop to watch
definition growing certain and

As a man and woman meet and depart forthwith.
Perhaps there are moments of awe
Extreme, fortuitous, personal, in

We more than awaken, sit on the sleep,
As on an elevation, and behold
The academies like structures in

Can we compose a castle-fortress?
Even with the help of Violett-le-Duc?
And see the MacCullough there a man?

The first idea is an imagined thing
The pensive giant prone in violet
May be the MacCullough, an exp

And logic, crystal, soothe
ous.

The swags of pine-trees bordering the lake.
Perhaps there are times of inherent ex-

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Can we compose a castle-fortress?
Even with the help of Violett-le-Duc?
And see the MacCullough there a man?
What's this?
A painting.
No, it's not.

Well, fine, it's a digital copy of an ink drawing done over a pencil copy of a printed photograph of a painting.

That wasn't my paint. I'm going the other direction.

Ah, you mean what are the characters doing?
We.

Sorry?

No, I'm glad you do. It at least makes you human. Sometimes I feel like you're such a hypocrite.

Sure. Abstract. We're not characters, we're us. You just pulled a cigarette. That's physical, messy, not abstract.

You wish I wouldn't smoke?

Janus
Who the hell is Janice?

You're two-faced. You talk about philosophy and higher ideals and play chess, but what of the cigarette? The wind? The pool?
A Roman god. Two faces.
Also the word for door in Latin.

What does that have to do with anything?

The original hypocrite.
Also an opening...

No, nothing’s truly closed. We would still each create a board, visualize it while we play. We could play over the internet from across the world and still not escape physicality.

I don’t know. Perhaps because chess is so closed, it’s all abstract. There is no board. We could use old cigarette butts for pieces if we wanted, or no pieces at all, and do it all in our minds.

That’s the thing. You theorize everything.
Translate it to philosophese.

What’s wrong with philosophies?
So this opening, it’s when we switch the two? When man becomes woman?

That’s one binary Janus can envelop. But there are others. Man and woman. Before and after. Image and text. Word and thing.

That’s one binary Janus can envelop. But there are others. Man and woman. Before and after. Image and text. Word and thing.

Absolutely not. Why would I want to have a conversation with myself? That’s dialectic. Thesis antithesis synthesis. What I’m looking for is not dialectic, but –

Hm. Difference. That’s all we have, our differences. So the goal is conversation so we can sort them out into some bland malaise?

That’s part of it. That’s negative deconstruction. But there is an affirmative deconstruction as well that maintains each, and maintains separation and difference while recognizing that each exists on the basis of the other.

Dialogue?
Yes, the dialogic. Bakhtin speaks of this. Think of our conversation now. Some might say that there are different ways of describing what is going on, words, people, images, physics, biology, etc.

But all of those things come down to the physical. There can be no words without the gift you mentioned earlier.

The given, yes.

ES gift.

Who is S. Giebels?

Exactly. The comic artist engages in these interplays more consciously than perhaps in any other medium. That is comics' uniqueness and strength.

The comic artist?

Who is the ES? That's a wonderful way of putting it. The universe? God? Moebius?
So you reject the notion of comics as sequential art.

Of course not. Comics are dialogic, that is perhaps the best way of saying it. Looking at them as sequential art privileges the dialogue of space with time.

Privileges our lived experience.

And image and text privileges what exactly? Isn't this still our lived experience? Words and things? Right and left brain?

What then of the schizo?

Split mind. Hm. Would this be Janice's opening?

Some kind of schizo asemantic composition?
I mean more specifically, this conversation. How did we move from chess to multimodal composition?

No. This isn’t us. It feels like we’re the mouthpiece for a rhet/comp scholar.

And what of these reflexive moments? Reflexivity reveals the system. Makes us aware. Makes learning possible.

Another binary. The distance between writer and reader is surmounted only physically, through texts.

What else would it mean to be multimodal?

So. What have we learned?

Yes, language speaks us. This is at the center of the split subject. Yes, language speaks us.

Another binary. The distance between writer and reader is surmounted only physically, through texts.

So what? Have we learned?

No. I mean more specifically, this conversation. How did we move from chess to multimodal composition?

What else would it mean to be multimodal?

Do you ever feel as though our words are not our own?

Reflexivity reveals the system. Makes us aware. Makes learning possible.

So. What have we learned?
2 of the

Figure, Discourse
Heterotopia

I invited my friend Kyle to join me on my weekly pilgrimage to the local comic shop a few days ago. With his misspent youth reawakened, Kyle began debating the epistemological implications of the übermenschen of our youths. This quickly dissolved into various hypothetical battles between our superheroes: who would win in a fight, Superman or Mighty Mouse? Batman or Wolverine? Jean Grey or Dr. Strange? This last one stopped us for a moment. Jean Grey is/was (the character is currently dead, though seems to get revived on a biannual basis) the world’s most powerful psychic with powers of telepathy and telekinesis coupled to an intimate understanding of psychology. Dr. Strange is a master of the arcane, with a knowledge of magic and the supernatural that beggars belief. Both exist within the so-called Marvel Universe, the self-contained universe wherein exist all the characters published by Marvel Comics. It suddenly struck me that these characters existed in incompatible worlds within the same universe. Jean Grey’s abilities depend upon a scientific, materialist world in which she walks through psychic landscapes created by human beings. Dr. Strange acts as a mediator between the spirit realms and our own. The battle has no common ground. Dr. Strange could rebuff Grey’s powers of metaphor and metonymy with magic and mysticism. Grey would meanwhile disperse Strange’s demons as the physical effects of psychic trauma. Though they occupy the same space, their material is cut from different threads.

I was struck by the parallel relationship of image to text: heterotopias coexisting in the mind.

“The mechanism at work here could serve as the object of a scholarly explanation of which I am incapable.

The explanation would be valuable even irrefutable but the mystery would remain undiminished.”

Rene Magritte to Michel Foucault
The answer is not a simplistic monism, but a self reflexive triad. And counting to three offers possibilities of counting beyond numbers.

In the previous chapter we discussed comics’ quest for a definition. From Eisner and McCloud’s canonical definition of comics as sequential art to Aaron Meskin’s disavowal of formal definition in favor of historicizing, comics have long sought to claim legitimacy through a clear definition. I followed Meskin in rejecting formal definitions, outlining instead a formal decentering. Whereas definition erects clear boundaries, decentering focuses on central attributes which deconstruct themselves thereby undermining the very center it posits.

Such decentering allows formal elements to be used to distinguish comics from other media while refusing to solidify any description of the medium.

My own decentering places comics’ center in the juxtaposition of image and text.
In this chapter, I follow the movement of the center through successive deconstructions of binary centers:

- from image | text,
- to visual | verbal,
- to paradigmatic | syntagmatic,
- to decoupage | tressage,
- to discourse | figure.

Finally, the general aporia of these binaries is embraced, allowing for the endlessly recreated binaries essential to the reading process.
Thierry Groenstein's The System of Comics, an important work that is only just beginning to influence American comic theory differs vastly from most American work. First off, it is far more formal than the average piece of American work. Groenstein erects a structure applicable to all comics exemplified by the best of comics. His structure breaks down along two poles: the spacio-topical system and arthrology, on which more in a moment. He also employs the strategic use of two terms throughout to build this structure: decoupage and tressage. Decoupage, translated as "breakdown," gets used fairly loosely throughout the work, signifying the way a page/work is broken down into discrete units, the piecing together of those units, and the indissolubility of the page/work itself. Tressage, translated as "braiding," signifies something similar: both the generation of meaning through the layering of discrete planes/threads/lay-ers. Both terms come closer to my Groensteen

This aporia turns back on itself in the composing process, forcing students to create self-aware multimodal compositions within the medium of comics. When we embrace this aporia, comics become not a marginal genre but a medium that currently finds itself at the center of all new media. The lessons learned in comics composition apply to web pages, graphic design, videos and all media in so far as all media depend upon multimodal reading and composition practices.

The justaposition of image and text occupies the most obvious of these binaries, and the one with which I began my decentering process in the first chapter. Becoming frustrated with sequential definition's exclusion of single panel comics like The Far Side or The Family Circus, I created a new center: image and text. Nor am I alone in this move. Robert C. Harvey has previously intimated such a redefinition ("Comedy at the Juncture of Word and Image" 75ff), but I feel we must move further into this division. The traditional comics definition relates comics as sequential art. McCloud perhaps did the field a disservice with his focus on this definition. His definition allows for theorizing the gutter, the space between two comic frames...
in which the real substance of comics happens (or so McCloud argues), a site which has since been extensively archaeologized. But the same gutter occurs between the image and its caption in single-panel comics. As we shall see, the gutter is very much the center of comics: it is everywhere and nowhere at once. We'll begin by defining image as mimetic and text as semantic and see what trouble that gets us into.

In the average Far Side comic the difference between image and text is fairly clear, and thus acts as a primary example for our analysis. Here the caption depicts a character’s speech. The speaker is clearly delineated from the four other characters in the image by his open mouth. Nor is it an accident that Gary Larson is obsessed with anthropologists. I like to imagine the disembarking anthropologist as Claude Levi-Strauss. He steps off the boat looking for a definition of culture, something that clearly separates physis and nomos. However, everywhere he goes he finds the incest prohibition, a universal interdiction, a natural
Any productive definition of comics will inevitably not only apply to other media but through reflection will show that the moves that typify comics are central to all media.

law. Would that he could arrive before he got there and see the savages with a culture not unlike our own. What do they watch on their TV? What do they read with their lamp? Perhaps their favorite show is Survivor: Paris, in which twelve Bororo are transplanted to the 16th arrondissement and forced to eat foie gras, escargot, and other local delicacies through clenched teeth, while performing feats of street painting wearing aboriginal berets. Who knows what one looks like through the eyes of the Other. Larson’s humor often revolves around these types of deconstruction which I defined as negative in my first excursus.

Things become more complex with the introduction of word balloons, as in our next example.

Here the difference between image and text becomes a little more slippery. Now the image actually contains text. The image must “translate” the text into a visual form, speech balloons and handwriting. The task is as impossible and
unwanted as a canine decoder. How could a dog’s life be translated into English and would we really want to know what they say? Traduttore, traditore. Translation is betrayal. Translating the image into text is equally impossible and unwanted; like explaining a joke, it removes the humor, the substance. Similarly, a purely negative deconstruction merely reveals the possible without actually entering into possibilities. Negative deconstruction clears the ground, an important act, which takes us from grund to abgrund, from ground to abyss. The affirmative deconstruction which I espouse erects possibilities, impossibilities, and compossibilities upon this abgrund.

Things can of course get infinitely more complex with repeated acts of translation. In the next comic, the caption occupies the position of text, but within the image we then have two more levels (at least) of representational translation. The thought balloon represents in a semantic, textual manner the ideas contained within a character’s thoughts. However, within thought balloon we find, not text, but another image. In the semantic thought balloon we find a mimetic reproduction of a textual object, the classified page from a newspaper from the future. The newspaper communicates semantically, but the typeface of the classified ads has been re-

There is always a supplement. Here it is Bill Keane’s The Family Circus, the comic that asserts itself as a deconstruction of sequentiality. Why focus on Larson instead of Keane? The answer is fairly simple. I hate The Family Circus.

I am able to both ignore and address the hated one through an interesting meme that circled the interwebs a few years ago. The Nietzsche Family Circus pairs a random quote from Nietzsche with a random image from The Family Circus, often with gratifying results. http://www.losanjealous.com/nfc/

Nietzsche Family Circus

God is dead! God remains dead! And we have killed him.
I wonder whether there are jobs for former video game playing experts. If this binary has not yet deconstructed itself clearly enough, there is still the caption, which we note by comparison has changed font from the previous two examples. Whereas the caption earlier consisted of simple sans-serif fonts, it has now evolved to a more decorative font choice, reflecting the type used for Larson’s name on the covers of many of the Far Side collections. Would this change be mimetic or semantic? The difference is disappearing.

When I first read this comic, I thought of myself as the child. Now, that we have passed the newspaper’s futuristic date, I wonder whether there are jobs for former video game playing experts. Was my own youth squandered reading comics and playing video games or did they prepare me to teach multimodal composition? The lineage is unclear, but present. Similarly the divisions between image and text in the comic are unclear but present.

Far Side comics provide my readers with a certain familiarity, in that they are read widely and conform to a common view of comics: they should be funny and found in a newspaper. They also seemed at first to fit nicely into the schema of Image|Text. As we’ve divided our investigation of comics into visual and verbal modes, we are able to at once carry with us our mimetic/symbolic distinction and focus more clearly on what might be traditionally found at the core of multimodality. Looking at the last Far Side example through this lens, we find that it breaks down a bit more neatly. The verbal describes the captions, word balloons,
and even the newspaper text. The visual then describes both the depictions of the characters and the newspaper in the parents’ imagination. Just as soon as we have things neatly divided, though, they begin to disintegrate, or rather re-integrate into an uninterpretable aporia. Each verbal element acts visually as well. The words in the newspaper are handwritten, the font of the caption distinctive. Similarly, the visual elements slip unbidden into the position of verbal element by making themselves utterable, readable, describable.\footnote{See Groensteen (The System of Comics 121-127).} In fact, it would be difficult to find any visual artifact that could not be reduced to the verbal. The opposite is only somewhat less true. The verbal can of course be spoken, not just written, and then could be devoid of visual elements (unless we consider lip-reading). Just as we were unsure whether to classify a particular element as image or as text, we are now unsure how to stop oscillating between elements which are always already at once visual and verbal, seen and read. Whereas the image/text binary broke down because of undecidability of content, the visual/verbal binary breaks down because of undecidability of interpretation. Perhaps Derrida could provide us with another way of thinking of the verbal and the visual. His Glas confronts readers with a text that is not purely linear. Glas features two parallel yet intersecting essays, one on G. W. F. Hegel and one on Jean Genet. Within each column, there are also peepholes of inset text peering out at the reader and across the gutter to the other essay. For the most part, the visual nature of Derrida’s text is owing to length. His Genet essay is shorter, and therefore its font is enlarged to allow it to fit, but this carries with it a supplement, namely that it allows the reader to more easily differentiate between essays. The essays repeatedly comment upon their own visual nature and reach across the aisle towards each other. Derrida mimics Genet’s formatting, attempting to evade a Hegelian synthesis through contraposition. Finally, the essays begin and end in mid sentence, allowing us to begin again. But these rebeginnings need not set up two closed systems. Instead we might end the Genet essay with a half twist by beginning the Hegel essay and vice versa, creating an infinite Moebius strip of a text. The disjunctive bar dissipates into its “originary” libidinal band.
To read *Glas* as visual, we must first dive into Derrida’s “The Double Session” (*Dissemination* 173-285). Published just two years before *Glas* (but presented four years prior and published in *Tel Quel* three years prior), “The Double Session” opens with two quotes in Glasian format.

The quote from Plato’s *Philebus* concerns the nature of thinking and the interplay of writings and paintings. The quote from Stéphane Mallarmé’s *Mimique* concerns a play, which Mallarmé may or may not have seen, and a quote, which Mallarmé may or may not have composed him-

Derrida finally made his confession during a subsequent confrontation with visuality and representation. In his introduction to *Visions d’Aveugle, L’Autoportrait et autre Ruines*, the exhibition he selected and prefaced at the Louvre in 1990, he revealed that his sense of a “secret election” to writing as a vocation was directly related to his brother’s prowess at drawing. His own efforts were pitifully clumsy: thus a substitution took place; a deliberate strategy of fratricide. “My hypothesis for work also signified a work of mourning. Throughout my life I have never drawn again, never even attempted to draw.” Painting, a “degenerate and superfluous expression” as it is called in “La Double Séance”, is subsumed in portraiture, a practice Derrida extravagantly, metonymically, immemorially, represented by the trope of blindness. (Wilson 13)

Derrida’s renunciation of the visual in favor of the textual both explains and indicts his writing. For his family circus, we must reveal his juvenile longwindedness for what it is: shadows and simulacra.

I employ these words, I admit, with a glance toward the business of childbearing—but also with a glance toward those who, in a company from which I do not exclude myself, turn their eyes away in the face of the as yet unnameable which is proclaiming itself and which can do so, as is necessary whenever a birth is in the offing, only under the species of the non-species, in the formless, mute, infant, and terrifying form of monstrosity.
SOCRATES: And if he had someone with him, he would put what he said to himself into actual speech addressed to his companion, audibly uttering those same thoughts, so that what before we called opinion (δόξα) has now become assertion (λόγος). —PROTARCHUS: Of course. —SOCRATES: Whereas if he is alone he continues thinking the same thing by himself, going on his way maybe for a considerable time with the thought in his mind. —PROTARCHUS: Undoubtedly. —SOCRATES: Well now, I wonder whether you share my view on these matters. —PROTARCHUS: What is it? —SOCRATES: It seems to me that at such times our soul is like a book (Δοξα μοι τοις ημεροι δεισοτε της ψυχης μαλακοτεριν προσεγγειαν). —PROTARCHUS: How so? —SOCRATES: It appears to me that the conjunction of memory with sensations, together with the feelings consequent upon memory and sensation, may be said as it were to write words in our souls (γραφειν ημεροι δεισοτε της ψυχης τοις λογοι). And when this experience writes what is true, the result is that true opinion and true assertions spring up in us, while when the internal scribe that I have suggested writes what is false (φυσικα δεισοτε τοις τοις ημεροι δεισοτε της ψυχης τοις λογοι) what sort of words we get, the opposite sort of opinions and assertions. —PROTARCHUS: That certainly seems to me right, and I approve of the way you put it. —SOCRATES: Then please give your approval to the presence of a second artist (δοξα) in our souls at such a time. —PROTARCHUS: Who is that? —SOCRATES: A painter (γραφειν ημεροι) who comes after the writer and paints in the soul pictures of these assertions that we make. —PROTARCHUS: How do we make out that he is in his turn acts and when? —SOCRATES: When we have got those opinions and assertions clear of the act of sight (δεισοτε) or other sense, and as it were see in ourselves pictures or images of what we previously opined or asserted. That does happen with us, doesn’t it? —PROTARCHUS: Indeed it does. —SOCRATES: Then are the pictures of true opinions and assertions true, and the pictures of false ones false? —PROTARCHUS: Unquestionably. —SOCRATES: Well, if we are right so far, here is one more point in this connection for us to consider. —PROTARCHUS: What is that? —SOCRATES: Does all this necessarily befall us in respect of the present (σημερον) and the past (υπερηφανοντα), but not in respect of the future (μελλοντα)? —PROTARCHUS: On the contrary, it applies equally to them all. —SOCRATES: We said previously, did we not, that pleasures and pains felt in the soul alone might precede those that come through the body? That must mean that we have anticipatory pleasures and anticipatory pains in regard to the future. —PROTARCHUS: Very true. —SOCRATES: Now do those writings and paintings (γραφειν ημεροι τα σημεροντα), which a while ago we assumed to occur within ourselves, apply to past and present only, and not to the future? —PROTARCHUS: Indeed they do. —SOCRATES: When you say ‘indeed they do’, do you mean that the last sort are all expectations concerned with what is to come, and that we are full of expectations all our life long? —PROTARCHUS: Undoubtedly. —SOCRATES: Well now, as a supplement to all we have said, here is a further question for you to answer. What question? 

MIMIQUE

Silence, sole luxury after rhymes, an orchestra only marking with its gold, its brushes with thought and dust, the detail of its significances on a par with a stillled ode and which it is up to the poet, roused by a dare, to translate! the silence of an afternoon of music; I find it, with consentment, also, before the ever original reappearance of Pierrot or of the poignant and elegant mime Paul Margueritte.

Such is this PIERROT MURDERER OF HIS WIFE composed and set down by himself, a mute soliloquy that the phantom, white as a yet unwritten page, holds in both face and gesture at full length to his soul. A whirlwind of naive or new reasons evanesces, which it would be pleasing to seize upon with security: the esthetics of the genre situated closer to principles than any! nothing in this region of caprice foiling the direct simplifying instinct... This—

The scene illustrates but the idea, not any actual action, in a hymen (out of which flows Dream), tainted with vice yet sacred, between desire and fulfillment, perpetration and remembrance: here anticipating, there recalling, in the future, in the past, under the false appearance of a present. That is how the Mimes operates, whose act is confined to a perpetual allusion without breaking the ice or the mirror: he thus sets up a medium, a pure medium, of fiction. Less than a thousand lines, the role, the one that reads, will instantly comprehend the rules as if placed before the stageboards, their humble depository. Surprise, accompanying the artifice of a notation of sentiments by unproffered sentences — that, in the sole case, perhaps, with authenticity, between the sheets and the eye there reigns a silence still, the condition and delight of reading.
self. However, when placed side by side, Plato introduces a question which Mallarmé perhaps answers. Derrida poses the question toward the end of the first session or rather toward the center of the double session: *La question du texte est—pour qui le lit* (224). Restated, the question is who reads and who is read.

The text is where one lies. It is at once fiction and bed, text and hymen. The text is a textile, woven through différence. But it is also the hymen: a marriage between opposites, an impossible moment, an event defined by rupture, a test of purity and a rejection of testing. However, the hymen of the text is also continuously resutured, oscillating between innocence and experience, between known and unknown, between. The pleasure of the text is found in rupture and rapture. The medium is always between author and reader. The text is the bed wherein two become one. What better way to read the central margin of *Glas* then as the continually perforated and reconstituted Hymen of textuality?

Derrida’s central interpretive metaphor is play, the allusions and illusions of the text, but to what purpose? “The practice of play in Mallarmé’s writing is in collusion with the casting aside of ‘being’” (216). Play avoids is. We must remember that play is always already sexual, the playsure of the text. Play is the proper act of the bed:

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1 Barbara Johnson helpfully points out the ambiguity of the sentence:

*The question of the text is—(for whom are) / (for whoever reads) these sheets. [La question du texte est—pour qui le lit; literally, can mean both: “The question of the text is for the one who reads it (or him)” and: “The question of the text is: whom is the bed for?”—Trans.]*
To play is to act, to screw, to lie. The central margin of Glas creates the excluded muddle that exists only in silent collusion between author, reader, and text. Play, as Derrida suggests, is allusion and illusion. But it is also elusive. Derrida began his essay with an unstated promise of developing the relation between image and text, a promise that lies undelivered. The entire essay is an attempt to elude that which is always already excluded in text: image. Perhaps his brother could have drawn more compelling conclusions.

Viewing a text such as Glas as visual...
seems perverse to say the least. There are no illustrations, no drawings, no images and the visual makeup of the page carries minimal significance.

absolute reason of absolute (revealed, Christian, and so on) religion comprehends its own proper fall into the body and into time. Christianity’s absolute privilege, religiosité absolute essence: to determine itself from out of its fall (the Sa-tomb-falls) and its absolute relief [la chaise (le Sa-tombé) et de sa relève absolue].

This absolute circle that carries and relieves its tangents, that produces at once the deportation and the concentration of its other, is a family circle.

This statement requires support from neither the spirit’s word [mot d’esprit] nor from formalism. Save specifying that the circle is of the spirit’s word, of its acmomy, of the property law of the spirit that finds itself back in language, in the word in which it falls [chaise] and that it relieves.

If one hears Hegel, understands him, if one comprehends (from inside the picture) the sense of what his text means—to say, one cannot reduce the absolute already-there of the not-yet or the absolute already-no-more of the yet to what one believes one knows familiarly of the family. What Hegel means is that the absolute sense of the absolute family, the being-family bands itself over only (in) to the passage between absolute religion and Sa, the next-to-last chapter of the phenomenology of spirit: since the absolute of the already-there of the not-yet or of the yet of the already-no-more. In order to abbreviate this synecdoche and to de-temporalize it, let us simplify it to not-there [pas-la] (the being-there (sa) of the not [pas] that, being there, is not, not-there. So the not-there cannot be reduced to the circle of a family about which what it is and means (to say) would be already familiarly known. On the contrary, the absolute essence of the family can be reached only in thinking the absolute of the not-there. To think the family, one must think absolutely the being of the already-there of the not-yet or the yet of the already-no-more. This family between reads itself (se lit) inside and outside—at its (sa) limit—the phenomenology of spirit, at the large [chambre] of the next-to-last and the last chapter.

In effect, in absolute religion, division in two (Entwesung) is not yet absolutely overcome by reconciliation. An opposition (Entgegenstellung) stays, determines itself as an anticipatory representation (Vorstellung).

The ultimate limit of the absolutely true, absolute, revealed religion; it remains no further than the Vorstellung. The essential predicate of this representation is the exteriority of what presents or announces itself there. It poses in front of itself, has a relation with an object that is pre-set, that arrives before only inasmuch as the object remains outside. The unity of the object and the subject does not yet accomplish itself presently, actually; the reconciliation

However, at a critical moment in Glas, Derrida raises another binary:

eighty involves the /les of the heart, it requires loyalty, because it is given in communication. . .

"GENET’S FAILURE [ECHEC]

"Genet’s indifference to communication is at the origin of a certain fact: his récits are interesting, but not enthralling. There is nothing colder, less touching, under the glittering parade of words, than the famous passage in which Genet recounts Harcamone’s death. It has the beauty of a piece of jewelry: it is too rich and in somewhat cold bad taste. . . .

" . . . the scholar who imposes titles on people demonstrates the same stupidity as Genet, who wrote these lines concerning the time when he travelled through Spain [citation of the "palace"

It would be necessary, among other constructions of the same kind, to circulate through every polis, in the
The division between paradigmatic and syntagmatic is often shown on a graph, similar to the difference between metaphor and metonymy. The paradigm is the replaceable, that which is placeholder. The syntagm is the ordered, linear thread. The syntagm constitutes languages’ one dimensional operation. The paradigm opens language into two dimensions through potentiality. Reflexivity then constitutes a third dimension to language. We see this clearly in *Glas*. The sentence comprises the first dimension, the layout the second (including both the words used and unused, paradigm here signifies not just the potential for other words, but the position in two-dimensional space of the words we do see), the commentary across the gutter, the third. We might even hypothesize a fourth that reaches across pages and even into other texts (intertextuality). It is through the interplay of paradigm and syntagm, linear and spatial, actual and virtual, that a text constructs and deconstructs itself. Paradigm and syntagm are the warp and woof, if you will, of the text.

Lev Manovich has asserted that to a certain degree new media favors the paradigmatic over the syntagmatic: “Interactive interfaces foreground the paradigmatic dimension and often make explicit paradigmatic sets. Yet, they are still organized along the syntagmatic dimension” (232). The design process in new media primarily revolves around choices, utilizing the file/folder metaphor. However, the end result is almost always syntagmatic. Gamers are greeted with paradigmatic choice, but through their own actions reduce the infinite into the finite syntagm of narrative structure. The only truly open game is the unplayed game. Why is the syntagm unavoidable even in new media?

Why does new media insist on this language-like sequencing? My hypothesis is that it follows the dominant semiotic order of the twentieth century - that of cinema. Cinema replaced all other modes of narration with a sequential narrative, an assembly line of shots which appear on the screen one at a time. For centuries, a spatialized narrative where all images appear simultaneously dominated European visual culture; then it was delegated to “minor” cultural forms...
as comics or technical illustrations. “Real”
culture of the twentieth century came to
speak in linear chains, aligning itself with
the assembly line of an industrial society
and the Turing machine of a post-industrial
era. New media continues this mode,
giving the user information one screen at
a time. At least, this is the case when it
tries to become “real” culture (interactive
narratives, games); when it simply func-
tions as an interface to information, it is
not ashamed to present much more in-
formation on the screen at once, be it in
the form of tables, normal or pull-down
menus, or lists. In particular, the expe-
rience of a user filling in an on-line form
can be compared to pre-cinematic spati-
alized narrative: in both cases, the user is
following a sequence of elements which
are presented simultaneously. (232-3)

We should pause for a moment and realize that
here the comic slips again into its traditional role
of “spatialized narrative.” Is this sequential art?
Somewhat. The narrative facet certainly is, and
the word spatialized reminds us of Spiegelman’s
“time represented in space.” However, for
Manovich it occupies a space between data-
base and narrative, paradigm and syntagm.

Manovich at first appears ambivalent on
the place of spatialized narrative. He wishes
to set up a binary between database and nar-
rative, but the spatialized narrative provides a
third option, “following a sequence of elements
which are presented simultaneously.” Cinema
then supplies the split, firmly occupying the po-
sition of narrative. Manovich finds himself inter-
ested then in films that problematize this easy
division. He cites Vertov’s

Man with a Movie Camera
as a multilayered database
projected into narration:
The overall structure of the film is quite
complex, and on the first glance has little
to do with a database. Just as new media
objects contain a hierarchy of levels (in-
terface - content; operating system - ap-
lication; web page - HTML code; high-
level programming language - assembly
language - machine language), Vertov’s
film consists of at least three levels. One
level is the story of a cameraman filming
material for the film. The second level is
the shots of an audience watching the
finished film in a movie theater. The third
level is this film, which consists from foot-
age recorded in Moscow, Kiev and Riga
and is arranged according to a progres-
sion of one day: waking up - work - lei-
sure activities. If this third level is a text,
the other two can be thought of as its me-
ta-texts. Vertov goes back and forth be-
tween the three levels, shifting between
the text and its meta-texts: between the
production of the film, its reception, and
the film itself. But if we focus on the film
within the film (i.e., the level of the text)
and disregard the special effects used
to create many of the shots, we discover
almost a linear printout, so to speak, of
a database: a number of shots showing
machines, followed by a number of shots
showing work activities, followed by dif-
ferent shots of leisure, and so on. The par-
adigm is projected onto syntagm. (240-1)
But Manovich’s system is too content based, leaving little room for formal analysis. This “if” of his penultimate sentence signifies a motivated analysis with which I am uncomfortable. Instead, I think we would find a more promising avenue for paradigm in the analysis of the film across layers. At any moment, each of the layers becomes evident to the viewer and the others are hidden. This interplay of presence and absence creates the metatextual. Here we have more than the spatialized narrative, we have the textured text, woven through with significations at once paradigmatic and syntagmatic, metaphoric and metonymic. Nor need we restrict ourselves to film as medium. Katherine Hayles has extended Manovich’s database analysis to Mark Danielewski’s remediated film, *House of Leaves* (forthcoming). *House* is of course a text, not a film, but it borrows much from of the cinematic. Danielewski’s father we must remember was a film maker, while Danielewski himself did sound for the Derrida documentary. Which brings us to Danielewski’s appropriation of Derrida in *House*. *House of Leaves* consists of multiple texts within texts. First there is *The Navidson Record*, a documentary film following a renowned photojournalist who discovers that his new house is haunted by space: it is bigger on the inside than on the outside. Next, there is a dissertation entitled *House of Leaves*, written by a blind man named Zampanò. Our protagonist, Johnny Truant, discovers the dissertation and creates a third text, the one we hold in our hands, by adding notes to Zampanò’s text. Slowly two stories unfold, Navidson’s, as told by Zam...
146For example, there is nothing about the house that even remotely resembles 20th century works whether in the style of Post-Modern, Late-Modern, Brutalism, Neo-Expressionism, Wrightson, The New Formalism, Miesian, the International Style, Streamline Modern, Art Deco, the Pueblo Style, the Spanish Colonial, to name but a few, with examples such as the Western Savages and Non-Auction in Superlative, Arizona, Animal Crackers in Highland Park, Illinois, Pacific Design Center in Los Angeles, or Minories Condemnation in Venice, Warner Hall in Berkeley, Katedra House in Pittsburgh, Dudas International Airport, Greiner House in Norman, Oklahoma, Chicago Harold Washington Library, the Warf Towers in South Center, Barcelona National Theater, New Town of Seville Florida, Tagnehat House: Rue de Larden in Brussels, Richmond Riverside in Richmond South, the staircase hall in the Athens, Georgia News Building, the Toshiba Center Building in Ibaraki, the Digital House, Hiroshima City Museum of Contemporary Art, the interior of the Judge Institute of Management Studies in Cambridge, Maison de Bordeaux, TGV Railway Station in Lyon-Satolas, the postmodernism of the Wexner Center for Visual Arts in Columbus, Ohio, Palomar Hotel in Fukuoka, National Geographic Society in Washington, D.C., the Amos Center Museum in Fort Worth, Texas, Samuelson Wing of the National Gallery, Pyramid at the Louvre, New Building at Steagardselle Sturtagt, J. Paul Getty Museum in Malibu, Palace of Ababs in Marne-La-Vallée, Piazza d'Ita in New Orleans, AT&T Building in New York, the modernism of Carré d'Art, Lines Building in London, the Boston John F. Kennedy Library complex, Nave of Vakseokita Church in Finland, head office of the Etno-Geizel Company, Administrative Center of Sápmi, the famous House of the Baker dormitory at MIT, inside the TWA terminal at Kennedy Airport, The National Theatre in London, Hall House Association Upwey Center in Chicago, Heiken Laboratory also in Chicago, Fitzpatrick House in the Hollywood Hills, Graduate Center at Harvard University, Pan-Pacific Auditorium in Los Angeles, General Motors Testing Laboratory in Phoenix Arizona, Bullock's Wilshire Department Store in Los Angeles, Canis Building in New York, Hotel Francisca in Albuquerque New Mexico, La Fonda Hotel in Santa Fe or Santa Barbara County Court, across the Neff or Sherwood House in California, Exterior of the Secondary Modern School, Maison Jard, Notre-Dame-des-Hauts near Bennecourt, The Unitd of Habitation in Marseilles, The Farmworth House in Pisto, Illinois, The Alumni Memorial Hall at Illinois Institute of Technology, Guggenheim Museum in New York, or nothing of the traditionalism of Luan Road Flats in Hsinepuird, the Zimbabwe House and Battersea Power Station in London, Choir of the Anglican cathedral in Liverpool or Memorial to the Missing of the Somme near Artois, Vicerey's house in New Delhi, Gledstone Hall in Yorkshir, Finsbury Circus facade, Castle Drogo near Drewsteington Devon, Casa del Magico in Cemo, Villa

146See Exhib. One.

Sebastiano Pèreous de Montclos, however, has written a sizable examination on the changes within the house, posititing that in fact follow Andrea Palladio's structural derivations. By way of a quick summary, Palladian grammar seeks to organize space through a series of strict rules. As Palladio proved, it was possible to use his system to generate a number of layouts such as Villa Badoer, Villa Emo, Villa Ragione, Villa Poiana, and of course Villa Zeno. In essence there are only eight steps:

1. Grid definition
2. Exterior-wall definition
3. Room layout
4. Interior-wall realignment
5. Principal entrances — porticos and exterior wall inflections
6. Exterior ornamentation — columns
7. Windows and Doors
8. Termination

Pèreous de Montclos relies on these steps to delineate how Navisien's house was (1.0) first established (2.0) limited (3.0) sub-divided and (4.0) so on. He attempts to convince the reader that the constant refiguration of doorways and walls represents a kind of geological loop in the process of working out all possible forms, most likely ad infinitum, but never settling because, as he states in his conclusion, "unoccupied space will never cease to change simply because nothing forbids it to do so. The continuous internal alterations only prove that such a house is necessarily uninhabited."
panò, and Truant’s, as told through footnotes to Zampanò’s text. That Danielewski’s text is not only readable, but actually enjoyable by a popular audience, is a testament to his dedication to cinematic pacing throughout the book. When one story lags, the other picks up. His fourth chapter in particular, Labyrinth, borrows heavily from Glas, expanding the typographical play into a claustrophobic, textual labyrinth.

While House of Leaves’ interplay of paradigmatic and syntagmatic tropes steps beyond the bounds of linear text, it still remains within a fairly verbal world. Its visual components are always at the service of the text, and never vice versa. He has traded logocentrism for what Mark Taylor calls logo centrism: Contrasting interpretations of reality lead to alternative aesthetic strategies. While logocentrism struggles to erase signifiers in order to arrive at the pure transcendental signified, logo centrism attempts to extend the sign to infinity by collapsing the signified in the signifier.

Union with the real—regardless of how the real is understood—holds out the promise of overcoming alienation and achieving reconciliation. (Disfiguring 222-223)

Danielewski’s plot mirrors his technique holding out (at once promising and denying) the possibility of escape from the chain of signification, an exit from the house which we are always already inside. My own system, then, must maintain an interest in both visual and verbal modes without privileging either (whether image as real or text as sufficient) while also realizing their distinction from each other: Logocentrism and logo centrism, Scylla and Charybdis. Jonathan Hickman’s work provides just such a navigation.

Jonathan Hickman’s The Nightly News shocked the comics industry with its antiestablishment message and nonconformist style. Coming out of a career in graphic design, Hickman created not just a new style but a new possibility for comics. His slick layouts look more like glossy magazine pages than superhero comics.

This two page spread from issue one offers an example of Hickman’s a/typical layout (2-3). The text boxes in the upper left contain simple narration, but look a bit more like menu bars than text boxes. Below that we have what looks like a well designed business proposal. On closer inspection, the proposal includes disturbing facts clothed in an ironically cheerful tone: “To find out more about globalization, read below. However, if you’re like me and only care about your own personal entertainment (certainly not anything like children dying of dysentery in Togo), keep reading on the next page!” The images on this page oscillate from realistic to abstract images with a happy medium found in the stylized white outlines of protesters found standing on top of the proposal. In the upper right we find the masthead,
What are you willing to do?

I hate their weakness.

Wall Street – The Financial District

The WTO/IMF/World Bank* are in town for their semi-annual Third World gangbang.

This, of course, means so are they…

You know: Contentious Objectors, Protestors… Activists.


Understand this: Their cause here today is just. But these people just lack the backbone, the will, to do anything about it.

I love these guys. I love their passion. I love their sit-ins, their slogans, their protest songs. I love that believing they can change the world.

The bull chases the bear chases the bull chases the bear...
including a table of contents for the comic. Below that the narration continues down into an image of three protestors drawn (finally) in what appears to be a fairly traditional pencil and ink comic book style (though Hickman is always generous when it comes to ink, rebelling against the principal of bounding line and embracing a kind of apeiron). The protestors’ signs are blank, but we find captions above, offering us more biting sarcasm aimed at the status quo. In the lower right we find “*the (voice) says: what are you willing to do?” “The voice says” acts as an icon, alerting us to a special kind of text, similar to the icons used throughout the *For Dum-mies series. The text following is formatted the same as the narration above but with a different color. The entire page is fairly monochromatic, using various shades of red, pink and orange.

The example of Hickman serves a few purposes here. First, it completely resists interpretation as sequential art. There are no panels, let alone gutters. While Hickman does use panels on subsequent pages, it is by no means the norm of the book. However, *The Nightly News is obviously a comic. If we were to define it as a comic on the basis of its few examples of sequential panels, then any textbook that utilized comics as examples would also have to be a comic.

Second, it offers a chance to investigate Thierry Groensteen’s concepts. As mentioned earlier, Groensteen utilizes the concepts of spatio-topia and arthrology (corresponding roughly to the terms I introduced at the beginning of this chapter, decoupage and tressage, respectively) to interpret comics. Hickman’s work resists restricted arthological interpretation as it has no strips, no gutters, no strict sequence. However, it is suited quite well to the tressage of general arthrology in its repeated motifs, icons, and color (Hickman is careful and consistent in his monochromatic palettes, oscillating between the narrative present [reds] and various flashbacks [blues]) and, more obviously, to the decoupage of the spatio-topical system through its layout. Howev-
er, these two criteria do not make it a comic, for they could apply equally well to other media.

Groensteen, wisely, does not seek to define comics (indeed, he rejects any efforts to define comics quite clearly), but to provide a “foundational principle,” iconic solidarity: “The necessary, if not sufficient, condition required to speak of comics is that the images will be multiple and correlated in some fashion” (19). This signifies a great advance over either the sequential or the historical/cultural definition by moving towards a foundational principle, or center, and in this way guides my own pursuit. However, Groensteen does not seem sufficiently perturbed or inspired by the fact that his necessary condition could describe an issue of Sports Illustrated, a genetics textbook, or Watchmen with equal fidelity. Instead, he likens it to the frustration of trying to define literature without resorting to claims of cultural superiority or formal naïveté (that is to say, literature can be neither “good” texts nor mere words in sequence). This issue, of course, still haunts literature departments, but there have been a few compelling solutions. One is seen in the gradual expansion of literary studies to include e-texts, films, comics, plastic arts, inanimate objects, political theories, et cetera ad infinitum. How did literature manage to move itself from the margins of the humanities to its center in the latter half of the twentieth century? By defining itself through its own central practice, the production and analysis of meanings, rather than through its limits. Can comics perform a similar metamorphosis?

If so, we must correct Groensteen’s foundational principle of “iconic solidarity.” Groensteen himself proceeds by analyzing comics not by means iconic solidarity, but primarily and throughout his work by the principles of decoupage and tressage.

Where have we gotten then? From a firm division between image and text we’ve moved to decoupage and tressage. We’ve made a Heideggerian move from nouns to verbs at least. However, we’ve yet to make the supreme Heideggerian move of the always already reflexive. I will leave that to the next chapter. For now, we will end with Lyotard and the question of any ending at all.

There is no absolutely Other, but there is the element which splits itself, overturns itself; that constitutes the face-to-face and the sensible at the same time; there is the ‘there is’ which is not initially heard speech, but the work [œuvre] of a sort of drift-work [travail de dérive], splitting the single element into two sides and leaving them in this disequilibrium of which ethical life speaks, but that is the disequilibrium of the seer and the visible, which is unheard
But to know what happens as a consequence of mixing speech and gesture, of dissolving saying in seeing: either speaking is silenced, or the seen is necessarily already like speaking.

(Lyotard, “Taking the Side of the Figural” 36, DF 11)

The hymen must be preserved, resutured so that it can again be violated through multimodal dialogue, moving across and back, weaving, creating a text which will truly require braiding, tressage. This chapter has not yet done that. My visual play has heretofore remained restrained to discourse. But as Lyotard reminds us, this is not sufficient. Yet we must also resist seeing it as a promise of ultimate escape, as Jacques Rancière reminds us:

The Image—that is, the ‘original image’ of Christian theology, the Son who is not ‘similar’ to the Father but partakes of his nature. We no longer kill each other for the iota that separates this image from the other.

But we continue to regard it as the promise of flesh, capable of dispelling the simulacra of resemblance, the artifices of art, and the tyranny of the letter. (8)

The next chapter will be devoted to hanging the twin heads of Lyotard and Rancière on the ship with which we will sail twixt whirlpool and sea monster.
playing it cool

reflexive multimodal composition
Here we find ourselves once again with the text, but this time nobody has written it, and it reads itself.

Jean-Francois Lyotard
("Taking the Side of the Figural" 36, DF12)

In this chapter I begin by finishing our discussion of Lyotard’s Discourse, Figure from chapter two. This draws us into a discussion of reflexivity and media. Finally, I draw a new vision of composition that is at once multimodal and reflexive. Throughout there will be tangents, rebus, discursive figures and figural discourses, including three Greek words beginning with alpha: aletheia, apeiron, and apophansis.

We need to remember again that Lyotard’s figural is neither identical nor unrelated to the visual. He introduces it as a supplement to text. The given is not a text, there is a density to it, or rather a difference, a constitutive difference, which is not to be read, but to be seen; this difference, and the immobile mobility which reveals it, is what is continually forgotten in signifying it. (34, DF 9)

Lyotard likens this difference to the unconscious and expression, calling it laterality. To say that this density signifies the figural is to fall into the trap of discourse:

depth greatly exceeds the power of the reflection that would like to signify it, to place it in its language, not as a thing, but as a definition. Meaning is present as the absence of signification; yet signification takes hold of it (and it can, one can say everything), and it is exiled on the borders of a new speech act. Here the death drive is always intertwined with Eros-Logos. The construction of meaning is only ever the deconstruction of signification. (42-43, DF 19)

Whence my own argument for decentering over definition. To define figure would be to forfeit the game. Some may find this incredibly disheartening, but I see in it great promise and great danger. Here we get to the heart of composition, the construction of meaning.
Lyotard critiques the structuralist notion that the unconscious is structured like a language. For him, the unconscious is the matrix-figure. The matrix-figure precedes the figure-form and the figure-image, acting as the impossible origin of all fantasy and desire. It is the other of discourse. However, this is not figure qua figure, but rather something else. The figural describes all three levels (image, form, matrix), while the discursive only has recourse to the first two levels. The figure-image is what we see, what we might normally think of as the visible. Lyotard calls the figure-form the schema of a scene, its layout, architecture, centering. While it is obviously visible, it is not what we might call visual in the traditional sense. The figure-matrix is invisible, indescribable, immersed in the unconscious. There seem to be linguistic components to the unconscious. However, they are by no means discursive. The unconscious is figural. Perhaps the unconscious is the only place where figure is neatly divided from discourse. However, everything on this side of the unconscious is “adulterated by discourse” as Lyotard will say (“Connivances of Desire” 333, DF 271).

Reverie, dream, phantasm are mixtures containing both viewing and reading matter. The dream-work is not a language; it is the effect on language of the force exerted by the figural (as image or as form). (“Dream-work” 50, DF 270).

Earlier, Lyotard implies that the figural exists as some kind of referent of which language always falls short. This is not to endlessly repeat that there is no outside-text, nor does it put figure on a referential pedestal of truth.

The construction of meaning is only ever the deconstruction of signification.

If a λόγος as ἀπόφασις is to be true, its Being-true is ἀλήθευς in the manner of ἀποφαίνεσθαι—of taking entities out of their hiddenness and letting them be seen in their unhiddenness (their uncoveredness). (Heidegger, Being and Time 262, H 219).

Heidegger has perhaps done more than anyone to bring ἀλήθεια (alētheia) into philosophical parlance. His reading of it in Being and Time, complicated and continuously reflected upon throughout his life, centers on the word’s etymology. Those unfamiliar with Greek may seem annoyed by the seemingly obscure pedantry of this tangent should note Heidegger’s warning: we must avoid uninhibited word-mysticism. Nevertheless, the ultimate business of philosophy is preserve the force of the most elemental words in which Dasein expresses itself, and to keep the common understanding
Truth, Lyotard argues, occurs between the two, or rather, as the event of their noncoincidence. And this is the figural, not the real world, but the forces that move between language and the depths it describes, depths of the unconscious and the real which are ever the same.

Nor should we merely oppose discourse to figure thinking we’ve found a more elemental way of dividing the given, Lyotard’s intuition… is that figure and discourse cannot be opposed. Unlike the history of the aesthetic, which has much at stake in distinguishing them as incommensurable ontological territories, in Lyotard’s view, figure and discourse are divided not by a bar but rather by only the slightest of commas. (Rodowick 5)

Nor am I the first to struggle to pin down the exact relationship of discourse to figure in Lyotard’s text. Geoffrey Bennington has written brilliantly on Discourse, Figure without arriving at any clear-cut conclusions. The figure is always already bound up with the discursive, and only this could account for the existence of a book such as Discourse, figure. This is not to reduce the argument of the book to a dialectic: the battle of discourse and figure is never, even in principle, resolved either way. The ‘critical function’ of the work is not that of delivering up the primary process (this would itself be an illusion of the secondary process (DF 23), but of resisting its absorption into the secondary, from within the secondary. Conscious thought is all for secondary revision, and is disconcerted by its failure to bind and order. To the extent that ‘truth’ irrupts in the event of that failure, then it is not surprising that from leveling them off to that unintelligibility which functions in turn as a source of pseudo-problems. (262, H 220, italics in original)

These pseudo-problems arise when we refer to Seinfeld as deconstruction or a computer as multimedia (How many media exactly? Is there a literal newspaper inside it? A book? A movie? The computer is a single medium that re-mediates previous media). When we fail to think critically, thought "levels off" and becomes mere common knowledge. We can also hear in Heidegger’s taboo a search for origins. This search, and its futility, will concern much of this chapter. For now, however, we will pursue truth.

αλήθεια can be broken into two parts: α (a) and λήθεια (letheia). The first denotes negation, the second concealing. From these Heidegger constructs a complex theory of truth involving revealing and concealing which attempts to circumvent the correspondence theory while maintaining something like the common meaning of truth. This theory gets reworked throughout Early Greek Thinking. Heidegger spends time with Heraclitus’ fiftieth fragment,
How can one hide himself before that which never sets?

He points out that the word for hiding here is λιποί, the core of ἀλήθεια. The thing which never sets for Heidegger is being, which makes possible truth, ἀλήθεια as unconcealing. Heidegger spends a bit of time talking about the light metaphor that truth is thus involved in, both because truth is an unsetting sun and because concealing involves the play of light and dark. The unsetting sun of being, for Heidegger as well as Heraclitus, is logos: “Λόγος, in whose lighting they come and go, remains concealed from them, and forgotten” (122). ἀλήθεια makes possible assertion, the ἀπόφασις which will concern our next tangent.

Lyotard brings up truth early on in Discourse, Figure in the context of utopia, to which he returns at the end of the book:

Freud has taught us what utopia is; utopia strictly defined. Utopia is that
Here we may glean two axes, namely horizontal relationships and a vertical progression. The horizontal relationships oscillate between love, hate, and beating among actors and victims. Lyotard articulates the vertical progression as four transformations: active to passive voice, feminine to masculine gender, definite (“me,” “the”) to indefinite (“a”), and the disappearance of the extension of the predicate (“by an adult”). The effect common to all of these transformations is a distancing, disassociation, deconstruction, which requires Freud to construct before he may interpret, because “regression has pushed the deconstruction of the verbal and iconic representatives so far that the signs produced by desire no longer satisfy the conditions for recognition by the preconscious, and there is almost nothing left to interpret” (352, DF 347). Is this a delicate way of saying that Freud’s ultimate construction (“masturbatorial phantasy” not “abuse victim”) has little to do with what is presented to him? Perhaps, but Lyotard continues into an investigation of beating. The beating here signifies both the genital and the anal-sadistic, both love and hate, Eros and Thanatos/Logos. Lyotard further connects the beating to the lamb, the rhythmic dot-dash of poetry or a heartbeat. It’s not that one is eros and the other thanatos. Rather, thanatos causes the gap between the dot and the dash, eros pushes its connection. If we transfer the metaphor to gaming, eros provides the play, thanatos the board. Lyotard’s translator Mary Lydon sums the section up:

truth never appears where it is expected. . . . truth shows itself as an aberration when measured by signification and knowledge. Truth is out of tune. To be out of tune in discourse is to deconstruct its order. Truth in no way passes through a discourse of signification, its impossible topos cannot be located by the co-ordinates of the geography of knowledge. Rather, it makes itself felt on the surface of discourse by its effects, and this presence of meaning is called expression. (“Taking the Side” 41, DF 17)

Elle détonne, truth is out of tune. Détonne signifies clashing, being off key, but its homonym détone signifies the destruction such a statement implies. Truth has nothing to do with correspondence at all. In fact, truth surprises us by not corresponding, by appearing unexpectedly. The tuning involved may hearken back to Heraclitus’ παλιντροπος (palintropos, backturning). For Heraclitus there is a harmony to the world, a logos which aligns all things through tension. Lyotard recognizes the tension but refuses the harmony.
Lyotard’s discussion of Eros and the death drive—what he calls Freud’s “hesitation” between them—and the link he establishes between the death drive and the figure would demand a separate and lengthy presentation. Let me suggest merely that this “hesitation,” and the intricate relation it implies—one that resists any effort to understand it in terms of opposition—is figured forth in the comma that separates and joins discours and figure in Lyotard’s title. One might even go so far as to say that discours is on the side of Eros, figure on the side of the death drive, so that figure points at once to the fulfillment of desire, and the disruption, the delay, the deferral of discourse, the dismembering of the ego and the silencing of speech. Yet it is necessary to remember, if virtually impossible to represent, that “[t]he visible is not freed from writing nor the intelligible from difference” any more than Eros is free of the death drive, or vice versa [179]. Thus discourse and figure are given together. Not sequentially, not in juxtaposition, but together, at once, one on top of the other like two superimposed photographic images, or like the representations of the unconscious. This is a spatial relationship that language in its linearity does not permit, hence the imperative to write “Discours, figure,” where the comma, like the switch to the passive voice in the fantasy “A Child is Being Beaten” represents graphically, but mute, as a pause, a blank, a hesitation, one might say, that which cannot be verbalized.24
“Now we understand that the principle of figurality which is also the principle of unbinding (the baffle) is the death drive: ‘the absolute of anti-synthesis: Utopia’ (“Fiscourse Digure” 357, DF 354). The principle of figurality is the death drive. It should be no surprise to us that discourse would line up with Eros (as Norman Brown had already stressed), but to assign figure the position of thanatos comes as quite a shock. Lyotard presaged this in the first chapter when he rejects the possibility of any unified theory.

We have renounced the madness of unity, the madness of supplying a first cause in a unitary discourse, the fantasy of the origin. The Freudian utopia maintains us under the rule dictated by the so-called death drive, which is that the unification of diversity, even in the unity of discourse (even in that of Freudian theory), is always repelled, always forbidden. (“Taking the Side of the Figural” 42, DF 18)

The figural (under the command of the death-drive) resists any possibility for a unified discourse. Here we may distinguish Derrida’s différence from Lyotard’s difference. Lyotard situates difference in the figural (always already intertwined with discourse) whereas Derrida sees différence inherent in discourse without any need to invoke the figural. The difference is subtle, but telling, hinging on Uto-

**ἀπόφανσις**

(some would say divided) later.

With Heidegger’s erasure of the distinction between subject and object, we can understand his love of the middle voice. Objects are not “seen by” subjects, nor do subjects “see” objects, rather things show themselves. It is this showing with which Heidegger concerns himself. The φαινεται (phain-esthai) of ἀποφαίνεσθαι becomes the pheno of phenomenology. The very voice of the verb foreshadows Edmund Husserl’s immanent transcendence.

Heidegger often uses a noun derived from the verb, ἀπόφανσις (apophansis), which means statement, declaration. However, there is another noun that comes from ἀποφαίνεσθαι, ἀπόφασις (apophasis, note the missing η), which can mean a sentence, decree, or list. I bring this up because there are two words spelled ἀποφανσις with two completely different meanings. The second word means negation, and is far more common than the ἀπόφανσις meaning sentence. This second word is taken from ἀπο and φημ… (phêm), meaning to speak. We get the term apophatic discourse from this second word.

ἀπόφανσις: sentence and its negation. The two meanings are indistinguishable and therefore always already there when using either. Logos and thanatos. Eros and the death drive.
pia, both “good place” and “no place” in the original pun. For Derrida, discourse will always be capable of the former. For Lyotard, figural- ity always occupies the latter.

Discourse, Figure, then, anticipates The Differend. The given entails a pockmarked landscape of difference and repetition, un- translatable, unsmoothable. Everywhere we look we find differends, injudicable regions between places, utopias. The call then is not to smooth over, but to bear witness to new idioms, to the construction of new places, to the composition of new topoi, always between and across mo- dalities. After all, jouissance only ever exists as a difference between two states. This disserta- tion constructs incompossible theories of such a composition, each theory in tension with the others, never failing into a unity.

Dans la technique psycha- nalytique, il n’est point besoin d’un travail spécial de synthèse; cela, l’individu s’en charge mieux que nous.

In the psychoanalytic technique, there is no need for a special work of synthesis; here, the individual does it better than us.

Letter from S. Freud to O. Pfister, October 9, 1918 (DF389)
Rudolphe Gasché’s *The Tain of the Mirror* builds and complicates a case for reflection as the central problem of Western metaphysics. He initially creates a history of reflection, from Socrates’ “know thyself” through Descartes’ skeptical reflection and into Hegel’s absolute reflection. Reflection here means more than careful consideration of an object. It progresses toward thought which takes the self as its object, then takes ever and ever closer objects for reflection (self - thought - reflection). With Heidegger, the subject-object relationship has been complicated sufficiently to merit dropping the term “reflection” altogether - Heidegger uses Besinnung, which Gasché is careful to distinguish from reflection. Besinnung, consequently, is the term by which Heidegger calls the non-reflexive capturing of what is turned back to through a destruction of the history of ontology, not only insofar as its representations of Being are concerned, but also as concerns its major methodological concept of reflection. (117)

Heidegger’s *Destruktion* makes way for Derrida’s deconstruction. Here we return to the impossibility of the hors-texte with which I have already identified...

In the earliest surviving fragment of Greek philosophy, Anaximander introduces the concept of τὸ ἀπειρόν (*to apeiron*), “the infinite” (Barnes 28ff.). Jonathan Barnes sums up Anaximander’s “Urstoff” (original material out of which all things came) thusly: “the first principle or element of things, the original and originating mass of the universe, was *apeiros*, unlimited” (29). This seemingly simple limitlessness is complicated by the realization that originary is in itself a limit (whence Lyotard’s pseudarche). As such, Anaximander’s *apeiron* prefigures Derrida’s shocking statement that “*différance*, in a certain and very strange way, (is) ‘older’ than the ontological difference or than the truth of Being” (133). The limitless is a necessary precursor to a world predicated upon limitation (differentiation). Through calling attention to the fundamental limiting inherent in epistemology and language, the Milesian Anaximander may have posthumously influenced the Ephesian Heraclitus.

That Heraclitus makes sidelong reference to Anaximander in his opening fragment has, to my knowledge, gone unnoticed far too long. Heraclitus’ opening fragment reads,

Although this account [*λόγος*] holds forever, men ever fail to comprehend,
Derrida. Gasché makes clear that for Derrida this does not mean that all is language (a reading I have perhaps leaned toward) but that there can be no final arbiter of meaning: the general text... has no extratextual signified or referent, no last reason, whether empirical or intelligible, at which its referring function could come to a final halt. It also means that the generalized text does not refer to something outside the system of referentiality that could do without being referred to, but that its referentiality is such that it extends abysmally out of sight without, however, entailing the text's self-reflexivity. The absence of all extra-text, about which one could decide independently of the textual system of referral, implies that there is no one final meaning to the text. Again, it must be repeated that this is so not because of the general text's semantic wealth or unfathomable depth, nor because of the finitude of its human decipherer, but for structural reasons.

(282)

Note first that there is no depth to the general text. This is not to make of it a plane of immanence (as will be shown below). Nor is the text totalizing in the sense of excluding any real world. It is more closely aligned with a structural (though not structuralist) analysis of Heidegger's referential totality (on which see below).

Referral itself is made possible by the separation of self and other, of subject

Both before hearing it and once they have heard. Although all things come to pass in accordance with this account, men are like the untried [ἀπειροί] when they try [πειρόμενοι] such words and works as I set forth, distinguishing each according to its nature and telling how it is. But other men are oblivious of what they do awake, just as they are forgetful of what they do asleep. (K.1, D. 1, Charles Kahn's trans.)

While the first word, *logos*, is one of the most recognizable of Greek words, the other two may be gleaned from our introduction to τὸ ἀπειρον—the first (ἀπειροί) being the masculine plural version of the same word, the second (πειρόμενοι) being a verbal form lacking the negative prefix. However, the question might arise as to what (in)experience has to do with infinity. To answer that, we first trace the history of the infinite.

Liddell and Scott's *Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon* records three separate words (n.b. not meanings) spelled ἀπειρος (apeiros). The first is a Doric version of ἄπειρος, meaning land (as opposed to sea or air). The second is defined as "without trial or experience" and traced to πείρα (peira). The third, defined as "boundless, infinite, countless," is traced to πειράς (peiras). The latter two of these words are negative forms of a word (πείρα)
and object, the arche-trace. The trace is constitutive of/by différance. Derrida notes,

And we will see why that which lets itself be designated différance is neither simply active nor simply passive, announcing or rather recalling something like the middle voice, saying an operation that is not an operation, an operation that cannot be conceived either as passion or as the action of a subject on an object, or on the basis of the categories of agent or patient, neither on the basis of nor moving toward any of these terms. For the middle voice, a certain non-transitivity, may be what philosophy, at its outset, distributed into an active and a passive voice, thereby constituting itself by means of this repression. (Margins of Philosophy 9)

The original philosophical move was to divide the middle voice into active and passive thereby separating subject and object. Heidegger’s reinvoction of the middle voice divorces his ontology from traditional philosophy as it demolishes the subject-object opposition.

In short, the arche-trace must be understood as the fold of an irreducible “bending-back,” as a minimal (self-)difference within (self-)identity, which secures selfhood and self-presence through the

which means an attempt or try and related forms include the idea of piercing or passing over, hence limit. The ἄπειρος therefore means without either experience or limit. This particular word cluster descends into experiment, empiric, pirate (one who makes an attempt), emporium (either a place of attempts or a meeting of limits), port, and experience (Hasley §296-7).

Apparently the word originally connoted testing something by poking at it. Hence it would evolve notions of limit (determined by trial), experience, and piercing. Somewhere behind all this lurks Pirsig’s notion of the rhetorical scalpel, which establishes limits—and thereby determines experience—by piercing the Urstoff. The concept of τὸ ἄπειρον becomes incredibly productive then for Anaximander, but it remains to be shown why Heraclitus would invoke such a word with such semantic weight. Perhaps its ambiguity is indicative of Heraclitus’s sibyline style which, “οὔτε λέγει οὔτε κρύπτει ἀλλὰ σημαίνει” (K.33, D.93).¹

This punning signification should be allowed only if productive. Seemingly, Heraclitus’ use would be just the opposite—why would Heraclitus link his inexperienced listeners with Anaximander’s Urstoff? Perhaps it was an

¹ “Neither states nor lies but signifies” (my trans.).
detour of oneself (as Other) to oneself. (Gasché 192)
The trace then makes possible self reference through identification of distinct entities at the same time that it makes self-reference impossible by making identification always approximate.

The immediate take away is that, as a reference system, the general text cannot get outside itself, nor ever refer to itself exactly (see Kurt Gödel). In this sense, there can be no reflexivity:

The illusion of self-reflection of a text is witness only to the representational function of a text, not to its representation of something outside the text or it self-representation. It is an effect of the text’s nature as a system of referral. (291)

Referral makes reflection possible and impossible in the same movement. The general text is a “system of traces” based upon metaphor.

Metaphor makes possible the originary split of the middle voice, the beginning of philosophy. Derrida concludes, “différance, in a certain and very strange way, is ‘older’ than the ontological difference or than the truth of Being” (Margins of Philosophy 22). Différance then reveals a certain metaphoricity in being. Gasché sees in Derrida’s notion of the metaphoricity of the general text, a subtle gesture toward the transcendental:

Since, as an “originary” synthesis, metaphoricity is more originary than what I have formerly referred to as

insult to Anaximander (long dead by this point). Perhaps an attempt to separate himself from Anaximander’s empiric followers. I would however argue that much more is at stake than a 2500 year old squabble.

Hereclitus’ first sentence plays with the word logos. Normally the phrase “this logos” would refer to the book itself—a sort of proem preparing the reader for what is to come. Yet by claiming both that “this [logos] holds forever” and that men fail to understand it both “before hearing it and once they have heard,” Heraclitus points toward a more elegant reading of logos (Kahn 96-7). Rather than a mere account or argument it is the discourse of nature itself, possibly language itself. As Kahn writes,

The tension between word and content is essential here, for without it we do not have the instructive paradox of men who are expected to understand a logos they have not heard. (98)

Playing between medium and message, Heraclitus unites them (and this, over two millennia before Marshall McLuhan). The logos is not only the structure of his book but the argument itself: both form and content.

The careful wording of the next sentence (really still the first in the
transcendentalism, and since it also combines with the most exterior qualities of metaphor, with metaphor’s exteriority to the concept, I shall try to define it as a nonphenomenologizable quasitranscendental. (295)

Let us aim at an understanding of this final phrase through a division first.

Nonphenomenologizable signifies the recognition of the limits of phenomenology. Phenomenology always entails a return to Sachen selbst, the things themselves. Gasché writes, “Derrida’s inquiries are concerned with a difference that is no longer phenomenologizable, that has no “itself” to itself but that, in its irreducible plurality, ceaselessly differs from itself” (88). When discussing metaphoricity, différence, or trace there can no longer be any “itself.”

By quasitranscendental Gasché signifies an alternative to Heidegger’s finite transcendentals. Finite transcendentals are the constitutive features of Dasein, “quasitranscendentals are, on the contrary, conditions of possibility and impossibility concerning the very conceptual difference between subject and object

Greek), sets up a delicate play between experience and empiricism. The statement that “all things come to pass in accordance with this account” once again plays toward the new science that had been brewing in Miletus—a blend between philosophy and proto-empiricism. Heraclitus is quick to challenge such a reading by saying that “men are like the untried [άπειροι] when they try [πειρέμενοι] such words and works as I set forth, distinguishing each according to its nature [φύσις] and telling how it is.” Again the idea of physis (as opposed to nomos) common in the new science rears its ugly head, promising a simple resolution. Instead, the subtle phrasing of the central section yields more complex readings. The complexity hinges upon the word “like.” Kahn calls this “a surprising phrase; for it suggests that in fact men do have the experience in question” (99). This problem may be dis-solved through the implementation of Kahn’s earlier argument about the logos: if it is universal and originary, then all have experienced it already.

Finally we have reached the apeirotic. The aporia is made evident in the central phrase:

άπειροισιν ἐσώκασι πειρώμενοι

They are like the inexperienced [or limitless ones] even as they experience. (My trans.)

Fortuitously the congruence between the two terminal words in this phrase appears, granting it a certain harmony in its paradox. If we invert our usual
and even between Dasein and Being” (317). The quasi-trascendentals (metaphoricity, trace, différance) precede Dasein. Nonphenomenologizable quasi-trascendentals occupy a position between the transcendental and the empirical and between immanence and transcendence thereby coupling the two binaries. It is through Derrida’s move away from phenomenology that the transcendental blurs into transcendence.

Transcendentals imply a transcendence through the hierarchical principle of identity. However, when identity is under erasure, immanence reasserts itself within transcendentals. Similarly, Deleuze and Guattari’s immanence does not lie outside of thought, but rather makes thought possible:

The plane of immanence is not a concept that is or can be thought but rather the image of thought, the image thought gives itself of what it means to think, to make use of thought, to find one’s bearings in thought. (What is Philosophy 37)

interpretation, we find that people are like the apeiron itself when they experience the logos. As we learn to listen to the logos, we find that form and content merge. Rather than Heraclitus’ statement being about the logos, it becomes a part of the logos. As we study the structure of language, we find that we are an expression of language rather than the reverse.

Always already returning to us we see Plato’s notion of rhetoric as experience (empeiria) rather than art (Phaedrus 462 C). Plato calls rhetoric a “made art” and when asked by Polus of his meaning replies, “I mean a certain habitude [ἐμπειρία]” (Lamb’s trans.). Empeiria, as you may have guessed, stems from the same root as apeiros. Concordantly, it provides a useful analog to Heraclitus. Rhetoric is indeed an experience—an experience in the infinite, boundless Urstoff from which reality is constructed: a discourse on the figural. Heraclitus somehow manages to inform Plato’s disparaging remarks about rhetoric even after his death. Deleuze and Guattari recognize that the immanence of the rhetorical subject lies in its existence as habit:

Empiricism knows only events and other people and it therefore a great creator of concepts. Its force begins from the moment it defines the subject, a habitus, a habit, nothing but a habit in a field of immanence, the habit of saying I. (What is Philosophy 48)
These three thinkers—Derrida, Deleuze, and Lyotard—all seek to subvert and combine the twin binaries of immanence-transcendence and transcendental-empirical. Lyotard makes clear his distinction from Derrida:

As we pursue the analysis we come up against a density, an opacity: the locus, I will assume, of the figural which deconstructs not only discourse but the figure, in as much as the figure is a recognizable image or a regular form.

Not just the trace, not just presence-absence, period, indifferently discourse or figure, but the primary process, the principle of disorder, the incitement to jouissance.

And underneath the figural: difference. Not just the trace, not just presence-absence, period, indifferently discourse or figure, but the primary process, the principle of disorder, the incitement to jouissance.

Rhetoric is an experience which yields infinite inexperience. Through looking through language, rather than at it, people “are oblivious of what they do awake, just as they are forgetful of what they do asleep.” This epistemological somnambulism reflects a public incapable of laughing at/with the sesquipedalian philosophizing in which this aside revels. Instead the demand is to “be clear,” a notion as dishonest as it is impossible. Hopefully it has found its way into the hands of a reader who glances off of it rather than staring it in the face. Only in this manner can it provide sufficient misreadings to merit its own creation.

Figure is not merely a trace. The given is not a text.

I have so far been reading Discours, Figure as a complex response to Of Grammatology. Lyotard later clarifies this relationship:
When J. Derrida talks of the trace, and... when he talks of archi-writing, the error. I think, is that of not dissociating what is letter and what is [L]ine. It’s obvious that the line does not function like the letter. For the letter made up of a set of distinctive features, and if it can bear meaning, this is because, just like speech, it offers the receiver easily recognisable elements, in a binary logic. This is not true of the line.... One can in no way say that the line traced by Klee’s pencil on a piece of paper is loaded with effects of meaning in the same way as the letters he writes under that line, which say simply: Salto mortale. for example. Absolutely not. (Dérive 228-9, Quoted in Bennington 102)

The line is not the letter. The image Lyotard constructs for dealing with their relationship is the Moebius strip interlaced with a band. This construction may have originated as a Moebius strip which was cut (like the cut in the middle voice), but this must always remain pseudarchic. We have no access to the figure as origin, whether in a historical sense, or in a more personal, psychoanalytic sense. Instead, we are surrounded by a given which is constituted by both discourse and figure, forever intertwined.
One way of seeing/reading the immanence-transcendence relationship is with the images of windows and mirrors. Transcendence hypothesizes a window through which the subject gazes at the object. Immanence requires instead a mirror which folds the plane upon itself. Nor need facilitate a consistent reflection, an aedequatio. Instead, it must be convex or concave, bent like the comma separating/joining discourse, figure.

The image is taken from Bolter and Gromala’s Windows and Mirrors, which advocates reflexivity in information design. They first show that current Information Design canon requires transparency and abhors reflexivity, prefers windows to mirrors. In the window metaphor, GUIs are transparent, showing you information as it is. This is of course, just a myth, though a useful one, to be sure. Users rarely see information as it is (except perhaps in the most applied uses like statistical and cad software). Nathan Shedroff, as well as Stuart Selber, would argue that Information Design always carries with it the myth of transparency. The alternative would be a mirror, which reflects its own methods, capabilities, and user. Reflexive GUIs encourage users to reflect on the process itself.

When we are encouraged to look through technologies to our work rather than at the technologies of our work, we perpetuate the false assumption that the relationship between a technology and its design is "natural" and not conventional. Moreover, we discourage users from examining how they might modify or work around technologies that fail to support their backgrounds, educations, learning styles, and worldviews. (§ 5)

Stuart Selber offers an intriguing view of the effect of technology on technical com-
OS and Linux. For the most part, OS X is designed to work thoughtlessly. A user’s immediate impulse for getting something done should be the way that it works. On the up side, this narrows the learning curve tremendously while meeting experienced users’ gut need for a feeling of immediate control. On the other hand, Linux, an open-source, cross-platform operating system, forces users to learn how it works on a much deeper level. Rather than anticipating users’ every move, Linux requires a bit of flexibility on its users’ part. Linux’s major advantage is its flexibility in return. Users can redesign every aspect of the operating system, customizing it to their own needs on the fly.

Normally, these are viewed through the lenses of Usability and Customizability. Usability = good. Customizability = good. Usability and customizability are assumed to be inversely related. Various information designers have found ways of splitting the difference. Think of the EQ on the receiver of a modular stereo. The more aspects users are allowed to control, the more difficult the device is to use. Apple’s designers have reinvented the EQ for the iPod by combining usability and customizability brilliantly. Rather than increasing dials, the iPod’s EQ system multiplies presets: quality over quantity in an interesting way.

He first addresses three myths of technology: the myth of progress, the myth of access, and the myth of transparency. Technology does not produce real progress, but is a complex system with benefits and disadvantages. Merely giving everyone access to technology will not decrease the distance between the haves and have-nots. Technology does not have to aim at transparency, nor does it often achieve that goal.

Normally, these are viewed through the lenses of Usability and Customizability. Usability = good. Customizability = good. Usability and customizability are assumed to be inversely related. Various information designers have found ways of splitting the difference. Think of the EQ on the receiver of a modular stereo. The more aspects users are allowed to control, the more difficult the device is to use. Apple’s designers have reinvented the EQ for the iPod by combining usability and customizability brilliantly. Rather than increasing dials, the iPod’s EQ system multiplies presets: quality over quantity in an interesting way.

Reflection (meaning). With the added dimensions an experience entails, we move from information to knowledge (deeper, personal), and occasionally to wisdom (generalizable approaches and values). Reflection makes possible the transition from knowledge to wisdom.
Like I said, OSs are usually seen through the lenses of customizability and usability. Instead, I’d like to look through the lens of user adaptability. OS X is an incredibly stable system, but when it does crash, users are often completely helpless. They lack the tools with which to adapt to breakdowns. On the other hand, Linux crashes far more often, but its users are left relatively unfazed. Linux gives its users tools with which to adapt. When users are taught to look only through the GUI, they internalize a technological myth: users’ desires should be met immediately; if they are not, then the machine has failed; if the machine has failed, users are inculpable. Conversely, users who are taught to look through technology learn how technology works. They realize that computers will only do what users tell them and that, most likely, if something has gone “wrong,” it is the user’s fault and can therefore be solved by the user.

This may seem far afield of comics, discourse, and figure. However, if you’ll bear with me for one last tangent, we can build a new, more useful understanding of comics.

Heidegger’s Zuhandenheit and Vorhandenheit roughly correspond to windows and mirrors respectively. Zuhandenheit, often translated by “readiness-to-hand,” signifies Dasein’s relationship to tools during use. Vorhandenheit, often translated by “presence-at-hand,” entails the conspicuousness of tools which are not currently usable for one reason or another. The interplay of ready-to-hand and present-to-hand has recently been integrated into usability and cognitive science research (cf. Dotov et al.) Heidegger’s hammer, then.

Heidegger employs a hammer as his primary example (Being and Time, 97-107: H 68-76). If I hold the hammer and use it for hammering, then the hammer is “ready-to-hand” [zuhanden]. In a sense, the hammer is invisible. I do not think, “Alright Jason, pull the hammer back, now bring it back firmly, but with just a touch of flexibility so that it doesn’t bounce to much, and use the bounce of the hammer off of the nail to create a kind of rhythm with which to continue hammering until, ah, there the nail is in.” Instead, my thoughts look a little more like, “Hammer. Nail. Hammer nail.” Though even that may be much more thought than I generally give to hammering while hammering.

Now, if in the course of hammering, something goes horribly awry, the hammer will become “present-at-hand” [vorhanden]. My thoughts will look something more like this: “Hammer. Nail. Hammer nail. Hammer nail. Hammer na—sweet cupcakes, my thumb! Why hammer why?! We had an agreement!” Now every movement of the hammer becomes completely reflexive. Now my thoughts are on the process of hammering and how it...
works. My hammering actually gets worse as I find that I can’t hammer while thinking about hammering. However, I also might discover new ways of hammering that prevent me from crushing my thumb. Perhaps the new methods eventually turn out to be too slow. The hammer is failing again (though without causing me to scream). I look to my watch and instinctively move the hammer from zuhanden tool to conspicuous Vorhangenheit. “Perhaps if I do this, I can hammer more quickly and still avoid crushing my thumb. Let’s see ... yes!” This oscillation describes not just a special circumstance, but our basic mode of being in the world.

According to Heidegger, these two modes reveal something about the world as it is. In the ready to hand, we discover the referential totality of the world. The world is a system, and everything we access works in
that system in some relation to other things in that system. A hammer would not be a hammer if we gave it to an alien who has never seen a nail. The presence-at-hand reveals the inescapability of objective reality, a more traditional, Cartesian reality which Heidegger does not deny, but complicates. The hypothetical alien would indeed have an object in its hands, and could examine and analyze that object, even determining what we use it for. These are all present at hand uses. However, it would then occupy a completely different position in the alien’s referential totality (probably something like “artifact discovered on distant planet used in conjunction with other artifacts for attaching things”), assuming the alien partakes of Dasein in a way similar to us.

I promised above that this would bring us back to comics, to discourse, figure. Though this may do some disservice to Heidegger’s terms, we can see a certain tendency for text to act more as ready-to-hand and image to act as present-at-hand. With text, we are encouraged to look through, into the content, beyond the medium itself. With image, we are encouraged to look at; seeing brushstrokes, lines, curves, drops, and the medium itself. This is more true of the discourse/figure distinction than of text vs. image. Discourse concerns itself primarily with meaning, not form. Figure, on the other hand, cares intimately about form and content simultaneously.

None of this is to say that text does not reflect. I have already given multiple examples of texts which reflect and of texts which engage in the interplay of discourse and figure. While my examples have all been twentieth century so far, we could of course include Tristram Shandy, the Book of Kells, and any number of other documents in a list of metatexts engaging in the interplay of figure and discourse. My MA thesis traced these roots through Shakespeare and into Homer. As the opening section of this chapter made clear, there is no discourse without figure.

However, in text (and here I am speaking primarily of print or digital alphabetic artifacts not Derrida’s general text) the distinction between looking through and looking at is sharp. In text reflexivity often causes humor, shock, a distinct shift in reading modes. However, in paintings for instance it is not uncommon to shift easily from symbolic readings to noticing shading, color, line, stroke, etc. The shift occurs more easily in the realm of the figural. Note especially here that discourse equals looking through, but figure does not necessarily equal looking at. Instead, the figural consists of interplay. This was foreshadowed in my first chapter during the discussion of the Moebius strip. The figural is the pseudarchè of the discursive. The discursive is never truly isolated from the figural.

Comics encourage this interplay in a variety of ways. First, by juxtaposing images and text, readers are forced to oscillate between reading (looking through) and seeing (looking at). However, comics complicate this by having readers see words and read images, as shown in chapter two. In fact, this oscillation regularly happens in each element: reading the image while reflecting on its composition, seeing the text balloon and reflecting on how its content relates to its form in subtle and informative ways. This interplay is central to reading comics; in my own experience, more central even than the closure of the gutter.
Marshall McLuhan defined comics as a cool medium for two reasons: they are low definition (cartoony) and highly participatory (amplification through simplification and the closure of the gutter). Chapter one explained the closure of the gutter, while chapter two showed why I don’t feel it’s the key to comics’ uniqueness. Amplification through simplification, a concept I’ve not yet covered, is McCloud’s way of saying that because of the reduced definition of comics, their cartoony character, comics require the reader to intuit more, and also to more greatly identify with characters. The cartooniness of comics has changed greatly in the last fifty years, with comics becoming more and more complex and more and more interested in their own composition. At the same time, many documents benefit from amplification through simplification, which might be another way of discussing the CBS (Clarity, Brevity, Sincerity) model of composition, alternately praised and lambasted by Richard Lanham (Economics of Attention 140-2). Comics, then, can be separated from other media by neither the gutter nor their cartooniness.

Comics maintain their participatory nature in spite of a variety of levels of definition. Their participatory nature, however, is not wedded to the gutter or simplicity of form. The above pages have built an argument instead for their interplay of two diverse acts: looking through and looking at, which can be restated as reading and seeing.

One interpretation would be that such oscillation better imitates the world of our experience. This interpretation would be similar to Hubert Dreyfus’ dismissal of Cartesian models of artificial intelligence: they do not adequately take into account the world as Dasein encounters it. While Dreyfus saliently critiques a certain kind of information design, his critique does not adequately address composition. To do so would be to assume that the goal of composition is mimesis. Instead, we might say that the basis of composition is putting together (com-posit) of disparate concepts and modes, that this kind of oscillation is built into composition from the etymological level up to the most theoretical.

Here I must resist a tendency toward a hegemonic espousal of comics. Other theorists have called various media “meta media.” Video, digital media, the internet have all been cited as so-called container media which encompass (and by implication supersede) all previous (other) media. However, to embrace the differend is to recognize, there is no genre whose hegemony over the others would be just. The philosophical genre, which looks like a metalanguage, is not itself (a genre in quest of its rules) unless it knows that there is no metalanguage. It thereby remains popular, humorous, (Differend 158) comical. Nor should we consider rhetoric or composition metalanguages. They will always carry with them the danger of hegemony. And as Lyotard writes at the end of The Differend,

The only insurmountable obstacle that
the hegemony of the economic genre comes up against is the heterogeneity of phrase regimens and of genres of discourse. This is because there is not ‘language’ and ‘Being,’ but occurrences.

The only insurmountable obstacle that the hegemony of current-traditional, C-B-S style composition comes up against is the heterogeneity of multimodal composition.

So far I’ve argued that all composition is multimodal. Why advocate multimodal composition if all texts are multimodal? It may seem like I’m not advocating anything at all. However, by invoking reflexivity I am creating a new vision of multimodal composition, one that is interested in its own composition and mediation. A reflexive multimodal composition binds discourse to figure while recognizing its own construction. The practical application of that theory comprises the second half of this dissertation.
The following excursus bridges the two halves of the book: knowing and doing. It engages in traditional argument with aleatory form. Please print the entire excursus on double sided copies, shuffle all pages except this one, and arrange the pages into a book, with this page as the cover. Then staple the center. The images and the text will then arrange themselves around this center into always new arguments. This rhizomic argument has no beginning or end, and is all beginning.

Said that as keen, illustrious ornament,
As a setting for geraniums, the General,
The very Place Du Puy, in fact, belonged.

Among our more vestigial states of mind.
Nothing had happened because nothing had changed.
Yet the General was rubbish in the end.

Two things of opposite natures seem to depend
On one another, as a man depends
On a woman, day on night, the imagined

This is the origin of change.
Winter and spring, cold copulars, embrace
And forth the particulars of rapture come.

Music falls on the silence like a sense,
A passion that we feel, not understand.
Morning and afternoon are clasped together
And North and South are an intrinsic couple
And sun and rain a pair, like two lovers
That walk away as one in the greenest body.

In solitude the trumpets of solitude
Are not of another solitude resounding;
The partaker partakes of that which changes him.
The child that touches takes character from the thing,
The body, it touches. The captain and his men

Are one and the sailor and the sea are one.
Follow after, O my companion, my fellow, my self,
Sister and solace, brother and delight.

On a blue island in a sky-wide water
The wild orange trees continued to bloom and to bear,
There is always an excluded third, a supplement whose history resides behind the official story.

In the first excursus I counted to two. A great improvement, I feel, over most dissertations which can only count to one. I have tried in this excursus to count higher. Once one counts to three something changes and there is always more and more and more. We do not need to count to four, for now we can count as high as we like.

The question of rhetorical device returns now with prosopopeia, in which our interlocutors speak for a third man, NOISE. I might propose another device, aposiopesis. Rather than putting words into another’s mouth, perhaps I could let myself be cut of-
Andre Leroi-Gourhan makes language an outlet of evolution. The slow expansion of the brainpan coupled with changes in the hand and mouth facilitate gesture and speech. However, figure has a separate origin.

We can therefore say that while motor function determines expression in the techniques and languages of all anthropoids, in the figurative language of the most recent anthropoids reflection determines graphism. (188)

For Leroi Gourhan the tie between word and thing is reflection, abstraction. The first marks were not mimetic but abstract: “graphism did not begin with naive representations of reality but with abstraction” (188). Notes, numbers, shapes, female symbols.

We might think then that the discursive precedes the figural. In terms of mimesis and language, we’d be right. Primative drawings “reflect the very slow development—lasting more than 10,000 years—of efforts to render with the hand a content that verbally had already been mastered” (373). The earliest inscriptions were likely aides memoire. However, the figural is not merely the visual, as we have seen. Lyotard rebuts Leroi-Gourhan by invoking the thinkness of the world (DF 83) and pointing to the importance of male and female symbols in these early drawings. This importance points us toward the original site of fantasy, the differences between the sexes, and therefore to not the discursive but the figural.

Lyotard’s rebuttal makes way for reflection to be added as a subsequent function for the figural through the guise of technology. Composition was from its beginning multimodal, reflexive, and dependent upon fantasy, the figural, which is always the agent of

its own demise. Not only do they inform our current moment, but such a juxtaposition offers uncanny visions of the future.
What invented whom?

a return of the repressed. Ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny in the individual and the multiplicity.

The history in question is that of dasein, always ek-sisting outside of itself through prostheses. Stiegler continues,

The logic of the supplement, always already the supplement’s history, is a techno-logic through which inorganic matter is organized and takes on the appearance of the living organism which is the originary supplement. Since this “logic” is comprehensible only through its history, it is a dynamic whose engine is différence. (Disorientation 4)

A différance engine, if you’ll pardon the pun. I refer of course to William Gibson and Bruce Sterling’s The Difference Engine, the ur-steam punk novel. Gibson and Sterling propose a new technological history in which Charles Babbage actually carried out his plans to create a computer in the mid-nineteenth century. The resulting society experienced the information and industrial revolutions in overlap. Steam punk as an aesthetic offers us a glimpse of the texture of the future anterior. The coming community flies an airship while wearing bad-ass goggles.

Stiegler’s point, however, is the history of the supplement, a repressed history which will have returned. The supplement in question is technics, or, more accurately, supplementarity is technics. In the first volume, Steigler is careful to confuse the organic and the inorganic. Interrogating the phrase “The invention of the human,” he notes, “the ambiguity of the genitive imposes the following question: what if the ‘who’ were the technical? and the ‘what’ the human?” (134). What invented whom?

All this hinges on the “ambiguity of the genitive. If poetry is “intricate evasions of as,” as Wallace Stevens writes (“An Ordinary Evening,” §8), perhaps philosophy is vested interrogations of
signification as signifiers and signifieds.

Barthes’ doesn’t think so. He posits a third meaning beyond the obvious and the metaphorical.

The obtuse meaning is a signifier without a signified, hence the difficulty in naming it. My reading remains suspended between the image and its description, between definition and approximation. . . . the obtuse meaning is outside (articulated) language while nevertheless within interlocution. (67)

The third meaning remains excluded, not by either interlocutor, but by language itself. This is why so many are uncomfortable with terms like “visual rhetoric” which seem to place visuals firmly under the thumb of the logos.

However, the logos is a place of third meanings as well, and I am not persuaded rhetoric is or ever was tied to signification.

Barthes’ third meaning does not rely exclusively on the visual but rather embodies any kind of discretization of narration, breaking the flow.

In short, what the obtuse meaning disturbs, sterilizes, is metalanguage (criticism). . . . obtuse meaning is discontinuous, indifferent to the story and to the obvious meaning (as signification of the story). (67)

The third meaning ruptures and resists metalanguage. In this sense, defining comics as sequential art excludes the third meaning, or sees it as an unhappy accident, interrupting the flow of meaning across gutters.

My own definition of comics, however, relies upon the third meaning as its primary mechanism. The correlation supplied by the reader between image and text, can of course embody the first two meanings alone. However, the juxtaposition of image and text found in comics creates a supplement, one which speaks to us of
historical movement.

However, resistance is always resisted by the structure of rhetoric itself, as Vitanza points out,

As hard as I might try, I could never exclude all binaries, for they keep creeping back in. Parataxis becomes hypotaxis; hypotaxis, parataxis. Just as anything that has been repressed, purged, excluded eternally returns such as thirds. And, yes, yes, yes, I would do what I am capable of doing when doing hystery and schizography to enable these thirds to creep and ooze in and in and in, back into The History of Rhetoric. I want to denegate The History. (22)

Opening the gap between figure and discourse is never an issue of saying the right thing. There is no orthography. Instead, it consists in always saying the wrong thing in new ways. Binaries reemerge where we least thought they would. Hopefully, though, we can make a space, a gap for thirds to “ooze in and in and in, back into The History of Rhetoric.”

And moreover it is this very difficulty, rhetoric’s resistance to our resistance that lets us know we are working against REAL forces, not “mere rhetoric.” Žižek asks, “is not, for a human being, ‘reality’ ontologically defined through the minimum of resistance — real is that which resists, that which is not totally malleable to the caprices of our imagination?” (“No Sex” para. 10).

The real resists us at each step. We may want to open third spaces and allow an endless free play of signifiers, as the post-structuralists are often accused of wanting. But the play, serious as it may be, is always a play on something; always bound to reality even in its resistance to reality. The pleasure principle has no hope of evading the reality principle.

If resistance is resisted, the way out lies in our acceptance of
we still long nostalgically for the materiality of images. One might argue that Nothing has a form, that it is the naked form of supplementarity itself.

Image seems different from text in that it always has materiality, whereas text is abstract and arbitrary. This is less true after the digital revolution. The image communicated on the left half of this page has no more or less materiality than the words on this half. And yet, it still retains a semblance of materiality over and above the text, as Rancière notes.

The imprint of the thing, the naked identity of its alterity in the place of its imitation, the wordless, senseless materiality of the visible instead of the figures of discourse – this is what is demanded by the contemporary celebration of the image or its nostalgic evocation: an immanent transcendence, a glorious essence of the image guaranteed by the very mode of its material production. (9)

Whereas Stiegler wants to emphasize the discretization of the image, Rancière stresses its continuity, even if the continuity is a lie. Even at our most cynical, we still long nostalgically for the materiality of images.

For Rancière, Barthes critique of images balances precariously between words and things:

But the semiotologist who read the encoded messages of images and the theoretician of the punctum of the wordless image base themselves on the same principle: a principle of reverse equivalence between the silence of images and what they say. (10)

The gap, the gutter is not between the right side of the page and the left only – it resides in the image itself. Perversing Rancière’s quote, I propose a reverse equivalence between the loquacity of
images and their critique. Are images mimetic reproductions of a real world or unique creations that are part of the world?

Mark Tansey depicts poststructuralist philosophers in photo-realistic scenes. In one piece, Derrida and DeMan fight to the death at the edge of a waterfall. In another, Harold Bloom oversees the (de)construction of the grand canyon, made completely out of text. His work denies realism, expressionism, and the heterocosm, instead relying on a more self-aware mimesis. "In contrast to the assertion of one reality, my work investigates how different realities interact and abrade" (Danto 132). The mere fact that a work exists means that it becomes part of the world it supposedly imitates.

And yet these two modes, discourse and figure, seem like two very different worlds. Discourse seems abstract, the letters arbitrary signifiers of speech. Figure has a materiality to it. Derrida would deny that speech precedes writing. Lyotard argues that figure needs no material other than psychic. Serres finds ethical implications in attempts at orthography.

To exclude the empirical is to exclude differentiation, the plurality of others that mask the same. It is the first movement of matematization, of formalization. In this sense, the reasoning of modern logicians concerning the symbol is analogous to the Platonic discussion of the geometric form drawn in the sand: one must eliminate cacography, the wavering outline, the accident of the mark, the failure of the gesture, the set of conditions that ensure that no graph is strictly of the same form as any other. (69)

To exclude that which does not fit the ideal is to deny our own materiality. When technical writing demands clarity, brevity, and sincerity, it implicitly excludes the figural that lies at the center of
Hypermedia and Rhizcomics
To distract ourselves from the unwatchable drubbing of the Clemson Tigers in the ACC championship game, my colleague Josh Hilst introduced me to a party game he enjoys with his wife, a combination of Pictionary and “telephone.” Every player begins with a stack of paper. Each writes a simple phrase and passes the stack. Each player then draws a picture of the phrase then passes the stack again. Looking only at the picture, the next person tries to recreate the original phrase (although deliberately obfuscating the original phrase through feigned stupidity is much more fun). The play continues, alternating from image to text and back, until each stack has rotated fully around the circle arriving at its originator. The originator then shows the last entry and walks through the stack backwards to reveal the original entry. Hilarity ensues. Beer helps.

Being the pedantic academe I am, after I had a few drinks in me, I wrote “there is no outside-text” on a card and passed. By the time the stack returned to me, I saw a fearsome logos threatening a diminutive text. The path between has ultimately been lost, but I thought it interesting how a party game could enact deconstruction so fittingly. With this simple game we move from Derrida’s logo centrum to Lyotard’s assertion of the figural as an outside text, an unconscious, a real which precedes and shapes the symbolic; a logos which threatens the text which purports to tell it.

The translator acts as a middle ground, a gap. In chapter one, I argued that the gap in comics is not between but within panels— I move the critical moment from interpanel play to intrapanel play. With chapter two, I problematized the notions of text and image, visual and verbal, so as to broaden the effects
The figural is this gap. Chapter three traced the figural into the unconscious through Lyotard, beginning to lay the groundwork for a composition which would encourage the reflexive synthesis of discourse and figure. Reflexive multimodal composition plays between transparency and reflection, Heidegger’s *Zuhandenheit* and *Vorhandenheit* respectively. McLuhan’s system of hot and cold media fits this dichotomy in terms of participation but falls behind in terms of definition. Advances in technology have increased participation and definition simultaneously leading to a cooling across media.

This chapter begins a broad sketch of Rhiz|comics, a composition between and across media and modes. Bernard Stiegler offers a complex, nuanced historical understanding of technology and our relationship with it. Whereas chapter two found examples of print being remediated by an increased focus on image and text, here I refer to hypermedia, games, websites, computer programs, videos, for examples and paradigms of rhizcomics. Recent technological advances have drastically changed the importance of delivery, yet the academy seems oddly isolated from many of these changes. Ignoring the importance of delivery, students and scholars have become alienated from their labor. The remaining sections investigate a return to delivery in scholarship.

**Logocentrism**

Post-structuralism’s critique of “logocentrism” creates a new “logo centrism” by privileging language over image. Mark Taylor writes,

> Contrasting interpretations of reality lead to alternative aesthetic strategies. While logocentrism struggles to erase signifiers in order to arrive at the pure transcendental signified, logo centrism attempts to extend the sign to infinity by collapsing the signified in the signifier. Union with the real—regardless of how the real is understood—holds out the promise of overcoming alienation and achieving reconciliation. *(Disfiguring 222-223)*

The *logos* speaks to us through us. Rather than returning to the hierarchy of logocentrism, we may challenge the abstraction of *logo centrism* and ground language in action: applied grammatology.
On December 19, 1991, Penn and Teller appeared on NBC’s *The Late Show with David Letterman*. I was ten, so I’m almost certain I never saw it live (there’s no way I was allowed to stay up that late), but I vividly remember their magic trick. Penn, the loquacious front man of the duo, asked to see Dave’s expensive watch. Teller, the silent partner, goofed around with Penn, pretending to almost drop the watch, and then smacked it on Dave’s desk, threw it to the floor where Penn crushed it to bits with a sledge hammer and began stomping on the watch’s remains. Dave was shocked; Penn and Teller acted nonplussed. Just to show there were no hard feelings, Penn led Dave to a deli case full of dead fish, wheeled out for this occasion, and offered Dave his pick of the lot. Still unable to reconcile the loss of his watch, Dave went with the rainbow trout. Penn then proceeded to lay newspaper across Dave’s desk and clean the fish. With a surprised look on his face, Penn drew Dave’s attention to the watch, sitting inside the gutted fish. Dave removed the watch, which at this point of the trick reeked horribly, and Penn and Teller danced victoriously.

Magic tricks are one of the purest examples of rhetoric our society. As a rhetoric scholar interested in citizenship and agency, I should say that law, politics, or medicine are the purest examples of rhetoric in our society.
But none of those examples encourage the interplay of reflection and persuasion which facilitate magic tricks. At the end of a book full of magic tricks, Penn and Teller reflect on their eagerness to reveal the secrets that made them famous.

Deciding whether to explain a magic trick is an aesthetic/personal choice. It is not like selling military secrets in wartime. No infant has ever died of magic trick exposure. Still, you should consider your goals.

If you want credit for being clever, you should probably not tell. Good tricks usually have dopey, unimpressive explanations. Look at the Letterman Fish/Watch trick. If you saw us do the trick on TV, you probably thought we were amazing sleight-of-hand wizards. Then we told you how the trick was done, and you realized we were just liars willing to pay a man to hide in a table full of cold fish guts. Of course, we had a reason for telling you. We thought it made a good story.

Good stories make good books, and people buy good books. (Jillette and Teller 209, italics in original)

Penn and Teller are triply reflective. First, they reflect on the trick itself, the original rhetorical act. They make its tropes explicit, like the importance of feigning carelessness with Dave’s watch. Then, they reflect on their reflection abstractly: should one expose one’s tricks or not. Finally they reflect on their own motives for sharing the first two reflections: money.

The more seemingly more rhetorical examples of law, politics, and medicine share magic’s use of tropes and tricks as well as its dependence on gadgets and technology.

The lawyer uses precedence and theatre, relying upon the technology of the codex to persuade an audience. The politician’s microphone facilitates the audience’s interpellation into specular society. The MRI reveals to the doctor not a mere body, but a docile body already normalized. However, none of those three situations encourage the reflection...
Aristotle defined rhetoric as

'ἀλλα το ἵδειν τα υπαρχοντα πιθανα περι ἕκαστον

the ability, in each particular case, to see the available means of persuasion.

Looking over the history of technology and rhetoric, it seemed obvious that today we have more means than ever before. The last century has seen an incredible expansion of persuasive means. The history of this expansion has engendered a variety of metanarratives, often of progress and decline: How did people live before the thing we were so much better off before they invented this newfangled Rhetorics multiply with technologies. In order to understand the current relationship(s) between rhetoric and technology we will begin with their intermingled histories.

How then should we define technology? Here I do not of course mean just computers, as I have implied in the drop menus above. Rather, technology is an externalization of self allowing humans to construct/modify our world. Bernard Stiegler’s Technics and Time, gives us a useful framework for discussing such a view of technology.
In the first volume *The Myth of Epimetheus*, Stiegler recalls us to the anthropogenic myth of Epimetheus and Prometheus. In the beginning, Epimetheus was charged with giving each of the creatures means whereby to defend themselves. However, when he got to humans, he found that he had neglected to save any gifts for them (Epimetheus means afterthought). Prometheus (forethought), thinking quickly, stole the arts from the gods and gave them to us.

Yet, this gift is our curse: we are always already in need of prostheses, tools with which to enable ourselves:

Man invents, discovers, finds (eurisko), imagines (mêkhanê), and realizes what he imagines: prostheses, expedients. A prosthesis is what is placed in front, that is, what is outside, outside what it is placed in front of. However, if what is outside constitutes the very being of what it lies outside of, then this being is outside itself. The being of humankind is to be outside itself. In order to make up for the fault of Epimetheus, Prometheus gives humans the present of putting them outside themselves. (*The Myth of Epimetheus* 193)

At a certain point in prehistory, evolution moved out, from the biological to the technological. Since then humans have been defined as external to themselves. Da-sein ek-sists. Stiegler defines these prostheses for us:

Prosthesis means “placed-there-in-front.” Pros-theticity is the being-already-there of the world, and also, consequently, the being-already-there of the past. Pro-s-thesis can be literally translated as pro-position. A prosthesis is what is proposed, placed in front, in advance; technics is what is placed before us. (235)

The term proposition recalls us to the sentence, both thought and speech. Every proposition is placed before and therefore outside of its speaker/thinker. We are in turn propped up by these false limbs, in fact defined by them:

Dasein is outside itself, in ec-stasis, temporal; its past lies outside it, yet it is nothing but this past, in the form of the not yet. By being actually its past,
it can do nothing but put itself outside itself, “ek-sist.” But how does Dasein eksist in this way? Prosthetically, through pro-posing and pro-jecting itself outside itself, in front of itself. (234)
Humankind’s dependence upon prostheses, its inherent externality, results not just from our beginnings, but our modes of living. To be is to be outside oneself: to “ek-sist.” As a result that which makes us human is forgotten. Our false limbs become phantom limbs, an integration of technology and organics—a hybrid creature.

We are in a state of perpetual incompleteness, outside of ourselves and outside of our tools. Lacking tooth and claw we default to prostheses, tools which are at once part of us and outside of us.

Jacques Lacan notes, “we find in man a veritable specific prematurity of birth” ("The Mirror Stage" 4, italics in original). We are unable to defend ourselves or get food at birth. In his second volume, Disorientation, Stiegler connects technology more explicitly to Lacan’s mirror:

The mirror constitutes an interminable maieutics of the self in which exteriority is constitutive (the desiring body originally instrumentalized), reflecting a Gestalt, producing in it a remarkable symmetry in which the object delays itself. (Disorientation 26)

The key word, constitutive, reflects the term formative in the full title of Lacan’s essay: “The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience.” The recognition of self in a mirror ushers the infans (un-speaking) into the symbolic order. Stiegler also invokes the splitting of the subject, a subject both premature and delayed.

For Lacan our maturity lies not in equipping ourselves with any conventional tool, but with the most conventional tool: language. Stiegler takes the same approach, first pointing out the prematurity of man and correlating that to language: “They do not yet possess the art of the political, which will be made necessary by their prematureness, directly ensuing from the technical” (Epimetheus 188). The art of the political, the ability to have conversation, is the first and primary art. The true gift of Prometheus was not just fire, but the logos:

“Language, the logos as language, occurs . . . through technics, through the theft of the fire and the ‘arts’ (tekhnai)” (194). So language is merely another tool.

Or so it might appear if Stiegler were not quick to correct:

The metaphysical illusion from Plato onward that turns language into a means through which humans express them-
selves, rather than its being located as the site of their very constitution, is abundantly criticized by Heidegger. Yet it is the same error that induces consideration of an instrument as a means. ... But if the instrumentalization of language is possible, this is only because its instrumentality is inherent to it. (205)

Language is not a means to an end any more than technology. Rather, they are our very mode of living. We are defined through language not vice-versa, and yet that does not diminish language’s technicity and instrumentality. The sophists, we must remember, saw language as a techne, for which Plato lambasted them. He had forgotten the instrumental nature of the logos, or rather, of mythos.

As we have seen Stiegler expands on this instrumentality in the second volume, continuing,

This dynamic (the constitution of the subject through delay), proceeding from an originary exteriority,..., is experienced in life as prostheticity: the mirror stage is essential unaccomplishment; the mirage is deformation. All mirrors are deforming ones, just as much the tekhnê of the gaze as of time. There are only clumsy, gauche memories, especially when they are accurate. (Disorientation 27)

Whereas volume one portrays the exteriority of Dasein primarily through the lenses of speech and thought, volume two expands to what might be more typically considered technology: writing, print, photography, film, and computers. The division between the two hinges upon Dasein’s retentional finitude and the role of tertiary memory.

Coming out of Heidegger and Husserl, Stiegler describes three types of memory. Primary memory is continuous memory, all memories which construct the present; it may last moments or minutes. Secondary memory denotes the construction of memories from one’s discontinuous past: my first trip to the zoo, my favorite high school teacher, what I ate for breakfast yesterday. Tertiary memory allows for a memory outside of oneself: I remember the five canons of rhetoric handed down to me from Cicero, the War of 1812, and the germ theory of disease. This tertiary memory is made necessary by retentional finitude: I can remember what happened to me, but I cannot remember what happened to Napoleon, unless someone passes that memory onto me via tertiary memory.

Stiegler introduces the terms “tertiary memory” and “retentional finitude” in the first volume to introduce linear writing’s overcoming of the latter. He calls this new techne “literal synthesis.” However, “Writing is no longer, for us, of ‘recent constitution.’ And we must know what that means” (224). We stand then at an age in which something other than literal synthesis appears:

We would knowingly affirm here, in plain and somewhat brutal terms, that it is a form of writing, linear and phonological, that gives this opening [the opening up of the epoch of historiality].... [We] des-
ignite the completed form of alphabet-
ic writing (phonological writing), literal
synthesis. A temporality that is deferred
belongs in principle to literal synthesis. In
the second volume of this work we will
develop the notions of analogical and
numerical synthesis, which dominate
contemporary technology, oriented,
inversely, by an asymptotic tendency
toward real, live temporality, temporal-
ity without detour, that is, toward a
particular atemporality—one that does
not exclude the work of différance but
conceals it in an essential manner. (230,
italics in original)

This “particular atemporality” comprises
a digital age characterized by oral
components: ubiquity, integration, return to rhet-
oric, kairos over chronos, formulaic-ness, etc. If
linear phonological writing was characterized
as closed, the coming digital era seems intrinsi-
cally open.

In the first volume of Technics and Time,
Stiegler examined why Dasein is defined
through prostheticity. Volume two explains
how this prostheticity relates to disorientation
throughout modern history, specifically in liter-
ate and post literate Dasein (Disorientation 7).
We saw that he connects this disorientation
with reflection. Let us engage in our own return
inquiry (Rückfrage) into this relationship.
Stiegler carefully distinguishes mnemo-technics, what are often sloppily called “media,” from other technics:

All supplement is technics, and all supplementary technics is a storage medium “exteriorizing” a program. But all technical supplement is not thus a technics of memorization: mnemo-technics only appears after the Neolithic period. And “the history of being” (the properly “historical” age of historicality) begins along with the history of language. (8, italics in original)

Mnemo-technics begin with language, writing and orality intertwined in the trace. Stiegler’s first volume dealt with this relationship. The second begins with an analysis of orthography, both writing and righting, rectitude (13). Whereas language’s inception began the overcoming of retentional finitude through tertiary memory as oral tradition, writing introduces rectitude, thus (de)stabilizing tertiary memory as more correct than primary or secondary. The advent of tertiary memory is constitutive. Tertiary memory as writing overcomes retentional finitude through instrumental retentionality.

But that is not all, “This instrumentality opens the possibility of a Rückfrage” (37). Writing opens the space for reflection: “The writer is affected in writing, encountering and reflecting on the writerly self” (37). Writing brings with it a new disorientation, incommensurability of primary, secondary, and tertiary memory—a false continuity between phenomena defined precisely through their discontinuity. However, this fault is overcome with an intensification of reflection.

In a more recent article, Stiegler summarizes and updates the ideas presented in Disorientation: “The analogico-digital image is the beginning of a systematic discretization of movement - that is to say, of a vast process of the grammaticalization of the visible” (“The Discrete Image” 148-9, italics in original). To summarize and rewrite Stiegler’s argument, discretization consists of a series of epochal steps. Linear writing discretizes speech and speaker; print, writer and writing; photography, participant and viewer. With photography, this discretization is still analog. The digitization of photography separates then and now: “The digitization of the analog destabilizes our knowledge of the this was, and we are afraid of this. But we were afraid
of the analog, too: in the first photographs we saw phantoms” (152, italics in original). If the verb *discretize* disorients the viewer, this is intended. We might have substituted the verb separate, however *discretize* has a particular meaning: the breaking of continuity (154). The general movement of discretization away from continuity results in reflexivity. Language allows speakers to reflect on their situation in a new way. Writing made new forms of reflexivity possible, “no geometry without instrumental re- 
tentionality” (Disorientation 37). What of these new modes of discretization, then? Just as certain kinds of writing actu- 
ally liberate certain kinds of reflexivity (for example, certain kinds of linear, alphabetic writing, without which law, science, and in par-
ticular history would be inconceivable), so certain kinds of image-objects are doubtless destined to liberate reflexiv-
ity in the domains of the visible and of movement, just as alphabetic writing reveals the discrete characters of lan-
guage. (“The Discrete Image” 162, italics in original)

Stop.

Reread that quote.

The term continuity likewise carries a historical weight through Walter Benjamin’s critiques of reproduction 
and history.

Discontinuity links Benjamin’s two critiques. Photography explodes a moment from the continuum of time 
in the same manner that the historical materialist explodes a moment from the continuum of history. Histor-
icism and cinema both rely upon the construction of a false continuity.

It may be that the continuity of tradition is mere sem-
blence. But then precisely the persistence of this sem-
blence of persistence provides it with continuity. (The 
Arcades Project N19,1)

The historical materialist cannot do without the con-
cept of a present which is not a transition, in which 
time originates and has come to a standstill. For 
this concept defines precisely the present in which he writes history for his per-
son. Historicism depicts the “eternal” picture of the past; 
the historical materialist, an experience with it, which 
stands alone. He leaves it to others to give them-
selves to the whore called “Once upon a time” in 
the bordello of historicism. He remains master of 
his powers: man enough, to explode the continuum 
of history. ("Theses on the Philosophy of History" para 16)
Now, revise that quote.

Multimodal composition is "doubtless destined to liberate reflexivity in the domains of the visible and of movement." Writing changed the way we thought. So far I have argued that new media changes the way we write. Now I lay my cards on the table: new media changes the way we think in a fundamental way. For Heidegger, Stiegler’s muse, reflexivity is the fundamental defining characteristic of Dasein: “Dasein is an entity which does not just occur among other entities. Rather it is ontically distinguished by the fact that, in its very Being, that Being is an issue for it” (Being and Time 32, H: 12). Dasein is the being for whom being is an issue. If we are to take Stiegler seriously, we must recognize his claim for what it is: new media constitute a redefinition of Dasein.

Multimodal composition bears with it a redefinition of composing in all three senses. Ontically, we write differently now. New media remediate the old. Composition changes with each new epoch. Ontologically, new media change the way composers think about composing. This is another way of saying that remediation affects all five canons of rhetoric, not just delivery (as has often been naively understood). Finally, new media changes composition theory. This last point too often goes unnoticed. Ontically, composing with a word processor is different than composing with a typewriter or with paper and pen. Ontologically, Richard Lanham knows this. Greg Ulmer tells us that logic itself changes with new media: the advent of conduction over deduction and induction. However, the ontico-ontologic
change is un(der)reported. Why? While we feel the effects of remediation across all five canons, we identify it with delivery, and we scholars are alienated from our scholarship primarily through the outsourcing of the canon of delivery.

Stiegler promises the overcoming of this alienation through cinema and television. While he does not specifically mention desktop video editing, YouTube, the ubiquity of video cameras, these technologies should be read across his conclusions:

The real problem here is to rethink or think otherwise what Hollywood has up to this point done in the domain of the culture industry, to which cinema and television belong. For what it has done, it has done in accordance with a reifying schema, and by opposing production to consumption, that is to say: by putting analysis on one side (production) and synthesis on the other (consumption). Technology is giving us a chance to modify this relation, in a direction that would bring it closer to the relation of the literate person to literature: it is not possible to synthesize a book without having analyzed literally oneself. It is not possible to read without knowing how to write. And soon it will be possible to see an image analytically: “television” (“l’écran”) and “text” (“l’écrit”) are not simply opposed. (“The Discrete Image” 163, italics in original)

The overcoming of the separation of production and consumption in video through the aforementioned technologies has not gone unnoticed. We are actually quite overwhelmed
with this consequence of new media. Likewise, this realization has had an effect upon scholarship with the advent of journals like Kairos, which "strive[s] to bridge the gap between print and digital publishing cultures" by publishing "texts authored specifically for publication on the World Wide Web" (Eyman and Inman). The conditions in place when Dialectic of Enlightenment was written no longer hold sway in the same way. The blurring of lines between author, text, and reader outlined by (post)structuralist and reader response theories have been enacted with the advent of generation YouTube. What does composition look like now? Rhiz|comics.

Rhiz|comics does not undo the arguments of reader response criticism, nor does it repeat them. Instead it complicates the terms reader and response. The acceleration of the expansion of rhetorical means changes our conception of reading, linking it to its etymological roots. To read has always been also to write. Heidegger points us to the roots of the Greek legein as gathering (Early Greek Thinking 61). Imagine what it must have been like for illiterate Greeks to see the act of reading: someone takes a miasma of obtuse signs and gathers them into coherent ideas. To read is to com-pose.

Lawrence Lessig creates the metaphor of two types of culture: Read Only and Read-Write (Remix 28-9). Read only culture is epitomized by the culture industry: passive audiences watch/read/listen from their couches while media operate unidirectionally from corporations to audiences. THEY produce while WE consume. Read-Write culture problematizes the Cartesian subject-object dichotomy by (com) positing the text as rhizome.

"It is not possible to read without knowing how to write."

A reading which is always already a composition—rhizcomics, rhizcomposition.
Deleuze and Guattari propose the rhizome as a way of looking at texts. There is the traditional (Ramusian) tree model of the book, based on hierarchy and genealogy—every leaf has its root, every page its conceptual origin.

A first type of book is the root-book. The tree is already the image of the world, or the root the image of the world-tree. This is the classical book, as noble, signifying, and subjective organic interiority (the strata of the book). The book imitates the world, as art imitates nature: by procedures specific to it that accomplish what nature cannot or can no longer do. The law of the book is the law of reflection, the One that becomes two. (A Thousand Plateaus 5)

Art as a mirror held up to nature, mimetic, representative, relying on a transcendental signifier. To this, Deleuze and Guattari oppose the rhizomic image of the book:

The same [aparallel evolution] applies to the book and the world: contrary to a deeply rooted belief, the book is not an image of the world. It forms a rhizome with the world, there is an aparallel evolution of the book and the world; the book assures the deterritorialization of the world, but the world effects a reterritorialization of the book, which in turn deterritorializes itself in the world (if it is capable, if it can). Mimicry is a very bad concept, since it relies on...
binary logic to describe phenomena of an entirely different nature. (11)
The relationship between the book and the world is similar to that of Dasein. Dasein is always already in the world (but not of the world). The book does not communicate unidirectionally with the world, nor vice versa, nor even both, that is to say, the world and book do not exist in two-way communication. Instead each constitutes, composes itself and the other and even itself in and through the other. After Heidegger, subject and object become complicated: so too with authors, texts, and readers. They are not identical and yet they are inseparable.

The world has become chaos, but the book remains the image of the world: radicle-chaosmos rather than root-cosmos. A strange mystification: a book all the more total for being fragmented. At any rate, what a vapid idea, the book as the image of the world. In truth, it is not enough to say, “Long live the multiple,” difficult as it is to raise that cry. No typographical, lexical, or even syntactical cleverness is enough to make it heard. The multiple must be made, not by always adding a higher dimension, but rather in the simplest of ways, by dint of sobriety, with the number of dimensions one already has available—always $n - 1$ (the only way the one belongs to the multiple; always subtracted). Subtract the unique from the multiplicity to be constituted; write at $n - 1$ dimensions. A system of this kind could be called a rhizome. A rhizome as subterranean stem is absolutely different from roots and radicles. (6)
The multiple is made by subtracting the unique. By separating the separable (which does not exist) we are left with the inseparable.

This was the process of the first half of this work. I attempted (unsuccessfully)to separate image and text, visual and verbal, discourse and figure. The relationship of image to text is that of the rhizome. It is not linear. Chapter one redefined (decentered) comics, breaking with a linear, sequential definition and embracing a more rhizomatic one:

Principles of connection and heterogeneity: any point of a rhizome can be

Aposiopesis

This passage embodies Williams’ view of the relationship of art to reality. He describes art first pragmatically: not to tamper, not to avoid, but to move reality. Next he investigates its affirmation of reality and the implications thereof: since reality needs not, art creates anew. Williams then envisions that new creation (dance, play) in opposition to Hamlet’s description of mimetic theatre: a mirror held up to nature. Finally, unable to define art adequately (or explicitly) Williams cuts off his sentence with a double-dash—
connected to anything other, and must be. This is very different from the tree or root, which plots a point, fixes an order.

(7)

This is very different from Eisner and McCloud whose theories assume a transparency of text: words reveal things and pictures help us by getting us closer to things. Instead comics as rhizome demand more and more connections, and reflect the experience of reading comics more closely.

McCloud’s notion of closure, reader response across the gutter, is too linear, sequential. As we saw in Lyotard, the reader provides the synthesis of discourse and figure, responding consciously and unconsciously across gaps. However, we must note that the response is recursive, iterative. As in the previous sentence, I have relied heavily upon the use of scesis onomatoton throughout this chapter: allowing multiple synonyms to co-exist, offering the reader a chance to gather, read, close, synthesize. This is rhizomic writing. Rhizcom(ic)position.

I will speak, therefore, of a letter.

Of the undeliverable letter, if the rhetorical tradition, and most of the speculations which have ventured into it, are to be believed.

I will speak, therefore, of the hand-delivered letter which it apparently has been necessary to insinuate, here and there, into the often resistant canon of rhetoric; and to do so in the course of a writing on writing, and also of a writing within writing whose different trajectories thereby find themselves, at certain very determined points, intersecting with a kind of gross paronomasia, a lapse in the discipline and law which regulate writing and keep it seemly.

All apologies to Derrida, the spectre that haunts this dissertation, the name on the return address of this undeliverable text. Liber non liber est: the book/letter is not free. The canons of rhetoric have been liberated somewhat throughout the twentieth century, no doubt as an effect of (post)modernism and the avant garde. However, to use an archaic form, we must liberate delivery in order to learn to write more deliverly.

Deleuze and Guattari saw that linear writing did not have to obey the rule of the line but could offer new, open lines of flight:

To attain the multiple, one must have a method that effectively constructs it: no typographical cleverness, no lexical agility, no blending or creation of words, no syntactical boldness can substitute.
for it. In fact, these are more often than not merely mimetic procedures used to disseminate or disperse a unity that is retained in a different dimension for an image-book. Technonarcissism. (22) Technonarcissism makes us think that an oral digitality promises an era of openness impossible in the print age. Deleuze insists that if we did not seek openness then, we would not now: “A language is never closed upon itself, except as a function of impotence” (8). Technonarcissism falls into the trap linguistics has fallen into: that of thinking epistemically rather than technically. Their tendencies toward transcendence, toward transparency, make writing a signification, an entrance into the real. Deleuze and Guattari counter that “Writing has nothing to do with signifying. It has to do with surveying, mapping, even realms that are yet to come” (4-5). When thought radically—or even rhizomatically—all forms of technê (whether oral, print, or digital) can map or trace.

The rhizome is not a special type of book, but perhaps a way of composing (which is done by those traditionally considered readers at least as much as it is done by those traditionally considered authors)—a way of composing that connects invention to delivery.

The pen is mightier than the sword. In the case of Peter Ramus, this would not seem to be the case. Ramus, the closeted intellectual, found himself quite literally forced to accept the superiority of deeds over words as he was cut down in his room. Ramus’
on August 26, 1572 during the St. Bartholomew’s Day Massacre. Mere words could not save him from the sharp edge of a blade that decapitated him or the rough hands that threw him out the window. However, in many ways he lived on. Walter Ong claims that Ramus marks the turning point from Renaissance to Modern Age and that his methods reside in every textbook and indeed in the very foundations of modern academia. If we are going to get down to the core of who Ramus is (which of course, is the core of who we, his inheritors, are), we must paradoxically stay close to the surface.

Puns are of course superficial. They distract from the real significance of a text and point sidelong rather than downward—the direction of proper hermeneutics. However, this lateral movement, far from any kind of equivocal sidestepping, engenders new thought while evading the trap of transcendent interpretation, the goal of which always resides underneath a text.

Ramus’ name provides many rich points of departure for discussions on what it might mean to be modern (or at least contemporary). The term ramifications might well describe this essay in both surface and content—for this essay might be seen as an argument that the two are indissociably linked. We find that Ramus has already inscribed himself into the first half of the word. In Latin ramus means twig or branch. Ramification, the making of new branches, the web that occurs when a window is cracked for instance, spreading out into a hundred new directions. It is a seed crystal enabling new thought. While Ramus himself seemed incapable of innovation (he was known as usuarius, an academic parasite hanging on to previous authors), his method

It is customary in writing about mnemo-technologies to give a nod to Plato’s portrayal of Socrates as Luddite. In the Phaedrus, he tells the story of two Egyptian gods, Theuth and Thamus. Theuth invented numbers, arithmetic, geometry and many other things, including letters (reminding us of Stiegler’s statement that you can’t have one without the other). He then presented these inventions to Thamus who judged each. In displaying letters, Theuth promised “an elixir of memory and wisdom.” Thamus responded, “O most ingenious Theuth, one man has the ability to beget arts, but the ability to judge of their usefulness or harmful-
ness to their users belongs to another" (274e) – one may invent, but another must judge usefulness. Thamus saw writing to be not a memory producer, but a memory eraser:

This invention will produce forgetfulness in the minds of those who learn to use it, for they will not practise their memory. Their trust in writing, produced by external characters which are no part of themselves, will discourage the use of their own memory within them. You have invented not an elixir of memory, but of reminding; and you offer your pupils the appearance of wisdom, not true wisdom, for they will read many things without instruction and will therefore seem to know many things, when they are for the most part ignorant and hard to get along with, since they are not

curly bracket which so often exemplifies this dialectic "{" could perhaps be a gamma turned ninety degrees with the emphasis placed upon the branches rather than their connective trunk.

On g points out that this binary logic shares an uncanny resemblance to digital computers (xvi). Ramus gives us a heuristic which finds only what it already knows: things are either A or B with no room for middle ground. Upon circularly proving this thesis the modern lets out a perverse gasp of "(h) eureka". Letting out our own cry of discovery, we find that a third possible definition
wise, but only appear wise. (275a-b)

Because this all occurs during a discussion on the supposed merits of rhetoric, Plato is quick to get back to the point. He has Phaedrus accuse Socrates of making up stories, only to have Socrates reply with an appeal to the ways things once were:

The people of that time, not being so wise as you young folks, were content in their simplicity to hear an oak or a rock, provided it only spoke the truth; but to you, perhaps, it makes a difference who the speaker is and where he comes from, for you do not consider only whether his words are true or not. (275b-c)

Plato thus exemplifies two things. First, he shows us that even the most careful of philosophers have Luddite tendencies—or, to nod at our grandparents: the TV was not the first technology to turn our minds to mush. Second, he stresses the Greek conception of truth—one already in flux as he was writing. In an oral culture, truth is momentous—concerned with the present not chronological history; it does not matter whether or not there were any historical figures of Theuth and Thamus who had this conversation, or that the computer kairos.

Many have argued that the computer has given us back our kairos. Commenting on the similarities between digitality and orality, Richard Lanham moves us away from technics and toward philosophy:

When we ask how electronic technology affects us, then, we are inquiring, in terms of electronic technol—

The rhetorical/philosophical distinction from the technological dis-

museum gazz

of the de Young

The act of writing is itself a kind of womb envy. In other words, the act of writing is it-

Francisco skyline. She said that perhaps self a kind of womb.

She wrote her body in cursive. Once when I drank a few too many, she held my head as I made my own contributions to a friend’s gar-

of raisin terms, a penis. It’s true. At the core of Ramus’ name not only lies the

ramifications he was so incapable of, but perhaps his most salient characteristic. He was a dick. Which is perhaps why he wrote so much.

A beautiful, raven-haired classmate of mine offered an interesting counterpoint to l’ecriture feminine. She was a half-Libyan, half-Egyptian theory geek who wrote her body in cursive. Once, when I drank a few too many, she held my head as I made my own contributions to a friend’s garden. A few days later we stood on the top floor of the de Young museum gaz

ing over the San Francisco skyline. She said that perhaps the act of writing is it-

ering a kind of womb.

In other words, the act of writing is itself a kind of womb

envy. In other

she held my head as I made my own contribu-

tions to a friend’s gar-

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In other words, the act of writing is itself a kind of womb.

envy. In other


and literate cultures, concerns more than technology. It debates opposed theories of human motive, human selfhood, and human society. (Lanham 203)

Yet each of these last items, "human motive, human selfhood, and human society," are by nature prosthetic, technical.

Orality certainly seems like the Real. It is multimodal, relevant, and dynamic. It cannot be located in any medium but overtakes all media within which it comes in contact. Think of a speaker using PowerPoint or posters. The rhetor becomes inseparable from the moment, from the oral component of the presentation. Likewise, in conversation anything is fair play—from a nearby squirrel to the weather, to a book. Yet, just as Derrida showed us that writing is not the representation of speech, so too Stiegler shows us that secondary orality is not mimetic but rhizomatic in nature. While digital media are certainly tied to orality, they provide no more exit from the instrumentality of language than oral culture did for Plato.

The history of rhetorical theory could be told as a marginalization of the canon of delivery. In an oral culture, rhetoric is overly concerned with enunciation, hand motions, paraverbal composition. Literacy represses the paraverbal. Recent technological advances have drastically changed the importance of delivery, yet the academy seems oddly isolated from many of these changes. Ignoring the importance of delivery, students and scholars have become alienated from their labor. Electracy signifies the return of the repressed.

Imagine a world in which scholars are not allowed to come up with their own ideas. Instead, journals and publishers give scholars specific ideas for research.

Or a parallel universe in which journals control the organization of articles, whether or not they should have a hook, where the literature review should go.

writing is man’s sublimation for his own lack of ability to create biologically.

This does not diminish l’écriture feminine, but rather frees it from the Rationalist methods of male hegemony.

Interestingly, Ong often describes Ramus’s heuristics in terms of matrix. Matrix, descending from mater, denotes a womb. In Ramus’ case his womb produced more writings. The creation of a text is prosthetic in that it creates something outside of its author which is still very much its author. It is both apart from and a part of its creator—much like a fetus, which brings us to the core of what it means to be human in more ways than one (to have a part of oneself be outside oneself). Yet rather than living this out, Ramism separates creator from created and stresses the outside-ness of text rather than its internality. In contrast, l’écriture feminine enables an author to step from dialectic to dialogue.

The difference between these two terms may seem negligible. They are etymologically identical, both coming from saying (legî) and between (dia). They describe a conversation between two people. However, dialectic stresses the rightness of one over the other. Dialectic is debate. It cuts the world firmly into two halves: right and wrong (or Pythagoras’ virtue and vice). As such, it aims at transcendence, getting to the heart of the matter. Dialogue on the other hand recognizes two subjects not necessarily in conflict, but perhaps a harmony of opposing ideas. As such, it evokes immanence. Its participants aim not at a heuristics of finding truth but of producing more dialogue.

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Returning now to our original pun, we find that for Ramus the pen acts as sword, dividing issues in half. Is it necessary to remind the reader of the phallic connotations of both sword and pen to the Latin mind? Perhaps. The act of inscription becomes a double entendre for penetration, used punningly by Milton for example. Likewise the image of sword, if not already phallic enough, is coupled with the connotations of vagina, which of course originally meant sheath. The term vagina thus exemplifies phallogocentric thinking by showing that it is not an organ but a container. The vagina for the phallogocentric man is always viewed in terms of penis and never vice versa. When all you have is a hammer, everything looks like a nail, and when all you have is a dick, everyone gets screwed.

The link between the literate revolution (Ramus) and penis castration complex of its subsequent feminist critique presupposes linearity. If we are to keep close to the surface, we avoid the traps of transcendence and embrace an immanence which allows dialogue over dialectic.

What might this look like? Well, for starters, it might look like this. It would employ puns, biography, fragmentation, and metatextuality. Puns, as stated previously, tie us to an immanent heuristic rather than a transcendent hermeneutic. Biography reconnects the author to her text, overcoming a fundamental division in phallogocentrism. Fragmentation inversely disconnects the normally connected. Rather than a glossy veneer, this new text offers a patchwork quilt or collage which shows its sutures. Metatextuality offers the final blow against transcendence, ironi-

Publishers could mandate style guidelines going far beyond the scope of MLA or APA, having specialized stylists who would rewrite articles to maximize the use of specific rhetorical tropes. Now, what if journals and publishers separated scholars from the delivery of their work, from its layout and design? Suddenly we are back to our own universe. Rhizcomics offers the possibility of changing our world, even as slightly as allowing scholars influence on the delivery of their research, connecting invention with delivery. We must remember that Socrates was right. We have forgotten more because of our technicization than we have remembered. His diagnosis was correct, but his prognosis was lacking. Forgetting constitutes our humanity as much as instrumentality and prostheses. We will be forever outside ourselves in the new digital age; not necessarily further from the Real but certainly capable of new lines of flight. In dealing with them, we must remember our forgetting: remember that the desktop or web...
cally pointing out the impossibility of metapositions. Therefore, when I say it would look like this, I do not mean the above stated list, but this section itself. This section employs the cut. Returning us to our original introduction by way of (dialectic?) reversals it asks the following question: “The penis: Mightier than the sword?”

and Charybdis, Deleuze and Guattari offer us a nomadic war machine that blasts as it constructs. The rhizome bridges the gap between reflection and transparency.
5 Plays Well with Others
Rhizcomics in the Classroom
Rhizcom(ic)position reintroduces delivery into the composition classroom doubly: in the students’ production of multimodal texts and in the teacher’s delivery of lessons. In this chapter I’d like to highlight each of these individually. The first part of the chapter focuses on the student side: teaching electracy with student mystery projects. The second part describes what I term “augmented pedagogy”—using teaching as electracy.

Electracy refers to a new kind of literacy, one based on electricity and digitality, one characterized by a new kind of logic. While deductive and inductive logic are of course quite familiar, electracy’s conductive logic may raise an eyebrow or two. Deductive logic proceeds from generals to particulars (all men are mortal, Socrates is a man, therefore Socrates is mortal) while inductive does the reverse (My father was mortal, so was his, so was his, therefore all men must be mortal). To this electracy adds a third kind of logic: conductive logic. Conductive logic might meditate upon the Proto-Indo-European root of mortal, mbrotos, and its surviving ancestor in the negative: the immortal ambrosia fruit salad sitting in the deli-case.

Greg Ulmer developed a tool to teach, theorize about, and practice electracy and conductive logic. The “Mystery” (pronounced “my story” or “mystery” depending upon how one feels at the moment) engages all five of the rhetorical canons (inventio, dispositio, elocutio, pronuntiatio, and memoria) and thereby teaches composition and teaches through composition (referencing both writing to learn and learning to write pedagogies). Ulmer writes, “A mysterical essay is not scholarship, not the communication of a prior sense, but the discovery of a direction by means of writing” (Teletheory 113). Writing to learn cannot be separated from its counterpart so easily: Although “writing to learn” has frequently been isolated from “learning...
to write” in workshops, often by means of a split between so-called “formal” (“learning to write”) and “informal” (“writing to learn”) assignments, conscientious workshop leaders try to keep the connections before the minds of participants. (Thaiss 303)

A multimodal mystery project connects the formal and informal. The non-traditional demands of conductive logic free the students to write to learn, while the fact that these are major projects forces them to learn to write. Reflecting on the impact of technology upon CAC, Reiss et al. write,

But the influence of technologies has not changed the basic tenets of CAC. Indeed, we expect these technologies to extend our ability to insinuate CAC concepts like writing to learn and collaborative learning. Electronic media also can extend our ability to expose students to a variety of purposes and audiences as well as to spread students’ involvement in complex communication projects across the curriculum and across their tenure at our institutions. (xviii)

Because this experiment was conducted in a technical writing classroom, some faculty may not see its use in other disciplines. However, if CAC has taught us anything, its that the rules of composition apply to any discipline in which people communicate, that is, all of them.

Ulmer’s theory of electracy answers the calls of Gunther Kress (among others) for a new media literacy. As Kress is careful to point out,

we can no longer treat literacy (or ‘language’) as the sole, the main, let alone the major means for representation and communication. Other modes are there as well, and in many environments where writing occurs these other modes may be more prominent and more significant. (35)

Kress later notes that each new “literacy” also entails a new writing system, not in the sense of letters (from which literacy gets its name) but in the sense of representation and recording (61-4). As such, visual and oral rhetorics enter the picture. While much has been written recently on visual and multimodal rhetorics, the work of Todd Taylor, Diana George, and Scott McCloud are of particular note.
During my technical writing class in the Fall of 2007, we read the second chapter of McCloud’s *Understanding Comics* to introduce basic rhetorical concepts such as amplification through simplification. McCloud’s way of saying that clarity and brevity can create sincerity. Early in the semester, the class also read the first few chapter’s of *Internet Invention*. Students were by and large puzzled by Ulmer’s project.

As a result, I attempted to teach theory through practice through two sections of a technical writing course. Each section was given the same syllabus, which called for four main multimodal projects throughout the semester, pulled together into a single narrative or “Mystory”. This narrative would take the form of a website that would link all four projects. The Mystory had to include four themes: career, entertainment, history, and family. For the course, each theme became a project. In the analysis which follows, I will trace the projects of two students’ mystery assignments, pseudonymously called Kelly and Kevin.

I asked students to sketch their own Mystory, assigning each category a medium (e.g. entertainment as graphic design, history as website, career as graphic narrative, family as film—though any combination was possible). Through the sketch they also were asked to discover (the Mystory is after all a heuristic) a single image that would unite all four threads (Ulmer’s “image of wide scope” or “punccept”). That image, as described above, had to be superficial and yet connective. Kelly chose soap and Kevin chose the Ark.

The students were divided into groups of four or five and given the assignment of writing instructions for each medium. Each student was to become an expert in the medium and then teach the rest of the group. The more traditional assignments of instructions, memos, and project reports were then created as adjuncts to the Mystory project. Students wrote instructions on a medium, sent each other memos about their projects, and created two project reports at the end of the semester (one written individual report and one multimodal group report). The class progressed through each medium sequentially, although the Mystory category differed from student to student (i.e. while all began with graphic design, some depicted entertainment visually while others chose family, etc.). Each medium took up three weeks of class time. The first week focused on learning the software and at the end of the week the instructions assignments were due. At the end of the second week, rough drafts were due. The final project was turned in at the end of the third week.

Each assignment was organized to help the students progress sequentially. The graphic design segment helped the students learn the basics of visual rhetorics. The web segment built on this by focusing on visually-based (rather than text-based) design. The graphic narrative taught the principles of timing, framing, and editing that the students would later use for the video project.

For the graphic design component, students created posters, fliers, package designs, and website backgrounds. While they were
not required to use any software in particular, Adobe Illustrator and Photoshop were recommended and, with a few exceptions, used by the students. After a few class periods devoted to studio time learning the software, the students turned in rough drafts of the projects. Most students learned quickly that the projects demanded more of their time than they had thought and their rough drafts were noticeably lacking. However, the final drafts blew me away.

Kelly, a nursing major, designed the cover of a nursing magazine that depicted a revolutionary new hand sanitizer. Kevin, a secondary education major, chose to present a modified picture of his home as an ark of safety, complete with a ninja-squirrel security force. Kelly stayed relatively close to the assignment’s guidelines throughout, while Kevin only nodded at them occasionally.

For the web design segment, I was unable to get my students access to Dream Weave and was forced to recommend they use free software like Mozilla Composer. I asked the students to create an image-based Website that would look identical across browsers and computers. Using images allowed the students to dictate every facet of the site’s appearance. Most of these sites still included a great deal of words (or rather, pictures of words), but by proceeding from text to image to design, they made a site that was on the whole more aesthetically pleasing and more readable.

During this segment students created a
Kelly created a history of soap operas and a main page with soap-dish buttons. Kevin’s lack of adherence to the guidelines led to a much more creative main page, a fake dictionary entry in which each definition linked to a separate page of the Mystory. His history section offered a polished website devote to the ark of Bukhara, an ancient fortress in Bukhara, Uzbekistan.

In the graphic narrative section, students made a comic using a free trial download of ComicLife. This relied on all their prior learning by involving visuals, texts, and the web experience to integrate it into their site. Some students imported photographs they had taken themselves to tell a story. Others drew their images.
free-hand or used images from the web. Kelly told the story of her experience at a Christian camp and Kevin created a cynical retelling of Noah’s ark in which mythical animals are kicked off the ark one-by-one by a cantankerous, 8-bit Noah.

The final section, video, was by far the most difficult for students. Most had only two alternatives for software: the bug-ridden, crash-prone Windows Movie Maker or the ram-dependent, complex Adobe Premier; both of which exceeded the capabilities of the school-supplied laptops. Students also found it difficult to either make or find footage. Video cameras were out of reach for most and even stock footage was difficult to import. However, having worked extensively with video in the past, I warned the students of all these pitfalls ahead of time and recommended they have all their footage together and imported at least a week before the final was due. Once they finished the video, they still had to upload it to YouTube and link it to their site.

Kelly created a fake Entertainment Tonight spot about Kelly Rippa and Clay Aiken’s recent run-in on Live! She used clips from the show and did a voice-over to pull it all together. Kevin followed a well-known internet genre, the fifteen second version of a feature film. He titled his video “Raiders of the Lost Ark in fifteen seconds”. It opens with a character telling Indy, “Any army with the Ark of the Covenant before them would be invincible.” A sudden jump-cut gives us the Nazi’s eventual destruction at the hands of the Ark and we cut back to Indy saying, “Haven’t you guys ever been to Sunday school?” The simplicity belies the subtly ironic humor of the piece, again fitting with the genre.

Looking back on the projects, I’ve noted some strengths and weaknesses. Conductive logic encourages abnormal thought (cf. Bruffee and Myers) which can in turn result in paradigm shifts. The creativity it engages can help students take ownership of composition. However, by its very nature it forces students to get off track.

One of my favorite projects from that semester was a comic composed by a student I’ll call “Keith.” Keith, a civil engineering major, prepared a graphic narrative combining various mystical elements. I’ve included his comic in its entirety on the next few pages.

Likewise, multimodal composition helps students realize that the message is never independent of the medium. Throughout the semester, students meditated on the potential uses of each medium: Should I make a video resume? Should I make a website instead of a research paper? The answer to both of these
"AHHH, MUSIC..."

Hello there, sport. It seems you've caught me doing what I love best—listening to and enjoying music in my private study, sipping a Stoli martini and smoking a fine cigar. Old brain hammer.

But seriously...

POOF!

This is the real me! I'm Patrick, and I'm an absolute fanatic for music! But not just any kind of music.

I'm talking about the greatest format in the history of recorded music.

Metalheadz
"I KNOW WHAT YOU'RE THINKING—AREN'T RECORDS OUTDATED AS A FORMAT?!"

TECHNICS

WELL, IF YOUR DEFINITION OF OUTDATED IS BASED ON COMPACTNESS AND PORTABILITY, YOU'LL GET NO ARGUMENT FROM ME.

TECHNICS

RECORDS ARE CLUNKY AND BY NO MEANS POCKET-SIZED, AND NEITHER ARE THE TURNTABLES THAT PLAY THEM.

"AND THE MOST METICULOUSLY ENGINEERED AND COMPLEX FORMAT ISN'T THE MP3. IN THAT REGARD, THOSE FORMATS ARE 'OUTDATED'. IN THAT REGARD, VINYL IS IN A LEAGUE OF ANALOG PERFECTION AS THE MOST MODERN OF ANY RECORDED FORMAT!"

*THUD*

*CLICK*

"BUT, IF 'OUTDATED' REFERS TO A FORMAT'S RAW AUDIO QUALITY AND CLARITY, THE MOST MODERN AND ADVANCED FORMAT ISN'T THE CD!"
“What a feat of engineering it is when tiny plastic grooves vibrate a tiny stylus and create the most realistic and crisp audio imaginable—enough of a feat to inspire a vinyl enthusiast to engineer things as well, even.”

“Now who do I know who’s both an engineer and a vinyl enthusiast?? Aaaah, yes…”

“Civil Engineer…Me!”

“So, records on bridges. How do I get here? The answer is structure.”

“Hard hats on, people! It’s time to get metaphorical.”

“When I was very small, my dad taught me all about ups and how to play them, and since then, I’ve been fascinated with how they worked, and the more I learned, the more my inner engineer could reason why some records were different than others.”
"FROM THE PIN SUPPORTS IN A TRUSS TO THE GROOSES AND BUMPS IN A RECORD, THE NAME OF THE GAME IS EQUILIBRIUM—the pins that keep the structure standing, and the grooves that keep the stylus tracking perfectly and without distortion."

"STIRRING FOR BETTER-PERFORMING SOLUTIONS TO PHYSICAL PROBLEMS IS THE CORE PURPOSE OF ENGINEERING, AND VINYL IS THE END-RESULT OF YEARS OF SUCH THINKING. CREATING A FORMAT THAT CAN OUTPERFORM EVEN TODAY’S MOST MODERN DIGITAL FORMATS..."

the iTT!

- No battery life whatsoever
- Zero portability
- No iTunes
- Sounds AMAZING

WHEN I HOLD A RECORD, I'M HOLDING SOMETHING THAT HAS BEEN PERFECTED AND TWEAKED UNTIL IT STANDS BY ITSELF AS THE PINNACLE OF ITS OWN PURPOSE. IT DOES EXACTLY WHAT IT WAS ENGINEERED TO DO BETTER THAN ANYTHING ELSE.

AND IT IS THAT PERFECTION OF FORM AND PURPOSE IN VINYL THAT INSPIRES ME TO DO GREAT THINGS WITH THE STRUCTURES AND DEVICES THAT I WILL SOMEDAY CREATE.

AFTER ALL, WHAT GREATER PURSUIT IS THERE IN ANY FIELD THAN THAT OF PERFECTION?

"AND NOW..."

... back to what I love most! Music!

RE-POOF!

ADIEU!
is probably no. However, students noticed how useful videos are in instructions and reports. The experience gained through working with the media was not just technical but also theoretical.

Multimodal composition also has its downsides. It’s much more demanding for both students and teachers. For me, attempting to teach new media can often become an epic battle with the very technology I had earlier lauded. In the feedback from the semester a pattern emerged. While some students embraced new technologies, others resisted. An electrical engineering student approached me at the end of the semester, saying that he had never been forced to think creatively before at school. It was one of the most fulfilling classes he had ever taken, he told me. Another student asked why he would ever need to know how to make a website. His inability to see the practicality of my instruction left me dumbfounded.

The next semester, I decided to make the mystery a smaller project, teaching each medium as an end to itself and offering the students a moment of self-expression only at the end of the semester in the mystery project. I taught each medium through in-class exercises (visual remixes, document design, etc.). At the end of the semester students were allowed to choose a medium for their mystery. Students really flourished under the new system. Upon further reflection, much of what students had articulated the previous semester as resistance to technology seemed to be resistance to forced self-expression.

Not only were students more interested in the technology throughout the semester, but the mysteries at the end of the semester were far more innovative. Students pushed the boundaries of what are traditionally understood as media. I received mysteries as comics, film, fortune cookies, and even prescriptions. One student, a graphic design major, incorporated all four elements of the mystery into a single poster.

I began to wonder how I might incorporate the lessons I’d learned from my students into my own teaching. How could I teach with electracy? I found the answer in augmented pedagogy.
In efforts to teach (with) electracy, I used Adobe Breeze (now Adobe Connect) and traditional lecturing to achieve an augmented reality pedagogy. Adobe Breeze incorporates webinar modalities: chat space, video conferencing, collective notepads, and shared control of screens. By using emerging software like Adobe Breeze simultaneously with a traditional lecture we create an augmented classroom. Students are free to engage in chat based conversations while the teacher lectures, thereby encountering the material in multiple representations.

Adobe Breeze can easily be co-opted and used in the composition classroom to teach (with) electracy on two levels: thinking and doing. First, the augmented classroom allows us to better exemplify electracy through samples: websites, PowerPoints, Flash games, etc. Second, it allows students to experience electracy for themselves in the classroom, thus making possible conductive (and often productive) leaps within the traditionally hegemonic academic environment.

By giving students the freedom to chat tangentially during the lecture, the classroom becomes a more playful and potentially more productive environment. The lecture becomes a base off of which students riff. Abnormal thought becomes acceptable, even encouraged. As a result, I hoped students would think in new and exciting ways and tend to pay closer attention as their tangential thought results from things stated in the lecture.

The basic research question was (How) does the augmented classroom (lecturing while students use chat technology etc.) produce in students abnormal discourse and an increased critical awareness of their relationship with all technologies?
My initial forays into electracy had been inspired mainly by Ulmer’s research. For this new project, I began casting a wider net.

An obvious place to begin was Heidegger’s “The Question Concerning Technology.” Heidegger’s seminal article highlights the effects of technology on humans and vice versa. Rather than technology serving humans, humans are made to serve technological thought. He invents key issues like “enframing” and “standing reserve.” Yet, techne seems to be humanity’s mode of being. It both blocks us from being and opens new ways of being. He ends by quoting Rilke: “Poetically man dwells on the earth,” and technology is our poetry. The article offers vocabulary for analyzing the ethical dimensions of emerging technologies, allowing us to reflect upon the complex issues my project raised.

Following Heidegger (and integrating Leroi-Gourhan’s work in evolutionary biology), Bernard Stiegler’s Technics and Time connects emerging technology with human evolution and the experience of exteriorization. I’ve already summarized much of Stiegler’s multivolume work. It provided a theoretical framework for analyzing the relationships students will have with augmented pedagogy. Individual students have to undergo new levels of exteriorization which may result in self-alienation. However, as something is lost something else is gained. Students gain a larger awareness of their own technological position even as they lose their assumed presence.

The concept of augmented pedagogy depends largely on Walter Ong’s concept of secondary orality, a communication mode that follows literacy and parallels orality in many of its characteristics. Some of its major features are departmentalization, resurgence of kairos, and a return to mythos over logos. When compared with Ong’s work on Peter Ramus, we discover a new rhetoric far less hegemonic than the traditional phallogocentric model. In hindsight we can connect with him not only the work of Derrida (whom he references throughout), but Deleuze and Guattari, Ulmer, and Stiegler. Ong, like Heidegger, Stiegler, and Ulmer, provides the theoretical framework within which I formulate the experiment.

Ulmer’s corpus has investigated many of the pedagogical implications of applying the theories of Ong, Derrida, Heidegger, and Stiegler. Rather then merely teaching about deconstruction, he teaches students to deconstruct actively and furtively through his Mystory assignments. Ulmer poses perhaps the best example of the pedagogical linkage in his title Applied Grammatology. Ulmer and those who would follow him seek to apply

"Not to follow in the footsteps of the masters but to seek what they sought."

— Basho
the theoretical findings of deconstruction and poststructuralist philosophy. However, we must also look to our own roots in both industry and the classroom.

On the industry side, Nathan Shedroff introduces the concept of Experience Design, a design aimed at the user’s overall experience rather than merely filling a user’s immediate needs. An experiential design engages users holistically rather than compartmentally (cf. his delineation of data-information-knowledge-wisdom found in Chapter 3 of this volume). Users are people not numbers. The augmented classroom offers a holistic experience, engaging students as partners in knowledge creation rather than mere consumers of information.

Todd Taylor’s “Design, Delivery, and Narcolepsy” recognizes the issue of attention deficit in the classroom—in this case due to no mental illness, but rather to poor classroom design. As Janice Redish has noted, “Students truly learn only when they are actively engaged in constructing knowledge for themselves. Lecturing at students rarely results in real learning” (80). Taylor eventually calls for a classroom designed along the principles established by Donald Norman (and furthered by Nathan Shedroff), one in which students participate instead of sleeping.

When bringing technology into the classroom, we bring students face to face with the oft neglected rhetorical doctrine of kairos. Michael Harker brilliantly discusses varying definitions of kairos and its use in the classroom culminating in a move from rhetorical triangle to a rhetorical pyramid consisting of ethos, pathos, logos, and kairos. We’ve already seen the importance of kairos to a rhetoric of digital technology. He differentiates between Aristotelian and Isocratean kairos. The first puts emphasis on appropriateness, the second on timeliness. In composition we can teach appropriateness through conventions and timeliness through re-writes. This may seem to have little or nothing to do with technology and Harker certainly never makes the connection. However, the central rhetorical principle of new media is not one of the big three (ethos, pathos, logos) but kairos. Timeliness becomes essential in teaching digital literacy, no longer in the sense of rewriting, but now in interactivity. Internet time is time full of now (invoking Walter Benjamin, as Harker does). The internet teaches us to teach kairos. Augmented pedagogy incorporates delivery and kairos with digital media.

Simmons and Grabbill explain that technology enables and increases civic responsibility. Interactive technologies depend upon collaboration throughout the invention process. By designing interactive experiences, the performance itself becomes another moment of collaboration. Participation is then moved outward, causing students to be civically responsible members of society.

Andrea Lunsford provides another bridge between theory and practice. Lunsford begins by placing us in the context of Ong’s secondary orality and juxtaposing a secondary literacy:

As I’m using it, then, secondary literacy advances a looser prose style, infiltrated by visual and aural components
to mirror the agility and shiftiness of language filtered through and transformed by digital technologies and to allow for, indeed demand, performance. To describe such literacies, we need more expansive definitions of writing along with a flexible critical vocabulary and catalogue of the writing and rhetorical situations that call for amplified, performative, and embodied discourses of many different kinds. (170)

She describes modes of writing that are closer to speaking (Shankar and Rosenberger’s “sprinting”), resulting in a writing that is “epistemic, performative, multimodal, and multimediated”(171).

This writing aligns most closely with the fifth, sometimes forgotten, canon of rhetoric: delivery. She describes attempts to integrate this new writing in the Program for Writing and Rhetoric at Stanford University, mostly with little success. Despite this, she makes a call to all first year writing instructors to engage these new technologies.

When reflecting on most research that incorporates technology and pedagogy, we are too often confronted with the unquestioning belief in the myth of transparency—technology is an invisible medium, something with which we get things done (see my discussion of Stuart Selber in Chapter 3). The issue is one of seeing technology in the classroom as mainly CMC (Computer Mediated Communication) and rarely HCI (Human Computer Interaction) let alone augmented reality, a strange hybrid we might call Computer Mediated Interaction. Few take into account the greater implications (technology is by no means invisible) and possibilities (technology may be used as augmentation rather than pure medium) of technology. Current compositionists tend to see technology as CMC rather than HCI.

In WAC for example, Mike Palmquist’s “Notes on the Evolution of Network Support for Writing Across the Curriculum” offers a recap of the history of technology in WAC, beginning with the introduction of the word processor in the eighties to the adoption of online writing labs throughout the nineties. At the end he introduces the Online Writing Center, mentions some of the impediments to OWLs and OWCs, and calls for further investigation by WAC scholars. The article provides a good bit of context for where WAC, and most writing pedagogy, has been with regard to technology. Specifically, it illustrates my major point that until now almost all pedagogical scholarship has focused on technology as pure medium not augmented reality. Palmquist suffers from this error more
than most, ultimately confusing human and computer networks (computer networks are more than mere CMC).

In his 2007 article, “Technological Activism,” Dickie Selfe calls for a pedagogy that teaches students to use technology and to reflect upon it. He includes pedagogical appendices on applying these lessons to investigating digital environments. I follow Selfe’s suggestion by teaching students to both perform and analyze technology. However, his assignments put more stress on collecting and interpreting data than on critically analyzing technology. I determined to include more theoretical grounding and reflection in my own development of augmented pedagogy.

Stuart Selber offers a much more balanced view of the effect of technology on composition. He presents three myths of technology: the myth of progress, the myth of access, and the myth of transparency. Technology does not produce real progress, but is a complex system with benefits and disadvantages. Merely giving everyone access to technology will not decrease the distance between the haves and have-nots. Transparency is not the ultimate goal of technology, nor should it be. He states that technology has brought five basic changes. Technology has moved us from reception to engagement, from the classroom to the real world, from text to multiple representations, from coverage to mastery, from isolation to interconnection, and from products to processes. Selber’s reflections on transparency provide an interesting foil on the one hand to Selfe, and on the other to Bolter and Gromala (their Windows and Mirrors is largely an exposition of the myth of transparency).

Sonny and Jamie Kirkley’s article on “Blended Learning” features a potpourri of theory and pedagogy. They outline issues involved in designing the learning environment (an environment concerned with space, surely, but also with various media and their relative purity). They track pedagogy through a constructivist perspective, the goal of which is the creation and transfer of context-dependent, flexible and adaptive learning and complex problem solving” (44). Augmented reality technology allows for this. While, most of the technology they use involves the use of virtual reality and space mapping, its theory applies to the use of Adobe Breeze in the classroom.

Finally, my experiment called for a reflection on abnormal thought. Kenneth Bruffee’s analysis of Kuhn provides arguments for promoting abnormal discourse in composition classes. Greg Myers furthers this by showing that group work will never achieve abnormal thought, but merely reinscribes students into preconstructed knowledge discourses. Teaching with emerging technology, especially Adobe Breeze, may encourage students to reflect upon their own relationship with technology and generate the kind of abnormal thinking Bruffee and Myers call for. Rather than enforcing consensus, anonymity mixed with face-to-face interaction helps students who normally would not communicate in one of those modes to get their ideas out. Students are able to think more tangentially because of it.
My experiment attempted to discover whether or not participating in an augmented classroom produces knowledge about electracy and writing. Can students write better after using Breeze? What kinds of writing does it encourage? How does teaching in the augmented classroom differ from merely using technology in the classroom? Does it effect in them a more aware relationship with all technologies? I hoped to discover not only the benefits of augmented pedagogy, but also the impediments.

My methodology aimed at each of the two assessment goals: abnormal thought and increased critical awareness of technologies. During the literature review I posed two ad-

![Figure 1](image-url)
ditional issues that became evident during the study: kaíros and participation. I judged students’ ability to engage in abnormal thought by evaluating their discussions. I gauged their awareness of technology by assessing in-class writings done at the end of each class. While there were no specific measures, the evaluation procedures explain themselves. These writings each focused on a different reflection question (e.g. What technologies have you used today? How do different technologies influence your writing?).

Our school had bought licenses for Adobe Breeze, a webinar themed program that enables teleconferencing. The program consists of various “pods” displayed in real time across all users’ screens. Examples of pods include chat, note, share (for displaying PowerPoint or flash presentations) and video pods. Figure one shows (from left to right) the main chat space along with a roll sheet and note pod. This is the Breeze configuration for the lecture portion of this study. During the lecture, students were able to discuss in the main chat pod and follow the outline in the note pod. Figure two shows the Breeze configuration for the discussion segment. Here there are four chat spaces open, with a quarter of the class in each chat pod. I was able to thus view all four groups and participate in each, both aloud and in text.

While I experimented with Breeze a few
times throughout the semester, I decided to focus my experiment upon a specific lecture given in two sections of my Technical Writing course. The lecture was on the third chapter of Richard Lanham’s *The Economics of Attention*: [http://www.rhetoricainc.com/eofa](http://www.rhetoricainc.com/eofa). Chat occurred during lecture and then students were placed into groups to answer one of four questions. The initial question was placed at the top of each group chat pod. During the first class period, group members were moved through all four groups. My second section’s class remained in the same groups the entire time. The goal of this rotation was to determine the degree to which the anonymity of the digital environment prompts students to think tangentially. The first section had enough trouble with the rotations that I did not repeat them in the second. After group discussion had gone on for approximately twenty minutes, a secondary question was then asked of all the groups:

How has this experience been different based upon the media in which it was performed? I.e. what would it have been like if I was the only one with a computer and I had made you talk in groups instead?

What about if I had no computer either and just gave a lecture and then told you to discuss in groups?

Will this class period change the way you act during the rest of the day at all? How?

I recorded both sections’ classes and later reviewed the results.
Having overviewed the recordings, I have divided the results into four categories: kairos, abnormal thought, participation, and awareness of relationship with technology. While I initially aimed at merely discussing abnormal thought and relationship with technology, the actual process led me to add these additional sections as well.

First, let’s look at sections that reflect strides in the kairotic dimension of rhetoric. Kairos, defined broadly, would result in a focus on the present, maximizing class time. One example would be when a student asked aloud if the class could have the day before Thanksgiving Break off. I responded (again, aloud) that they should write up a proposal and send it to me. Immediately the chat board lit up:

Student A: I said i could do it
Student B: that will work
Student A: [student’s email address]@clemson.edu
Student C: So, who wants to be in charge of putting everyone’s quotes together?
Student C: ok good!
Student D: How about “Jason, if you come to class on the Tuesday before Thanksgiving, you will be a loser and no one will like you. Hence, no class.”
Student E: just send them ASAP
Student E: lol
Student B: haha
Student F: or if you come to class, no one will be here
Student F: hence, we can all just agree not to come
Student E: sucks for him lol
Student F: agreed? (Session 1, Main Chat)

While their mutiny never occurred, they did compile a very nice proposal done in a more traditional format—complete with an actual rhetorical argument—and I gave them the day off. This conversation happened only aloud in my other section and the proposal was notably lacking, taking the form of a bulleted list of
reasons to get the day off. Students also noted that Breeze let them feed off each other simultaneously. Conversations therefore went further more quickly than they would have if they’d only been aloud.

Student E: It would have been a less interesting discussion because this lets me feed off everyone's comments
Student D: we talk more on the computer because of electracy. Oral discussion would not get as much done and would not be as entertaining

Student G: we can scroll through and see what everyone is saying
Student G: if we are talking, we can't rewind the conversation
Student D: and you don't have to worry about letting someone have time to speak
Student H: true true
Student E: its more fun with computers...this way i will actually listen lol
Student I: i agree to that
Student D: true dat!
Student G: lol, i remember not liking it all that much when we did this the first time (Session 1, Group Chat)

The students grasp in practice the kind of engaged learning scholars like Redish call for. In a world of such simultaneous communications, kairos is even more important than in orality.

When asked to reflect on their experience with Breeze, students pointed to the oral and textual dimensions of electracy:

Student J: I would probably leave if I had to listen to jason for an hour or more
Student J: no offense jason
Student K: we could have only done one discussion at a time without computers
Student A: thats true
Student J: Class wouldn't have been very efficient
Student J: plus nothing would have gotten done

Jason Helms: can you envision even more helpful things that can be done?

Student J: It is more entertaining but, it also helps class to.
Student J: It would be way to confusing to have this type of discussion out loud
Student K: it makes class more enjoyable and usually less confusing

Jason Helms: [Student J], good point, run with that: why would it suck out loud?
Student J: Everyone talking about different topics and then about the
assigned one
Student J: would confuse people
Student J: an the teacher wouldn't have a clue on what was going on
Student A: i agree because with different conversations going on
Student A: it is just easier that way
Student A: b/c the other discussions don't apply to me but this one does
Student A: it keeps people separated but together as well
Student J: good point.
(Session 1, Group Chat)

While such a conversation would obviously be unfeasible aloud, participants evidently felt that the deficiencies of a more traditional oral discussion (one at a time with hands raised) went without saying.

Traditional discussions certainly allow for much less “chatter”, and, though staying closer to the task at hand, sacrifice the learning of the silent majority to the whims of the vocal minority. Students also reflected on the positives and negatives of kairotic dialogue:

Student L: i think that we've all gotten used to using this medium so it's easier to communicate here now
Student L: if you had asked us this question on the first time we used breeze, i think the response would be different

Student L: the first time, i didn't enjoy it, i thought it was impersonal
Student L: but now it's easier to just type out what i'm thinking without knowing that i'm not going to interrupt anyone...
Student C: I didn't care for it either, but I like it now...communication is more open...
Student L: i also feel like it's similar to oral communication as well though b/c you can still go off on tangents

Student C: this won't change the way I act at all though
Student C: there are more distractions with this too
Student L: especially when the side chat board is up...sometimes i feel like we get less done.
(Session 1, Group Chat)

While the group chat spaces opened up communication and allowed students to better follow their own trains of thought, the augmented lecture seemed to some to be less effective. For all their heralded multitasking abilities, it seems even the Nintendo Generation finds it difficult to negotiate the spoken and the written.
Again, working off of Thomas Kuhn and Greg Ulmer and Myers, I sought to create opportunities for abnormal and tangential thought. Often these opportunities can backfire (as in the case of the near mutiny noted above), but I’ve found that when their potential pay-off outweighs their risks.

At one point in the group chat, students were asked to look at an interactive resume done for a job in interactive design. They responded by connecting it back to the Ulmerian Mystery project I had assigned and their ePortfolios required by the school:

Jason Helms: Reflect on the following job application: http://www.rhetoricainc.com/eofa/e_of_a/media/mateo.html

Jason Helms: Remember, the original was interactive, not a movie. Do you find it persuasive? How could you do something similar in your field? Remember, unless your field is interaction design (as this person's is) you don't have to show off your interaction design skillz. Instead, show off skillz your employer might want (computer hacking skillz, bow-hunting skillz).

Student J: Its just showing how well he can use interactive design
Student M: thats really neat
Student J: Its really well put together
Student J: Depending on the job I would hire him
Student M: yeah if i needed someone to make bad ass computer stuff hed get hired
Student J: Agreed
Student M: You could just make a mystery type of resume with little film clips of your work depending on the field
Student M: thats kinda
what that whole new E-portfolio thing is with the school. (Session 1, Group Chat)

Clearly students are completely capable of making connections from theoretical discussions back to their discipline and eventual career if we just let them. While the prompt directed them towards personal reflection, the connections toward the school’s “ePortfolio” system were the students’ own. Abnormal, tangential thought has the power to surprise even its instigator.

Another turn down this road saw students reflecting on how digitality reveals a tacit ethos:

Student N: I feel like the print readers would be the OCD types, or old people stuck in their ways...
Student N: the “bi-stable” seriousness allows one to look at a work and analyze it, take things not so seriously
Student O: ok, that fits me
Student O: I never take anything seriously
Student O: I'm really not understanding the meaning of alphabetic seriousness
Student P: That's what we are proving is overrated
Student O: my fault for being on a bus during class on Monday
Jason Helms: so alphabetic is through
Student P: Darn Fencing
Jason Helms: oral is at (like when someone mis-speaks and we all laugh)
Jason Helms: digital is...
Student O: both?
Student N: yes, but a very stylized analytically conformist way of looking at things
Student O: typos = mispeaks. (Session 2, Group Chat)

While the conversation occasionally seemed to get away from the point, the students were able to maintain focus with a minimum of coaxing. “Seriousness is for noobs” (n00bs is current internet slang for the technologically naive) could well be the battle cry of a new generation of Homo rhetoricus, one discovered through abnormal thought.

Some students reflected on the extra
time it takes to type answers rather than talk: Student R: It seems weird. I think there are more tangents with this media. Student Q: hmm, it takes longer to type than to talk as well, that would have been different. Student R: More time means more free thinking. (Session 2, Group Chat)

While a traditional class discussion would have probably led to lengthier responses, those responses would probably be less thorough. Others reflected on the way in which the augmented classroom places “seriousness and craziness” face to face, unknowingly invoking Lanham’s homo seriousus and homo rhetoricus: Student C: More of us probably do pay attention but it isn’t to important class information. Student L: it’s about random conversation... it’s the juxtaposition of seriousness and craziness. Student C: So there could be a trade off...I feel like that’s up to the teacher though (session 1, Group 3)

The instructor obviously needs to be much more alert and involved in the augmented classroom. I was constantly pushed to the limits of my attention, lecturing while reading a chat space and then jumping from group to group in the discussion segment.

Answering Todd Taylor’s vision for a classroom environment designed to combat narcolepsy, the augmented classroom offers multiple means for teachers to increase participation. In fact, lack of participation becomes incredibly obvious to both teacher and fellow students. At one point I was able to pick out the one student in class who was working on something else (she hadn’t typed anything in five minutes) and the rest of the students joined in when I asked her to join us. The very fact that only one student was not participating is a great success for any teacher willing to admit the fact that all too often much of our students are passive and bored. During the reflection period, students noted their own increased desire to participate in the discussion with Breeze, not only because of its entertainment value, but also because it makes demanding theoretical discussions easier to follow:

Jason Helms: can you envision even more helpful things that can be done? Jason Helms: (serious question, cuz i'm still just experimenting with
I was especially surprised that they noted that I could pay better attention to them with Breeze. Also, the statement of separation and unity revealed the general tenor of the class. Participation was individualized for students, but the teacher was able to participate in all conversations at once (partially due to the fact that I was the one who had posed the questions and they were faced with them for the first time). Though the teacher may feel more responsive, students still betray a sense of isolation in a mostly silent room of furious typing.

In a traditional group discussion, students are typically able to discuss whatever they want so long as the teacher is currently paying attention to another group. In the augmented classroom, teachers can move quickly from group to group monitoring participation:

Student J: It is more entertaining but it also helps class to.
Student J: It would be way to confusing to have this type of discussion out loud
Student K: it makes class more enjoyable and usually less confusing
Jason Helms: [Student J], good point, run with that: why would it suck out loud?
Student J: Everyone talking about different topics and then about the assigned one
Student J: would confuse people
Student J: an the teacher wouldn’t have a clue on what was going on
Student A: i agree because with different conversations going on
Student A: it is just easier that way
Student A: b/c the other discussions dont apply to me but this one does
Student A: it keeps people seperated but together as well
Student J: good point.
(Session 1, Group Chat)

I was especially surprised that they noted
read the text it kept going on and on about the same thing "in different words"
Student V: im awake.
sorta. (Session 2, Group Chat)
Students who might normally get away with sleeping with their eyes open are forced to participate.
Students also began to explain concepts to each other, displaying yet another check on lack of participation:
Student I: someone who looks at that would def. remember this resume more than just another paper he read over
Student W: because he had skillz
Student M: thats true
Student H: well most companies weed out using resumes and then there are practical tests that the potentials must go against
Student M: you stand out
Student E: Hey group
Student K: here now
Student X: that was a stupid video huh
Student E: i think that it was all over the place
Student X: but how is it a job application
Student X: it seemed more to me like it was selling you the desire to work for AOL
Student K: i hope he didn't get the job
Student E: lol
Student E: he was in graphic design and stuff so he made his application work for him
Student X: oh i get it now. (Session 1, Group Chat)
In all likelihood, a traditional lecture would have left Students X and K in the dark about the importance of exigency in resumes (whether interactive or not). In this case, Student E was able to follow the thread and move the others onto the right track. In traditional group discussions, the student with the most knowledge and experience often monopolizes the discussion. In chat-based discussion groups the students most in need of help are able to get a word in edge-wise.
Students also noted their tendency to be more honest in their participation with Breeze:
Student S: i am usually more apt to say what i am thinking in this situation than in actual group conversation
Student R: That is a nice feature, but the same could be done with a tape recorder.
Student Q: yeah, removing us from actual personal interaction does definitely make people more honest
Student Y: true. (Session 2, Group Chat)
Their increased honesty was certainly a result of the feeling of "being watched" that elec-
tronic discourse encourages. Too much “drive by Foucault” research has already been written on panoptical nature of digital media. The class was small enough that at this point in the discussion, any anonymity had mostly dissipated. A future version of this experiment might try to engage theories of control societies as articulated by Deleuze and Hardt and Negri.

As students continued to reflect on their own participation, the themes of boredom and entertainment arose again and again:

Jason Helms: would it have been easier/better/more efficient if we just did this all the old fashioned way?

Student L: i don't think it would have been better b/c i would have been bored, honestly

Student L: this at least adds entertainment value to the afternoon b/c i have a 2 hour break before this class so most of the time i have no desire to come to it

Student C: Yea I would have been really bored too. (Session 1, Group Chat)

Student V: if we were sitting in groups talking we wouldn't have been this productive the little amount of productive we were

Student U: that would probably make me cranky.

Some instructors might be reticent about the benefits of an “entertaining” classroom experience, but I would assert that the goals of teaching are, like poetry, two-fold: to delight and instruct. Only through instruction will it be delightful. Only through delight will the students be instructed.

One of the major critiques students had was that this level of participation was too demanding:

Student S: it takes me a little longer to keep up though...my brain isn't quite awake enough to keep track of everything
that's being said
Student S: but i don't know if that would be any different if we were actually talking...
Student Q: I think being forced to talk in chat rooms before 10 am may be constitutionally defined as torture
Student Y: but we still know who is talking/typing.
Jason Helms: it doesn't let u fake it, does it?
...
Student S: no no at all. (Session 2, Group Chat)

Student N: i am really ADD, and when I read I jump around (ex. I can't read a list of five things in order) so typing and writing somewhat screws with my head, esp. if someone near me starts talking
Student P: Sorry
Student O: my bad yo

Student N: that's okay
Student N: you say what you type, it helps actually
Student P: I think it is easier to think "digitally"
Student O: Well, for one thing, if we'd had a more typical lecture class, I'd have finished my [homework] by now. (Session 2, Group Chat)

The second selection in particular raises the dual issues in participation. Sometimes I worry that I may be requiring too much of students, especially when they claim Attention Deficit Disorder as a reason for the difficulty of the assignment. However, when they complain that they are less able to do other work in class because of the required participation, I am less sympathetic.
The end goal of the experiment was that students would become more aware of and reflective on their own relationship with technology, not only within the experiment (an awareness implied by many of the above quotes), but also within their career and everyday life. This goal built upon Dickie Selfe’s demand for a technological awareness that allowed students to both work with technology and analyze it simultaneously. During the course of the experiment students were able to reflect upon technology as more than just computers and turn their analysis on their careers and everyday lives.

I had emphasized early on that technology is much more than just electronic, but that even writing is technological. As the semester continued on, however, I became increasingly worried that students had forgotten this reality and were thinking of technology strictly in terms of computers etc. However a single conversation restored my faith:

Jason Helms: k, so how do you apply into your career? just add tech to anything?
Student U: nope, only add tech when needed
Student T: well if you don't then you will surely fall behind
Student U: it's like when ppl make ppt's when only a handout is needed
Student U: it's annoying
Student U: or like mechanical engineers, they make things so complicated, an industrial engineer has to make it saleable and userfriendly
Student T: even a career such as agriculture that people think or view to be very premature a lot technology is actually envolved
Student V: true, but i think technology in the workplace is a good idea, as a chem major im going to use it to run tests etc. tech isn't just computers
Student U: true, bc u would use the technology u understand
Student V: and comp applications
Student U: yep yep
Student T: with farmers the workplace is a larger field full of corn or cattle and there is still a decent amount of tech stuff envolved
Student V: so reflection is that technology helps careers well when used wisely and correctly?
Student U: yeah, but in farming i'm guessing that over technology can bring harm or make things toxic, etc. (Session 2, Group Chat)
Their realization that technology has limits was an excellent one, and fairly organic within this discussion. I was also quite glad to see that they connected it to their careers with little prodding on my part.

Other groups made the same connections, this time when reflecting on Lanham’s distinctions between at and through:

**Student L:** well if you look at something, you just see it for what it is

**Student E:** i think it is more marketable to look through something and see the bigger picture

**Student L:** when you see through something, you’re seeing behind the face value, you’re taking away the bigger meaning of it ...

**Student D:** at means what you see on the surface, through means analyzing it

**Student H:** at makes it seem as if the person were shallow

**Student G:** or maybe rushed?

**Student G:** at would be for memos

**Student D:** I think “at” os referring to seeing an advertisement, whereas “through” means seeing the meaning behind the advertisement

**Student W:** So it would good to be able to see both the surface and meaning

Although they seem to invert the dichotomy (Lanham’s discussion shows that at reveals the rhetoric inherent in any discourse, while through aims at ignoring it), they were able to grasp the need to do both well.

Another group (who did seem to understand at and through correctly) made the same connection:

**Student R:** [Student Q] says, “The at and through merge to give purpose.”

**Student Q:** Weren’t we supposed to be talking more specifically about marketability

**Student Q:** like how does knowing the difference between at and through and how they complement one another help in what you’re going to do?

**Student R:** I don’t know anymore.

... **Student R:** Employers what a person to be both an at and through person, but at times this is lacking. (Session 2, Group Chat)

That the students used examples from their
careers and everyday lives to bolster their arguments showed a particularly nuanced understanding of the issues.
This experiment in augmented pedagogy reveals the medium’s strengths and weaknesses. It certainly brings kairos to a privileged position with the three other pillars of rhetoric. It rewards tangential thought and, as this experiment has hopefully shown, is rewarded in turn by those acts of abnormality. It encourages participation and allows instructors oversight on student participation. It enables digital literacy while simultaneously making a space for reflection on technology and our relationship with it.

The process of engaging simultaneously in the actual and the virtual can be quite taxing for instructors and students alike. It extends our attention’s capacities to the near breaking point. The very strengths mentioned above can turn quickly to weaknesses. Many instructors would see little benefit in tangential conversations and fear that teaching kairos through experience can only further the alienation of our tech savvy students from all things academic. Whatever the case, more work is certainly needed. While this study was conducted in a writing course, there is no reason other disciplines would not discover the same advantages. Also, a more quantitative analysis comparing augmented and traditional pedagogies would likely reveal other trends. Yet the most immediate concern is for other instructors to begin to dabble in this on their own. As they do, I’m sure we will begin to form a picture of what augmented pedagogy can and cannot do.

The students in this course were taught the importance of delivery in the form and content of the class. They composed multi-modal assignments relying on discourse and figure, learned the promises and perils inherent in various media, and reflected on their own relationship with rhetoric and technology. This is one way of applying the theories I’ve articulated throughout this dissertation, but there are of course infinite other possibilities for application. The classroom is a blank space waiting to be given form.
ound,

I only need to find a final
ood,
he way wine comes at a table in a
ood.

and we enjoy like men, the way a leaf
bove the table spins its constant spin,
o that we look at it with pleasure, look
it spinning its eccentric measure.

Perhaps,

he man-hero is not the exceptional
monster,
he that of repetition is most master.

at girl, terrestrial, my su-
right,
how is it I find you in difference, see
you there
in a moving contour, a change not
quite completed?

You are familiar yet an aberration.

ivil, madam, I am, but underneath
stree, this unprovoked sensation
quires

hat I should name you flatly, waste no
mind

And sky, between thought and day at
ight.is

For that the poet is always in the sun.

Patches the moon together in his ro-

To his Virgilian cadences, up down,

Up down. It is a war that never ends.

Yet it depends on yours. The two are

one.

They are a plural, a right and left, a
pair,

Two parallels that meet if only in

The meeting of their shadows or that

meet

In a book in a barrack, a letter from

Malay.

But your war ends. And after it you

return

With six meats and twelve wines or
else without

To walk another room... Monsieur

and comrade,

The soldier is poor without the poet’s
lines,

His petty syllabi, the sounds that stick

Inevitably modulating, in the blood.
Today we'll be making a scarf.

Yes, this is a bit of a

Metaphor

Hayden White tells us that metaphor is an attempt to deal with the uncanny we discover in the world (9).

Metaphorization is always exclusionary, an attempt to evade the reality principle.

In knitting, we compose a three-dimensional text out of what is basically a one-dimensional line. Through decoupage and tressage we create a multimodal rhizomatic.

For this, we'll need some material. Yarn, hyle. A blank page on which to compose.

Material is also of course the first of Aristotle's four causes.

Casting On

Two things come to mean one thing. All trees come to be represented by one. For this reason metaphor is the copula (cf. Socrates)

It also signifies the syntagmatic mode I described in Chapter 2.
Metonymy

Metaphor is vertical, this equals that, but metonymy opens up the horizontal.

Metonymy operates as a slippage of signifiers. A displacement.

Here, things form a continuity.

Metonymy relies upon parataxis. Parataxis says AND, AND, AND, always signifying more.

But, of course, it's not enough just to be able to start a row.

We have to continue into the second dimension, adding more rows.

The easiest way to do this is to knit, which is like casting on, but easier.

Here, the scarf starts to take shape, form, eidos.

Most people start knitting thinking of it in terms of this platonic form, i.e. “I'm making a scarf.”

However, actually working with the hyle reveals the scarf as a single series of stitches.

The relationship between the hyle and the eidos seems to reflect discourse and figure, but of course they are more complex.

Knitting
Hayden White tells us that **Synechdoche** is where the pattern first emerges.

Synechdoche is representation within the French dream sense and is a reoccurring concept.

The pattern is intimately related to the function of the garment.

This is the causa finalis, the ideas of the material. In our case, the causa finalis is with fashion and warmth.

Now that we've learned to purl, we'll need to keep our stitches straight. One handy mnemonic is that knit stitches look like scarves, purls like nooses.

One thing is needful. "Giving style" to one's character - a great and rare art.

Synechdoche, combined with the illusion of continuity and repetition, possesses power to imbue Dasein with meaning.

Purling
But to have a self-reflective subject, a true cogito, we must move into

And now that we've discovered our end, we can finish, cast off.

We can also add another cause, the causa efficiens.

Typically, this would be the knitter.

You.

Heidegger, however, refuses to separate subject and object, making the causa efficiens a kind of appearance.

Heteronomy

Ironic

Hayden White calls irony "self-reflexivity," connecting it with gestalt switches.

There is no logic to this switch, he writes. Instead, there a our spontaneity, our individuality occurs alongside this reflection, as if by accident.

Who are we when we compose ourselves?

The inscription of the woman
(of) Nietzsche is that, if there is going to be style, there can only be more than one.

(1 + 2 + 3 + 4)^2 times.

At least.

Casting Off

Using secondary revision, you can now weave in any excess thread, to reveal a complex subject. A single thread wrapped around itself, and appearing as a scarf only in the intricate wrapping.
Conclusion:

Compose Yourself!
Who am I composing

The question is ambiguous and perhaps grammatically incorrect. Did I mean whom? Should there be a comma? By asking what “I” mean, the reader (one of whom I am) falls prey to the representationalist paradigm I have so assiduously attacked throughout this book. Compositionalists love to ask these questions, often uncritically. We/they can use terms like agency to cover their tracks, but we/they really mean someone who can “really mean.” Perhaps there once was someONE who could mean transparently. I have argued that such a person no longer exists, and such nostalgic attempts are doomed to failure and shot through with dishonest assertions of continuity.
I am not sure who I am. I do not mean this in any Sartrean, high-school angst search for meaning (do I?). I mean, who is this first person pronoun used throughout this work? With all I have said of the complex relationship between figure and discourse, why would I still rely upon a singular marker, knowing full well that the body typing these words is not even singular. Moreover, when the massively recursive modes of writing THIS dissertation - modes which include pencil, pen, eraser, a variety of papers, books, scans, half of Adobe's creative suite, and the full force of the collective intelligence of the internet - are brought into account, notions of singularity, continuity, agency, intention become virtually meaningless. Should I then bracket [I]? Eliminate I? Could each sentence be uttered passively? One could [many would] follow Raul Sanchez in eliminating the subject from the composition classroom:

Can I tell you something?
all of our available terms—agency, subject, consciousness—are so deeply implicated in the representationalist paradigm that it is all but impossible to imagine a writer or even an appropriately postmodernized “writing subject” that is not fundamentally prediscursive, that solves or identifies problems through the medium or tools of language and writing. (Sanchez 97)

Here we (Raul and I, though the I of the last one) are falling prey to the correspondence theory of truth I complicated in chapter three. However, the opposing concept of truth I proposed, Heidegger’s infinite, generative play of (un)concealment, relies not just upon reflexivity. It is not enough, in other words, to ask whether I should use the first person pronoun. That is merely to interrogate an always already Cartesian subject. Truth as aletheia, which is to say composition as apophasis, is in constant struggle with itself. It depends upon a multiplicity (Deleuze and Guattari’s useful evasion of the word subject) who never arrives.

Žižek’s metaphor of the parallax view (the metaphor with which I began this text) is careful not to presuppose a transcen-

At the end of the day, some must compose.
dental

I with two eyes. Instead, the parallax view creates the transcendental I:

“What, then, is this new dimension that emerges in the gap itself? It is that of the transcendental I itself, of its “spontaneity”: the ultimate parallax, the third space between phenomena and the noumenon itself, is the subject’s freedom/spontaneity, which — although, of course, it is not the property of a phenomenal entity, so that it cannot be dismissed as a false appearance which conceals the noumenal fact that we are totally caught in an inaccessible necessity — is also not simply noumenal” (22).

Even in our contingency, when we are at our most “thrown,” our spontaneity reveals us to ourselves. The transcendental I reappears as medium, also, of course, message.

“The philosophical consequences of this Kantian parallax are fully explored in their notion of ontological difference, the focus of Heidegger’s entire thought, which can be properly grasped only against the background of the theme of finitude. There is a double doxa on Heidegger’s ontological difference: it is a difference between the Whatness, the essence of beings, and the mere That-ness of their being — it liberates beings from subordination to any arche/goal; furthermore, it is a difference not merely between (different levels of) beings, of reality, but between the All of reality and some-thing else which, with regard to reality, cannot but appear as “Nothing” . . . This doxa is deeply misleading” (23).

Žižek’s declaration of our freedom, however, may leave us looking a bit like the emoticon that introduces his quote — not entirely happy. Our spontaneity is always already in the face of our contingency. We are free only insofar as we are bound to act.

We are composed by others at least as much as we compose ourselves. Heidegger is able to bridge the gap between phenomena and the noumenon, but at a cost: I am not the master of my own fate,
though
I may instead become
its lover. And still, his assertion that
existence preceeds essence is taken as a
grand proclamation of the freedom of the will. The
composer is bound by a variety of conventions, some
grammatical, some material, all rhetorical.

The composer is always already a gap bridger. I have
made much of the etymology of composition, literally to put
together. Multimodality lies at the heart of composition (for how
can one put together one ingredient?).

At the core of this multimodality is the gap between the
phenomenal and the noumenal, discourse and figure. It is here
that the multiplicity composes itself with (un)conscious (un)
intentionality.

And we are left with a single dot. It can signify
circularity. A pupil (eye or student?). It signifies,
and bears witness to the supplement which
I was unable to include. It also sig-
nifies an end. Period.
Works Cited


---. *Discours, Figure*. Paris: Klicksieck, 1971. Print.


