DELEUZE, FEMININITY AND THE SPECTER OF POSTSTRUCTURAL POLITICS:

VARIATIONS ON THE MATERIALITY OF RHETORIC

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In this thesis I rethink the materiality of rhetoric in a minor key. I review

poststructural and psychoanalytic endeavors to position rhetoric from within the

postmodern and poststructural critique of the subject. I move beyond the logic of

influence (dependent on a flawed conception of object) and hermeneutics (the

correspondingly flawed methodology). In this endeavor, I primarily enlist Deleuze and

Guattari (1987) for a conceptual apparatus that enlivens the "thinness" of rhetoric's

(neo)Aristotelian conceptual design (cf. Gaonkar, 1997a, 1997b). I offer *Monster* (2003)

as a case study, analyzing the discursive expression of nondiscursive abstract machines to

draw out the reterritorializations of the latter. Recognizing the impossibility of complete

reterritorialization I map one artifact that reinvests difference in itself, *Dancer in the*

Dark (2000). Finally, in the epilogue I provide a brief recapitulation of minor politics,

and offer a summarization of the utility of rhetoric.

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PROLOGUE

A specter haunts communication scholarship attempting to understand the capacity for citizens to use symbols to engage with and change a history that is not of their making (Biesecker, 1992a); that is, it haunts much of what is understood as the pursuit of rhetorical studies (e.g. Bizzell, 1997; Cloud, 2004; Eberly, 2004; Klumpp, 1997; McKerrow, 1989; to name only a few of the scholars addressing this concern). Much of rhetorical scholarship is relegated to interpreting the persuasiveness of one rhetorical message or another; the pedantic hope being that understanding the process of persuasion available to a speaker or artifact as demonstrated in a message under a given set of circumstances (e.g. as a rhetorical situation) may empower subjects to act as citizens (Bitzer, 1968; Wallace, 1970). However, some scholars argue that the turn in communication studies over the past two decades towards the writings of continental French thought, largely associated with the advent of poststructuralism, undercuts this hermeneutic tendency and profoundly limits what can be said about autonomous subjects exercising sovereign will to engage as participants in public spaces, deliberate about the goings-on of the nation-state, and otherwise identify themselves as members of a healthy and active citizenry (Biesecker, 1989, 1992a; Gaonkar, 1982; Greene, 1998, 2004; Grossberg, 1992; Gunn, 2003).

A reaction to the specter of poststructuralism and worry about the future of democracy that, at least in the U.S., appears to be increasingly technocratic and self-regulating, animate a religious calling for some scholars (ranging peculiarly from liberals to Marxists) to have faith that the "collaborative practice of rhetoric [understood in the

above sense] is the best chance democracy has" (Eberly, 2004 p. 46; echoed also by

Cloud, 2004; Hauser, 2004). Though dominant within the discipline, this expression of

faith in a traditional understanding of rhetoric, is even used to articulate this conservative

ideology, based on nostalgic longing, as the perspective of the oppressed: "I know this

kind of hope is theoretically incorrect, but in the wake of Foucault, Lyotard, and the

fragments of liberal humanism—here we are, still, together. What now?" (Eberly, p. 46).

Momentarily bracketing my concern over the ideological implications of this statement

and poststructural critiques of rhetorical theory notwithstanding, a profound critique of

rhetorical criticism has emerged from within our own ranks and is worth mentioning.

Gaonkar (1997a) argues that the tradition of rhetoric is one of production, whose

primary function is to produce oratory and articulate pedagogy toward that end. He

demonstrates, in his now (in)famous analysis of Gross (1990) et. al., that, more recently,

rhetoric is articulated as an interpretive practice but continues to utilize the set of

theoretical stances afforded by its tradition as a practice of production. Unfortunately the

theories associated with producing good speeches don't translate well into systematic

criteria or insightful conceptual arrangements of interpretation; this characterizes

rhetoric's "thinness" (Gaonkar). Another assumption guiding hermeneutic rhetoric is that

the rhetorical properties are not immediately apparent or intrinsic to an object of analysis

(as in the rhetoric of x), but are "uncovered," as it were, by critical interpretation, which

demonstrates their "actual" rhetoricity. However, also given the understanding that

rhetoric is not an intrinsic property, it becomes an effect of the interpretive act; if the

rhetorician is ultimately responsible for this interpretation-creation, how may we

understand the potential to challenge her "reading" of a text? Thus, again Gaonkar describes the thinness of rhetoric as an interpretive act; one consequence of rhetoric's thinness being its presumed global applicability, rendering conclusions that are not falsifiable or even contestable (Gross, 1997). The primary victim of Goankar's critique is the logic of influence that accompanies neo-Aristotelian criticism, but also all criticisms seeking to uncover the rhetoric of this or that artifact or event: the rhetoricity of a text is only demonstrable through the creative endeavor of the critic and therefore rendering a displacement of understanding of the effectivity of a text outside of the lens of the rhetorician. Gaonkar argues the point:

> if what is rhetorical is an effect of one's reading, then a master reader can produce such an effect in relation to virtually any object. Hence, the range of rhetoric is potentially universal. Thus, it turns out that the interpretive turn in rhetoric is inextricably linked to an impulse to universalize rhetoric (p. 29)

In effort to avoid the circular "rhetoric of x" logic that accompanies the hermeneutic turn in rhetorical criticisms, I attempt to discuss a method of analysis that does not seek to interpret a single text, as in, for example, the rhetoric of a film, but rather to describe the event-text in such a way as to understand the rules of possibility governing the formation of the text as it emerges concretely within a specific cultural milieu. In other words, in relinquishing the burden of establishing the persuasiveness of a text, I seek to understand how the texts evidence a concrete instantiation (and sometimes deviation) of the historical burden of the material conditions in which they become intelligible. In doing so I hope to give legs to my endeavor on an alternate path through

the double burden every rhetorician faces in the current cultural critical milieu, as demonstrated in the pages of our journals, to define the rhetorical and find it in the object under analysis (Gaonkar, 1997a).

My response to this challenge to our field arrives during a conservative period of American culture. It is no surprise that a critical hermeneutic impasse exists at a time when cultural lines of territorialization seek to control a number of minoritarian bodies. For example, popular culture abounds with women suspected of murder. Recently executed by the state of Florida, Aileen Wuornos, incorrectly labeled America's first female serial killer, appears as the subject of at least three films, a made for TV movie, two full length books, one comic book, too many daytime talk-shows and magazine articles to mention, and one opera. Indeed, according to one author, she is firmly ensconced in the canon of the most evil women of all time (Klein, 2003).

From the circulation of images of Wuornos it can be inferred that a considerable market exists for images of so-called evil women. Such fascination with the referent, with what "actually" happened at the scene of her crime(s), so to speak, signals more than a politically unmotivated necromantic desire on behalf of U.S. culture. Violence against supposedly deviant (evil) women, sanctioned by the state, articulated with the interests of the logic of late capitalism, assembles in a series that only in retrospect unifies as a coherent trajectory. First, the circulation of popular images of women suspected of murder articulates the state's right over the distribution of violence, indeed of death, to a social system inundated throughout by violent acts by (though actually against) subjects who stray from the traditional roles of femininity (Griggers, 1997). Clearly it is

suggested that the role of the state is not to protect minoritarian and often battered bodies (e.g. lesbian women, women of color, sex workers, etc),[1] but to discipline them, to remove their agency within a system permutated throughout by violence. Thus, the circulation of images links up with, or conditions the possibility of the state's access to violence that is legitimate, public and sacred (Griggers, 1997). On the second side of the articulation, the popular circulations of such images, in lock-step with the machinations of governmental apparatuses, produce a continuous (though nonlinear) flow of female minoritarian bodies who, in taking the law into their own hands, commit spectacular murders, providing viewers with a unique temporal perspective. Viewers experience televisual images in a continuous feed. Yet the image is what already happened. Thus, the experience of watching images of true-stories is the experience of a unique temporal mode of seeing what has been as if it were happening, blurring the distinctions between past and present (Barthes, 1985). This seeing what has been, the creative aesthetic associated with a documentary aesthetic, suggests an unmitigated access to the referent, to what really happened (outside of political, historical, or economic motivations) and indeed, as the proliferation of such images persistently suggests, what could happen. Insofar as the made for TV docudramas, news coverage, and films proliferate, the media provides the contemporary consumer access not only to what "really" happened, but what will have happened, molding an (affective) anticipatory readiness at the level of the body.[2]

Accordingly some scholars argue that state-sanctioned violence against women is a controversial subject calling for further research (Carroll, 1997; Cruikshank, 1999;

Heberle, 1999; Kaufman-Osborn, 1999; Valliant and Oliver, 1997). While scholars of communication have studied public attitudes toward capital punishment largely from a sociological perspective and established its popularity among at least 70% of Americans (Cohen and Liebman, 1995; Sandys and Chermak, 1996; Sawyer, 1982; Shaw, Shapiro, Lock, and Jacobs, 1998; Shipman, 1995), few have addressed the specificity of rhetorical strategies used to maintain popular support for the execution of women (Valliant and Oliver, 1997; Last, 1998).

Studies based on a hermeneutic method are incapable of dealing with the complexity of the politics of the cultural formations describe above. Indeed, new methods are called for. However, before continuing, I know turn to a more specific description of the central goal of this thesis.

Beyond the pale of the normative (religious) ideal of rhetoric as an instrument of deliberation in the public sphere, the central question that thesis attempt to address is simply the "what now?" question articulated above, providing a methodological answer, and offering two case studies that implement rhetorical analysis based primarily on the philosophical endeavors of Deleuze and Guattari (1987). Rather than resurrect the ghosts of rhetoric's (idealized) past to argue for a future that never will have been, I endeavor to articulate a modified definition of rhetoric, one that in staking a claim to a Deleuzian model of (reconstructed) materialism and difference, finds the material condition of agency and the potential for a reconstructed notion of deliberation, in their historical specificity as a production of the relations of postindustrial capitalism. In this endeavor, I seek affect and the attempts to capture the potential of the nonpersonal passional

dimensions of everyday life (what I later describe as the materialism of the minor), as the

primary field of rhetorical action (Grossberg, 1992); though unconscious and asignifying,

this plane of intensity is put at the forefront of my work.[3] I seek it as the space of

continuing the study of the rhetorical dimension of the public outside of its traditional

understanding as the study of the discursive practices of intending citizens (cf. Hauser,

2004).

I utilize this model to perform an exploratory rhetorical analysis of popular visual

U.S. culture—the cutting edge of expression for the deterritorializing forces of

capitalism's inherent and schizophrenia processes of disintegrating the atomic units of the

social fabric (especially identity) and the accompanying conservative reterritorializations

remaking the world over in its image—for evidence of the potential for difference to be

absorbed within the acceptable range of variation *and* for difference to articulate a line of

flight from the stratifications of the popular visage. More specifically, I undertake an

investigation of the structures within the visual field of popular culture that recuperate the

potential of radical difference (difference that is articulated with a perceived threat to the

majoritarian regime of signification) into a dual process of commodification and

discipline. In doing so, I investigate two films (chapters two and three, respectively) for

evidence of the articulation of violence associated with deviant femininity as a scapegoat

for the perceived threat to the wealthy, white, male, heterosexual—put otherwise,

majoritarian—regime of signification, supposedly being encroached upon by the

imminent threat posed by the difference of the minoritarian other. I argue that minor

difference, that is, difference that does not fall within an intelligible chain of equivalences

established by the economy of a center-margin hierarchy, usually, but not always, faces the double bind of being recuperated into a majoritarian grid of intelligibility and being sacrificed for its inarticulable deviation from this regime (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987).

Humanization, I argue, is the specific mode of expression associated with such filmic portrayals. Ironically, humanization, and the corresponding epideictic rhetorical devices used in articulating the events of the past with a human face, a story, are ultimately in the service of abolishing the antagonism associated with even the most traditional forms of deliberative engagement and incorporating difference into a palatable commodity. Thus, liberal-consumerism is the collective mode of audience position articulated with the vapid popular humanizations of "deviant" women.

Prior to articulating the specific methodological programme that follows from a Deleuzian understanding of rhetoric and the application of said method to two rhetorical events, I utilize the remaining space of the prologue to review that portion of the field of rhetorical studies that attempts (and often fails) to respond to what Biesecker characterizes as "a generalized pressure in the humanities to update or 'postmodernize' our orthodoxies while preserving, in however veiled a fashion, our disciplinary identity" (p. 351). I therefore first undertake a brief review of traditional rhetorical studies and feminism, followed by a review of recent attempts to incorporate an understanding of psychoanalysis to analyze the visual field of culture. I point out that in their sundry attempts to articulate a decentered rhetorical understanding of the subject, these projects fall short in their account for the historical specificity of the material bases of subject composition. In doing so, they risk losing the most important development that

psychoanalysis and schizoanalysis offered in the history of 20th century thought: articulating the unconscious with the productive forces of capitalism (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983). I then tack towards the historicizing tendency in rhetorical studies, targeting criticisms and theories of rhetoric associated with its critical school of thought. Adding to the growing list of scholars that take issue with critical rhetoric (cf. Biesecker, 1992a; Charland, 1991; Cloud, 1991; Green 1998; Hariman, 1991; Ono and Sloop, 1992), I argue that it misses a crucial opportunity to explore the productivity of power because of the limitations of its all-too-hermeneutic framework and foregrounding of ideology. Turning away from the reviews, in the penultimate section of this prologue I readdress the trajectory of the study, discussing the limits and scope of each subsequent chapter. I conclude with a brief discussion of the importance of this study for advancing our understanding of rhetoric.

<div align="center">Literature Review</div>

Efforts to incorporate the insights of feminism(s) into the field of rhetoric are largely geared toward the incorporation of women into the canon of 'great orators' (e.g. Campbell, 1989). Campbell (2001) discusses this recovery effort—or as Biesecker (1992b) calls it, the affirmative action approach—in a recent article.[4] She notes that following her initial (1973) efforts, this project is extended by the anthological efforts of Anderson (1984), and Kennedy and O'Shields (1983); the women's social-movement analyses of Campbell (1989), as well as her two-volume reference work (1993, 1994). Campbell also notes the work of Linkugel and Solomon (1991), Waggenspack (1989) as

contributing to this project. Of more immediate concern to my work are efforts to employ visual rhetoric under the sign of feminism.

Of one aspect of visual studies and psychoanalysis, one scholar comments: "if one's encounter with feminism had been through film theory alone, one could be forgiven for thinking that psychoanalysis was the only feminist position open to women" (Taylor, 1995, p. 152). Despite the essentializing gestures going on here between feminism and women, the quotations reflects the profound effect psychoanalysis has had on the study of visual culture. Mulvey's (1988 [1975]) initial use of Freudo-lacanian influenced psychoanalytic theory has been highly influential to a number of communication scholars (Sillars and Gronbeck, 2001; Taylor 1995). Indeed, in Sillars and Gronbeck's now canonical work, Communication Criticism, they highlight a number of communication scholars that have incorporated psychoanalysis into their methods of conducting criticism (e.g. Brodie, 1974; Clover, 1987; Livingston and Tamar, 1995; Terrill, 1993; Wood, 1982). These studies have made modest progress articulating the study of communication practices with an understanding of relations of patriarchy (especially in understanding the function of the camera as a virtual extension of the objectifying gaze of masculinity), but they leave unaddressed the specific connection between psychoanalysis and rhetoric.

On a more rhetorical note, Gunn (2003) uses Lacan to update a rhetorical understanding of imagination. He argues that "a general unwillingness to let go of the Cartesian ego" (p. 42) permeates rhetorical studies and that only an understanding of the interior psychical structures of the imaginary and the unconscious dimensions of the

subject may account for suasive processes.[5] Such psychoanalytic endeavors conceive of

rhetoric as an interior process of suasion or identification that occurring primarily

because of pre-given psychical structures of subjectivity, coming close to laying claim to

the rhetorical equivalent of a theory of everything. Furthermore, Gunn leaves

unaddressed the historical specificity of the modes of articulation between the

unconscious and the mode of production, presumably because he fears falling into an

unreconstructed materialism that "emphasize(s) the analysis of structural and institutional

objects" (p. 55). This misses the entire point of the new materialism: psychical structures

of the subject do not exist apart from their production in an economy of material

relations. Famously, Deleuze and Guattari (1983) argue in the opening passages of Anti-

Oedipus:

> It is at work everywhere, functioning smoothly at times, at other times in fits and
>
> starts. It breathes it heats, it eats. It shits and fucks. What a mistake to have ever
>
> said the id. Everywhere it is machines—real ones, not figurative ones: machines
>
> driving other machines, machines being driven by other machines, with all the
>
> necessary couplings and connections. (p. 1)

In fact, the idea of an interior psychical space, especially but not limited to its oedipal

formations is a "miraculation" of the current mode of production (Deleuze and Guattari,

1983), and is a new mode of idealism:

> a classical theater was [sic] substituted for the unconscious as factory;
>
> representation was substituted for the units of production of the unconscious; and

an unconscious that was capable of nothing but expressing itself—in myth,

tragedy, dreams—was substituted for the productive unconscious. (p. 24)

To truly heed Gunn's call for "a theoretical reconceptualization [of rhetoric] that admits

and incorporates determining social structures and psychical structures simultaneously"

(p. 55), we are obliged to disqualify the fantasy of their distinction.[6] In doing so, the

value of all of the psychoanalytically informed literature reviewed so far is called into

question. But what alternatives exist? I now turn to a selected review of recent attempts

to address material concerns from a critical perspective.

Attempts to incorporate material concerns into rhetorical studies have been

largely influenced by ideological criticism and the study of power. Therefore I have

selectively chosen to review three scholars who exemplify the dominant trend in

rhetorical studies to focus on the ideological, or as Barthes (1985) would have it,

connotative or mythical, level of analysis. First I review Fiske's (1987) conception of the

televisual viewer alongside McGee's (1990) fragmentation thesis. Second, I locate a

similar trajectory of thought in McKerrow's (1989) flagship article for the project known

as critical rhetoric. Third I offer Flores (1996) analysis of visual depictions of the Virgin

Mary as a manifestation of the assumptions informing the theoretical developments of

Fiske and McKerrow.[7]

Fiske (1987) employs a method to decode patriarchal ideology manifest in

televisual texts that is by now well-rehearsed by cultural critics and adopted by

rhetoricians, perhaps most explicitly under the sign of critical or postmodern rhetoric.

Arguing that television and television programs are potentials of meaning distinct from

the meaning produced by viewer, Fiske anticipates McGee's (1990) postmodern fragmentation thesis. For Fiske as well as for McGee, texts are fragmentary instances of conflict between the forces of their production, the relative autonomy of their distribution endemic to the cultural logic of the contemporary economic mode, and their subsequent reception. The unified meaning of a text is a discursive construction of the viewer, which reverses the traditional logic of meaning production in the communicative act. The dominant ideology, we are reminded, intercepts the full range of meaning potential in programs through becoming "structured into popular texts by the discourse and conventions that inform the practices of production and that are part of their reception" (p. 14). The good news is that because a television program (as the meaning product of audiences' construction) is a site of struggle between production and reception—because with contemporary capitalism, as Marx's often quoted statement goes, all that is solid melts in air—the text constructed by a viewer may conflict with the codes structured into it. A reader, precisely because she does more than passively consume a TV program, actively invests meaning into a text, and may construct a text in a way that does not reify the dominant ideology. Fiske's theoretical assumptions about the demystifying nature of critical viewing translate neatly into rhetorical criticisms, which find affinity with the active notion of spectatorship or audience in the project now well-known as critical rhetoric.

McKerrow (1989) develops critical rhetoric as an emancipatory critique of domination and freedom aimed at the demystification of the conditions of repressive power and as a permanent self reflexive criticism "that turns back on itself even as it

promotes a realignment in the forces of power that construct social relations" (p. 91).

Drawing on Fiske's (1986) conception of a polysemic critique, and Foucault's critique of

the repressive hypothesis, McKerrow argues that viewers may be socially located in such

a way that they can put the signifying practices of the dominant cultural norms to

aberrant use. Critical rhetoric emphases a demystification of the dynamic of power and

knowledge as integrated through discourse to normalize language that reifies the status

quo, or dominant ideology (McKerrow). The critical rhetorician, unmasks the ideological

dimension of language, that is, the conflation of what is with what should be, through

exposing strategies of legitimation, that through their invisibility come to characterize

some truth or just the way things are, and is therefore "in a position to posit the

possibilities of freedom" (p. 100). Before turning to a discussion of my point of

departure from the critical rhetoric method, I provide an example of one application of a

critical rhetoric project and a brief discussion of the numerous responses to McKerrow's

initial formulation.

Also drawing on Fiske (1986), Flores (1996) provides an example of an

application of critical rhetoric in her seminal study of the rhetoric of difference and the

discursive construction of a Chicana feminist homeland.[8] Flores demonstrates

oppositional readings of everyday cultural information by Chicana feminists "resist the

dominant construction of their identity and insert their own creation" (p. 149). For

Flores, this creative process manifests in the visual art of Yolanda Lopez, whose series

"Our Lady of Guadalupe" reclaims the passive Virgin Mary as a strong and active

woman. The series includes portraits of herself, mother and grandmother, wearing

Guadalupe's cape and surrounded by rays of light often seen in images of the Virgin Mary. Flores refers to the subversive reading, and subsequent reclamation of an image, as a process of translation. She argues that through the process of translating the Virgin Mary from a passive figure to a woman endowed with agency, Chicana feminists resist the identity and meanings conferred upon them by the dominant culture in order to "rework existing, and often negative, information into positive portrayals" (p. 148).

Fiske (1986, 1987), McKerrow (1989), and Flores (1996) operate under assumptions about the nature of power that prevent some rhetoricians from buying wholesale into their method for critiquing and evaluating visual texts. All three assume that power functions in a repressive manner and that it may be possessed by something like the ruling class, or expressed as the dominant ideology. Therefore they miss the insights throughout Foucault's oeuvre into our understanding of power as (1) not possessed but exercised (2) not repressive but productive, and therefore (3) analyzed (most effectively) from the bottom up (Sawicki, 1991).

Furthermore, each study attempts to distance itself from a fundamental insight of Foucauldian thought, that action to counter power creates the conditions for the reaction of power.[9] Each example, in short, overemphasizes the roles of ideology in the operations of power. In doing so, the materiality of power and the potential of resistance in the plane of materiality (or immanence) itself is displaced.[10]

I situate myself within and against the grain of critical rhetoric because of the insight it lends to the poststructural methodology of Foucault, however misread by McKerrow (1989), in attempting to locate the material effect of discourse (Green, 1998).

Rhetorical theory, insofar as it is useful to this project, concerns itself with discursive and imagistic strategies as material action (Attias, 1998), tracing philosophical bloodlines to Nietzsche and the sophists of pre-Platonic Greece—especially Gorgias (Balliff, 2001). Along with Greene's assertion that rhetorical criticism operating under the sign of critical rhetoric displaces the materiality of rhetoric by "linking a methodological stance that privileges the 'politics of representation' to a political stance that investigates power through a bipolar model of domination and resistance" (p. 21), I agree that rhetoricians do well to produce new approaches and methods to the study of power and discourse (inclusive of visual productions). This thesis is likewise a move away from the interpretive project.

I have demonstrated that the turn in rhetorical criticism to critical rhetoric provides activist rhetoricians with important tools for understanding the functioning of ideology within systems of signification that produce material effects in the world. However, ideological criticism falls short in helping us understand the productive nature of materiality in relationships of power. And insofar as ideology, as articulated by Thompson (1984), is concerned with "the ways in which meaning (or signification) serves to sustain relations of domination" (p. 4), and ideology critique is primarily hermeneutic, it could not fall further from our critical lens. Before concluding, I do well to restate the finding of this review of literature.

I have demonstrated that feminist and psychoanalytic-influenced theories of communication have greatly affected the study popular culture. They have, among other things, contributed to the project of decentering the objectifying gaze of heterosexual

masculinity. However, rhetorical studies insofar as they follow Gunn's (2003) lead, work

along a false binary between psychical structures and materiality. In doing so, they have

opposed their dressed-up idealism to a straw man in the form of dumb matter, leaving

little room for rhetoric to exist beyond interpreting the fantasies of split subject(s). I have

also demonstrated that despite its claim to Foucault's critique of the repressive

hypothesis, critical rhetoric misses the primary locus of suasory action in assuming that

meaning is the genetic element of power. Both schools of thought, however, foreground

the act of interpretation as the primary mode of rhetorical operation, short-circuiting the

articulation of theories of change with the productive moment of materiality (the primacy

of the line of flight).   I have also demonstrated that at this unique juncture in

conservative American culture, where the fetishization of deviant women links up with

the legitimation of state violence, the hermeneutic model is ill-suited to political

intervention. In the project(s) that follows, I offer an alternative.

<div align="center">Chapter Progressions</div>

In the first chapter, I discuss how the rhetorical theorists discussed above (e.g.

Fiske, 1986; Gunn, 2003; McKerrow, 1989; Flores, 1996; op. cit.), and indeed, the

traditional field of rhetoric, tend to associate criticism with hermeneutic activity

(processes of interpretation) and the logic of influence (attributions of causality). This

chapter disassociates from both of these modes of criticism in order to arrive at a method

that takes into account aspects of Foucault's critique of the repressive hypothesis and

Deleuze and Guattari's conception of resistance which provides the former with a much

needed theorization of the possibility for change. First I discuss Foucault's critique of the

repressive hypothesis of power. Second I briefly address the complexity for this hypothesis in terms of developing a theory of change. Third I call for a communistic rhetoric that takes into account the primacy, immanence and materiality of the line of flight. Fourth, given the above considerations, I elaborate on one theoretical and methodological procedure for charting a cartography of the processes of deterritorialization and reterritorialization, immanent to the capitalist socius, within which difference is stratified into a molar range of variation or propelled into its own becoming.

In the second chapter, the first of two case studies, analyzes narrative-production in the film *Monster* (2003) to broaden our understanding of the intersections of identity, narrative, and faciality in the age of postindustrial capitalism. Provisionally, I argue that narrative is deployed as a tactic of reterritorialization within an epideictic mode of rhetorical discourse that secures a profitable relationship between the intelligibility of a deviant feminine identity and the (non)agency of the citizen-consumer of the film. The chapter is organized as a model of how I envision one possible expression of rhetorical criticism that roughly follows the methodological lines suggested in chapter one.

In the third chapter, also drawing and expanding on the method proposed in chapter one, I analyze the recent film, *Dancer in the Dark* (2000), as an attempt to deterritorialize the regime of oversignification through a series of minor tactics. This paper, also drawing from Deleuze and Guattari, as well as Kenneth Burke, analyzes the material composition of *Dancer in the Dark*. I argue that, in making use of perspective

by incongruity, the film evidences a mode of political engagement based on intensity rather than possibility.

In the epilogue I review my findings and comment on the process of writing this thesis. I argue that Deleuze and Guattari (1987) provide largely ignored conceptual tools for rethinking the materiality of rhetoric from within a minor politics of intensity. Having established an alternative mode of rhetorical criticism, I directly address the question that marked the opening discussion of this thesis: how can deliberation and agency (understood as the capacity to affect and be affected) be thought in terms of intensity?

Conclusion

Each following chapter deterritorializes space that was previously stratified by assumptions of previous modes of engagement with rhetorical criticism, heeding Norton's (2002), call to "give our attention to what Rhetoric might yet become" (p. 27).[11] What's more, they attempt to work within this new space in search of the space of the new without falling prey to a desire to "measure up," as it were, to continental philosophy (Norton, 1997). I have organized them so that they may exist somewhat autonomously of one another, and, as such, they can be read in any order (excepting the epilogue).

My thesis is not a call to return to the old Marxists doctrines of base-superstructure or a reduction to the study of the economy. Furthermore, it is not a return to the blind faith held in the existing structures of social organization (be they governmental or otherwise) and democracy to provide for a more inclusive future. I write to think through the potential for rhetoricians to become engaged with materiality in

the complex age of postindustrial capitalism. As such, an overhaul is needed in our

understanding of the forces of production and the potentiality of an agency. If the present

study signals some movement in that direction, it will have been successful.

Footnotes

1. I utilize the Deleuze and Guattari (1987) terminology 'minoritarian' and 'majoritarian' because I am not interested in the quantifiable distinction between minority and majority. On the contrary, 'minoritarian' allows me to specify otherness as a process of signification established through a relation of power. Majoritarian signification is process by which certain qualities held in common by a group (of bodies conceived of as broadly as possible) are consolidated (molarized) as the major terms of identification where there had previously been difference. Thus, a striation or territorialization manifests at the level of difference: something comes to differ only by difference to the scripted molarity. The minoritarian need not be in the minority, but signifies as such. Some scholars have suggested a useful link between the work of Deleuze and Irigaray at this level (Balliff, 2001).

2. Of affect, Massumi (1993) says:

> It is vague by nature. It is nothing as sharp as panic. Not as localized as hysteria. It doesn't have a particular object, so it's not a phobia. But its not exactly an anxiety either; it is even fuzzier than that. It is low-level fear. A kind of background radiation saturating existence…the presence of the condition of possibility of being the mediatized human victim we all are in different ways: signs of subjectivity in capitalist crisis. (p. 24)

3. Pinning down affect for analysis is a difficult, if not impossible, task. It cannot be said to exist precisely, but rather, marks a transitive and asignifying modality of feeling (experience prior to its intelligibility) that is, nevertheless, real. Rather than study affect

per se, in my work, I attempt to uncover practices of signification that attempt to finesse its ontological uncertainty; in chapter three, I refer to these as practices of oversignification.

4. Biesecker does not object to recent attempts to write women in the history of rhetoric. Instead, she problematizes the assumptions that have guided the project. First, she argues that attempts to inaugurate women in the canon of "great orators" are susceptible to tokenism, defined by Spitzack and Carter (1987) as "the power withheld from the vast majority of women is offered to few, so that it may appear that any truly qualified woman can gain access to leadership, recognition, and reward; hence that justice based on merits actually prevails" (cited in Biesecker, p. 141). Thus the inclusion of a few women into the canon reinforces the myth that most women are not capable of rhetorical savoir faire. From a cultural perspective, inclusion, or the affirmative action approach, as Biesecker argues, reaffirms the authority of the center (the legitimate) to establish criteria of value, separating itself from the marginal, the other. The inclusion approach is also problematic because it is based on an ideology of individualism. In its affirmation of the achievements of individual rhetors, the inclusion approach finesses its own political interestedness in favor of a cultural representation of the rhetor as master of her own discourse. For these reasons, Biesecker states that the revisionist history of rhetoric, as envisioned by Campbell, "resolidifies rather than undoes the ideology of individualism that is the condition of possibility for the emergence of the received history of Rhetoric" (p. 144).

5. Gunn (2003) is afraid of the "radical exteriority" of Deleuze and Guattari and Foucault because of a misconception about what constitutes the plane of rhetoric: "the upshot of this perspective on criticism [informed by Deleuze and Guattari and Foucault], however, is that rhetoric, understood as suasive communication, as the interplay and contest among representations or as the mediation of Self and Other, ceases to exist" (p. 54). In differentiating between the plane of immanence and that of fantasy, despite his claims to the contrary, Gunn sets up a binary between a rhetoric of interior and a rhetoric of exterior (p. 54). Collapsing this binary results in a radical challenge to Gunn and any other psychoanalytic perspective to think rhetoric as an immanent process involving the intersubjective psychical space between subjects as a production of historical process of production and articulation, rather than a given zone of psychical interiority (the imaginary or whatever)

6. Massumi (2003, 1998, 1993) theorizes affect as an important tool for understanding the productive immanence of the relation between the unconscious and capitalism.

7. Obviously there remains some difference between the project of cultural criticism outlined by Fiske (1986, 1987) and the critical rhetoric project outlined by McKerrow (1989). For our purposes, it is useful to note that despite the divergent scope of cultural studies as envisioned by Fiske and critical rhetoric as put forth by McKerrow, the similar themes of power as repressive and the viewer as active demystifier of the dominant ideology haunt the assumptions informing both methodologies. I have selected Flores (1996) for the recency of her project as well as its focus on minoritarian women's use of the visual field.

8. Flores (1996) does not explicitly identify with McKerrow's (1989) version of critical rhetoric, but cites the same Fiske (1986) text to establish her argument that "the creation of their [Chicana feminists] own discursive space means defining themselves independently of the dominant group" (p. 147) is the second step in the construction of a homeland. Is this not the same step as the moment of demystification in critical rhetoric? Does this move not involve the polysemic and oppositional reading as resistant to the dominant ideology?

9. Foucault (1978) argues:

> each offensive on one level serves to support a counter-offensive on another level. The analysis of machines of power does not seek to demonstrate that power is both anonymous and always victorious. Rather we must locate the positions and the modes of action of everyone involved as well as the various possibilities for resizing and launching counter attacks. (p. 19)

10. A similar displacement suggests a moment of crisis in Foucault's work as well, marked only by his silence during the eight year period between the publication of the first volume of *History of Sexuality* (1990a) and subsequent volumes. It is no accident that it is Deleuze (1997) that, in suggesting his differences with Foucault in a brief letter, provides us with the tools to understand the primacy of difference (and hence, change) from within the infinitesimal expressions of power, rather than the reverse; this exceptional claim is developed and justified in the second chapter.

11. Norton (2002) writes that "as both Atwill and Barbara Biesecker have argued, it is time to rethink rhetoric as a techne and disengage from the politics of representation in order to reclaim the civic for a heuristic rhetoric" (p. 27).

A PROPOSAL FOR A COMMUNIST DEFINITION OF RHETORIC AND

METHODOLOGY OF RHETORICAL CRITICISM

The whole fabric of the capitalist world consists of this kind of flux of deterritorialized signs – money and economic signs, signs of prestige and so on. Significations, social values (those one can interpret, that is) can be seen at the level of power formations, but, essentially capitalism depends upon non-signifying machines. There is for instance, no meaning in the ups and downs of the stock market; capitalist power, at the economic level, produces no special discourse of its own, but simply seeks to control the non-signifying semiotic machines…A-signifying machines do not recognize agents, individuals, roles or even clearly defined objects. By this very fact they acquire a kind of omnipotence, moving across the signification systems within which individual agents recognize and become alienated from one another. Capitalism has no visible beginning or end. – Felix Guattari, 1984

The rhetorical theorists discussed in the review of literature in the previous

chapter (e.g. Fiske, 1986; McKerrow, 1989; Flores, 1996; et al.), and indeed, the

traditional field of rhetoric, tend to associate criticism with hermeneutic activity

(processes of interpretation) and the logic of influence (attributions of causality). This

chapter disassociates from both of these modes of criticism in order to arrive at a method

that takes into account Foucault's critique of the repressive hypothesis and Deleuze and

Guattari's conception of resistance which provides the former with a much needed

theorization of the possibility for change. First I discuss Foucault's critique of the

repressive hypothesis of power. Second I briefly address the complexity for this

hypothesis in terms of developing a theory of change. Third I call for a communistic

rhetoric that takes into account the primacy, immanence and materiality of the line of

flight. Fourth, given the above considerations I elaborate on one theoretical and

methodological procedure, for understanding what I consider to be the rhetorical.

Foucault (1980) argues that within any analysis of power (as "the way in which relations of forces are deployed and given concrete expression" p. 90), the critic should be on guard against three methodological precautions. First, the critic should not concern herself with "the regulated and legitimate forms of power in their central locations" (p. 96). Instead, the critic is obliged to seek power in its capillary points. Second, the critic is urged against analysis concerning the intentional and conscious use of power; rather "what is needed is a study of power in its external visage, at the point where it is in direct immediate relationship with that which we can provisionally call its object, its target, its field of application" (p. 97). Third, Foucault warns against understanding power as a phenomenon of one individuals domination over another or one class's domination over another; rather,

> power…is not that which makes the difference between those who exclusively possess it and retain it, and those who do not have it and submit to it. Power must be analysed [sic] as something which circulates, or rather as something which only functions in the form of a chain…Power is employed and exercised though a net-like organization. And not only do individuals circulate between its threads they are always in the position of simultaneously undergoing and exercising this power. They are not only its inert or consenting target; they are always also the elements of its articulation. (p. 98)

Biesecker (1992a) has pointed out the difficulty of understanding how to incorporate Foucault from within a field that is profoundly utopian in its desire to understand humans as agents capable of using symbolic action to change history. Her

work is of essential importance for advancing a poststructural critique of rhetorical

criticism (e.g. 1998, 1992a, 1992b) as well as a poststructural rhetorical critique (2002,

1989). Most important for me is her reading of Foucault, which provides an opening into

the question of resistance in his work. However, rather than seek a theory of resistance,

or politics, from within Foucault, it is from Deleuze, I argue, that a different potential for

change emerges. Prior to articulating this concept of change (i.e. the immanence and

precedence of the line of flight rather than dispositifs of power), I restate three

precautionary tenants of any Foucault-influenced analysis.

Given the three precautions listed above, we are to understand that power is not

possessed, but exercised; power is in direct and unmediated contact with its field of

application; and finally, that power is best analyzed as a bottom-up phenomenon. Each

of these precautions largely eliminates much of rhetorical criticism from laying claim to

incorporating Foucault into analyses, despite publications to the contrary (e.g.

McKerrow, 1989).

If power is ubiquitous and distributed throughout the minutia of the social, what

then is resistance? Biesecker (1992a) provides one answer, arguing that, as a field, the

incorporation of Foucault calls on us to reexamine our relationship to style. She points

out that (1) resistance is not necessarily resistance *to* power per se, but rather always

accompanies power as a virtual break in the grid of intelligibility, (2) practices of

resistance, exist "outside," or transversally to available chain of signification, and (3) the

subject-rhetor cannot be said to be the origin of resistance, as the break with the chain

(which establishes the subject as such) precedes the formation of the subject. For

Biesecker, then, the role of the critical rhetorician, once put into motion by the preceding practices of transgression, is "the strategic and deliberate codification of those points of resistance" (p. 359), or in other words "to trace new lines of making sense by taking hold of the sign whose reference had been destabilized by and through those practices of resistance, lines that cut diagonally across and, thus disrupt, the social weave" (p. 361); this she argues, involves the reinvention of our relationship to style (style being the aesthetic mode of the co-creation of the self).

Biesecker's theorization about the possibilities of agency and change stem from a combination of Foucault's (1985, 1986) later controversial writing in which he undertakes the study of the practices of the aesthetic creation of the self and his earlier writing which asserts the primacy of relations of power in all aspects of life. Importantly, between the texts she cited for her understanding of the productive nature of power and the text she cites to understand style, an eight year gap, or in Thoburn's (2003) words, a crisis, exists in Foucault's work. It is between this eight year period that Deleuze (1997) drafts a letter to Foucault discussing their differences, focusing on questions of resistance and the line of flight.

Contrary to Foucault, Deleuze (1997) argues that the line of flight is not immediately functional to relations of power, but rather, that lines of flight and desiring relations are primary and therefore the site of political articulation (Thoburn, 2003). For Foucault, however, dispositifs of power are primary, and therefore politics may only be reactive phenomena (Thoburn). Thus, in the later Foucault (1986 on), style becomes associated with the enduring and lived relationship between an individual subject and the

outside. As Thoburn points out, "against a model of the outside – as infamy, madness, and so on – which is either functional to power, or a flash of transgression, the outside becomes a site which – through careful, tentative work on the self – emerges immanently to a life, as a way of escaping the self" (p. 43).

Deleuze's reading of Foucault suggests that an important gap exists somewhere between Foucault's theorizations about the nature of power and the possibilities of things to be otherwise. Foucault's later writings provide only one mode of realizing the possibilities of change. Biesecker, in citing Deleuze's important book length study on paves the way for a discussion of the important relationship between the two philosophers that was, by all accounts, mutually conditioning. And even, perhaps, warrants a modification of the possibilities of a rhetoric of resistance (critical or otherwise) as aesthetics and the processes of individual conduct—a move that, no doubt, imperils the possibility for collective action.

What is needed is a truly communist definition of rhetoric; one that aspires toward the same ambitiousness that Klossowski attributes to Deleuze and Foucault, that is, "the liquidation of the principle of identity" (Cited in Macey, 1993, p. xv), but that, contrary to most philosophy, begins with the creative material derivations from identity in the most banal and everyday forms. Guattari and Negri (1990) argue that communism is

> the assortment of social practices leading to the transformation of consciousness
> and reality on every level: political and social, historical and everyday, conscious
> and unconscious. Recognizing that discourse is action, we will fore a new
> discourse in such a fashion as to initiate the destruction of the old way. (p. 10)

And also: "more than just the sharing of wealth (who wants all this shit?)—it must inaugurate a whole new way of working together" (p. 13).

Consistent with Deleuze's continual assertions that politics (broadly here: as a shared field of articulated and antagonistic forces) precede being and Foucault's dispositifs of power, rhetoric becomes the study and practice of the tactics of engagement with minor politics, with the outside or with immanence; this is the negotiation between everyday minor becomings and the forces of reaction which always threaten with abolition or reactionary reterritorializations, but is not reducible to individual or groups stylizations of existence. I'm reminded of Deleuze's comment that Foucault's work addresses the "need both to cross the line [of molar or major forms into the plane of immanence], and make it endurable, workable, thinkable" (Cited in Thoburn, 2003, p. 43).

But rhetoric needn't lose sight of its history. I oblige Aristotle's historic parameters of rhetoric in my definition, in fact, seeing no reason to quarrel with it inasmuch as persuasion includes those nonhuman and unconscious processes available as suasion, constitution, articulation, deterritorialization and reterritorialization to no one person(s) or ideology in particular. I am do not privilege a human audience and neither do I privilege signification. Too much time has been wasted studying suasion from the perspective of meaning and the adaptation of a discourse to already existing people. As the quotation that opens this chapter makes clear, capitalism cares less for meaning than it does for audience. The goal here is not a return to a sovereign meaning or audience, but may include a candid discussion about how such nostalgic projects ultimately

recuperate little outposts of academic security for the continuation of the state sponsored

study of communication practices. Contrarily, this definition seeks to account for the

unintending forces of suasion (those strange attractors around which identities, parties,

ideographs, and other major forms oscillate) in their immediate and impersonal

actualizations (they are for no one, they are for you). Certainly, all these processes have

signifying effects, and there are people who are persuasive and they bend meanings into

messages to suit particular audiences, etc. etc. But these things are secondary molar

considerations that follow the same old logic of influence; indeed, they are tertiary, to the

unconscious movements of affect and desire already (un)constituting all practices of life,

carrying them toward one future (anterior) or another. Guattari and Negri (1990) ask

"how can capital continue to preset its work process as natural and unchangeable, when

for technical reasons it is changing every day?" (p. 15). They argue that "this

unexamined gap in the logic of work is the opening through which new movements of

social transformation will charge pell mell" (p. 15).

Spivak is our precursor here in her definition of rhetoric as "the name for the

residue of indeterminacy which escapes the system" (Cited in Ballif, 2001); my only

addition being: also, the name for the study of the means of recuperating indeterminacy

into acceptable levels of variation or difference—this amount to the same thing as the

definition above.

As I discuss at length in chapter three, lines of flight from major forms are

primary and consist materially; this is consistent with Marx's, Deleuze's, and Guattari

and Negri's entire theory of the immanence of the limits of capitalism. As regards

academic discourse, subjects may very well be constructed through processes of interpellation, discourse, or otherwise become the "will-less objects of culture" but only inasmuch as the active/passive, subject/object binaries are intact and "sustain[ing] the humanist subject"(Ballif, p. 23). Minor processes are too messy for the naïve realism of theories proclaiming the inertia of matter and it's positioning within an economic superstructure, but also too messy for the structural subject-positions or subject-group position articulated within a discursive formation. They are, by definition, between: the material derivations from molar forms. What is needed then is a method of analyzing reterritorializations of material deviations from molar forms into signifying regimes. In what follows, I offer one such method.

Many projects inaugurated by Deleuze and Guattari have gone under the sign of schizoanalysis, rhizomatics, micropolitics, and a host of other sexy names that seem to obfuscate more than they explain. Zizek (2003) recently accused the new wave of would-be Deleuzian scholars for posturing like schizo's but basically keeping the same old ways of thinking (liberation v. domination) intact and even propagating the very bourgeois relative deterritorializations they claim to dislike (usually for aesthetic reasons). I now turn to a systematic explanation of the method I have drawn from Deleuze and Guattari in hopes of avoiding similar criticism.

The Signifying Regime of the Sign

In the underused fifth plateau of *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987), Deleuze and Guattari articulate one of the most valuable methods for understanding the relationship between power and semiotic systems. Deleuze and Guattari refer to "any specific

formalization of expression [as] a regime of signs" (p. 111). They acknowledge the

difficulty in analyzing a formalized expression of signs in and of itself: "there is always a

form of content that is simultaneously inseparable from and independent of the form of

expression, and the two forms pertain to assemblages that are not principally linguistic"

(p. 111). The regime of signification at the level of its formal expression, that is, at the

level that it is autonomous from content, is the aspect I pay closest attention to here.[1]

There is no single regime of expression, but rather a contiguous mixture of forms,

such that "it is impossible to attach any particular privilege to the form or regime of *the*

'signifier'" (p. 111) (emphasis added). Therefore, Deleuze and Guattari invite us to

return to a method of discourse analysis based on pragmatics—pragmatics, because

discourse "never has a universality in itself, self sufficient formalization, a general

semiology, or a meta-language" (p.112).

We are left with a method that, though somewhat technical, does not fall into the

trappings of a depth hermeneutic or the idolatry of a supreme signifier. The method, in

short, follows the movement of deterritorialization and reterritorialization at the level of

the regime of signs.

Deleuze and Guattari write that:

every sign refers to another sign, and only to another sign, ad infinitum. That is

why, at the limit, one can forgo the notion of the sign, for what is retained is not

principally the sign's relation to a state of things it designates, or to any entity it

signifies, but only the formal relation of sign to sign insofar as it defines a so-

called signifying chain. The limitlessness of signifiance replaces the sign. (p.

112)

Signifiance therefore designates signification as a relation between signs rather than the

referent or signified. The circularity of signs referring to other signs referring to other

signs (i.e. signifiance), is best described as having a high degree of what Deleuze and

Guattari refer to as deterritorialization. The sign ostensibly appears to have a great deal

of capacity to slide, to glissage, and signify otherwise,[2] given the abstraction of content:

> Your wife looked at you with a funny expression. And this morning the mailman
>
> handed you a letter from the IRS… Then you stepped in a pile of dog shit. You
>
> saw two sticks on the sidewalk positioned like the hands of watch. They were
>
> whispering behind your back when you arrived at the office. It doesn't matter
>
> what it means its still signifying. (p. 112)

What matters is not the circularity of signs (the deterritorialization inherent in every

regime of signs that makes signifiance possible), but the paranoiac reterritorializations

that affix a signified to the process of signifiance in order to reimpart a new signifier, thus

decreasing the entropy inherent in any regime. This is, by definition, a despotic act.[3]

Faciality

To restate: a regime of signs is best thought of as a threshold or limit-experience

of signification. Ultimately one sign refers to another infinitely, but also hollows out an

affective black hole, a kind of no-space (either excess or lack, it doesn't really matter)

that is the very condition of meaning-production (interpretance). At the same time, for

meaning-production to occur and for a system of signs to accrue value, a regime must

constantly update itself (reterritorialize through *over*signification) to account for the lines of deterritorialization always escaping from it because of its own circularity. The black hole swallows (resonates with) organic and inorganic matter-energy, signs, sign-particles, and other imperceptible trajectories both into and out of itself in a partially self-sustaining (autonomous and inhuman) process of establishing the domain of the signifiable, which is expressed as if on a white wall where the circulation of signifiers chains out.

At this point in their method of describing a regime of signs, Deleuze and Guattari introduce the concept of faciality to discuss one specific organization of the signifying aspect of the regime. The definition goes something like this: faciality is an abstract term that describes any formalized redundancy between the production of signifiance (the circularity of signifiers) as distributed though an organizing principle of excess/lack that hollows out a space for value and meaning production. Put differently, a despotic or paranoid regime of signs operates through a process of faciality. Faciality designates a correspondence between a formalized series of signifiers and the production of an associated series of meanings and values. In order to insure the production of a semi-stable series, the face must organize (reterritorialize) all of the (relatively deterritorialized) signifiers it comes into contact with into an organization that is suitable to its own reproduction: selection and sedimentation. Those signs or affective sign particles that do not "pass" the test of the face—"everything that resisted signifying signs, everything that eluded the referral from sign to sign through the different circles" (p. 116)—are designated as the scapegoat: the difference that challenges the reach of the signifying regime that must therefore be expiated and destroyed.

Remembering that faciality is completely virtual, a process of organizing

signifiers and interpretations into a signifying regime of signs (an abstract machine), I

want to emphasize that it has nothing to do with an actual face (though actually existing

peoples faces are one territorialized expression of faciality) as I turn to Griggers (1997)

for a fuller explanation of the politics of faciality.

How to get a Face in Public

Griggers (1997) provides an excellent application of Deleuze and Guattari's

theory of faciality, replete with examples from pop culture, in her landmark book on the

despotic face of white femininity. She demonstrates that woman is neither a product of

biological necessity nor the material expression of superstructure in relation to an

economic determinant; rather, Griggers describes woman as "a network of interpretations

organizing a zone of acceptable expressions of the signifier and acceptable conductions

of meanings to signs and of signs to social subjects" (p. 3). As such woman is less

anything human and more a part of the abstract machinic assemblage of faciality that

maps itself in its own image over entire bodies, entire populations.

She also gives a concise description of how the face is a politics, beginning with a

discussion of faciality as a process of subjectiviztion: "a social process that begins with

the production of binary facial units" (p. 3). Good/bad, fashionable/unfashionable,

man/woman, wealthy/working class, and other binary distinctions, are one mechanism by

which the face territorializes itself into a relation of power (p. 4). But there are not two

faces, only one face with binary aspects, a "biunivocalization stabilizing a unitary

privilege that truncates multiplicitous proliferation" (p. 4). For further explanation, I can

do no better than to quote her at length:

> Faciality is a system of signs and a system of subjectivization that not only
>
> assembles signifiers and signifieds into biunivocal facial units, but also regulates
>
> possible degrees of divergence between those units and any number of
>
> nonconforming singularities…does the individual face conform to socially
>
> intelligible limits? Are its deviations intelligible? Does it pass? Faciality serves a
>
> policing function. (p. 4)

Furthermore, she echoes Deleuze and Guattari's argument that the face is remarkable in

its plasticity, its capacity to incorporate new territories, new expressions, into its

regime—once again highlighting its despotic characteristics.

She goes on to suggest that the despotic face of white femininity is where the

majoritarian regime of signs becomes established by reterritorializing minoritarian

becomings (deterritorializations that do not "pass," so to speak, beyond the threshold of

the face). She provides RuPaul as an example:

> RuPaul as queen of American drag certainly tested the limits of public
>
> (im)perceptibility of minoritarian subjectivities, yet the black transvestite could
>
> only become perceptible to a broadcast public gaze, could only have access to a
>
> public sphere now constituted by the mass media, by taking on the face of white
>
> femininity. Not a referential signifier for an individual identity, faciality is a
>
> system of signs organizing a zone of perceptibility and intelligibility for the
>
> socially constructed subject. As such, the face neutralizes, channels, and polices

minoritarian forms and substances of express…it is on the face that the limits and threshold determining (im)proper conductions among signs and meaning are charted. (p. 5)

Griggers is concise in her application of Deleuze and Guattari, yet her analysis is somewhat confusing on two points. First, she attempts to discuss faciality as an abstract machine, that is, a purely virtual regime of signs, yet spends the majority of the book discussing how faciality produces an intelligible and perceptible system of biunivocalizing aspects for actually existing faces. This comes close to confusing the actual face with the process of faciality, which articulates signs and meaning to emotions, bodies, gestures, and other flows of energy-matter that may be regulated-produced as intelligible and/or perceptible, but have nothing to do with an actual face. This would be the same thing as mistaking the panopticon (another abstract machine that exists only virtually) for the penitentiary (an assemblage of discursive, organic, and inorganic matter-energy). Griggers is cautious of this ("through the eye, signification and subjectification are integrated by the face and mapped over the entire head and body" p. 1), but ultimately may be charged with facializing faciality: limiting the perceptible utility of the theory to a discussion of white women's faces. Second, and this is likely the product of the previous confusion, Griggers does not articulate a method or any series of procedures for analyzing expressions of faciality that may be applied to majoritarian regimes of signs other than those expressed in the face. Instead, she argues, "I have developed each section [of the book] not as an argument so much as a textual space and temporality in which meanings can be allowed to proliferate and resonate" (p. xii);

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though commendable for its innovative structure(lessness), this adds to the confusion about the applicability of her method to other processes and sites of reterritorialization.

Nevertheless, Griggers provides the only treatment of faciality and visual culture that is most unique in its ability to update the well-known double-bind of femininity: breakdowns in the regime of intelligibility "in turn mobilize the machinic workings of various social institutions that channel, mediate, and regulate—not to mention diagnose, arrest, and turn a profit off of—her arational and adestinal becomings" (p. x). Because woman is both the icon of ideal social privilege and the material realization of the impossibility of the ideal, each encounter she has with faciality "is the scene of emergence and constraint, market development and social investment, and, often enough, social violence" (p. x). With this is mind, I review the theoretical axioms discussed so far and put forth a method that builds on Deleuze and Guattari's and Griggers' examples.

I now paraphrase Deleuze and Guattari (1987) in restating the primary principles we have briefly outlined before continuing: (1) every sign refers only to other signs and this process is without limit (2) eventually the sign returns in circular fashion to itself, (3) signs travel different paths of circularity that sometimes intersect, (4) the entropy in the system requires the continual expansion of the circularity (always new signifiers), (5) the deterritorializations of the sign are limited by the reterritorializations which allows some signs to "pass" (i.e. become incorporated into a biunivocal arrangement) and others to be destroyed for their indiscernible difference, and (6) faciality is the virtual abstract machine by which operations of reterritorialization are mapped across the surface of actually existing material formations (e.g. faces, bodies, gestures, etc.) (p. 117).[4]

15

Method

Materiality

The first step in the method I am proposing is to describe as closely as possible,
and at the surface of their emergence, the dispersion of signs within a given field of
problematization. The point is not to uncover what a signifier means in relation to a
signified, or uncover the conspirator behind an ideological code, but to describe the
effectuation of a series of signs that establishes the threshold or limit experience of the
signifiable within a given historical milieu. Put concretely, this emphasizes examination
of the material circuits of feedback between media and capital as the primary movers in a
semi-self-regulating process of producing the intelligible: the story told from the
perspectives of the machines, so to speak. From this point of view, nondiscursive
formations are exo-skeletal systems of support for sign-flow and affect production
directly routed along the semi-stable nervous system of the media which includes actually
existing human bodies as appendages whose individuation is required for energy
production in the distribution-consumption cycles that sustain the entire system (Delanda,
2000).

Transversality

Second, trace the transversal movement of a regime across different paths of
circularity to establish the functional characteristics. In other words, a regime of signs is
not identical with its expression; in Deleuzian (1987) terms it is unlocal yet omnipresent
(p. 115). To return to the panopticon, this step amounts to arriving at a description of a
function (e.g. total surveillance) and its dispersion in a series of reciprocal concrete

expression (the school, the barracks, the prison, the factory, etc). In short, this step in the method seeks to define the intersections of a given circularity. In other words, which abstract machine are we dealing with?

Despotism

Third, following closely from the second step, map the expansion of the circularity into new domains. A regime of signs always requires new signifiers to expand its center of signifiance outward or it risks the entropy of hermetic circularity. At the same time given the impossibility of ever signifying the asignifying material base, the black hole, a regime always oversignifies, that is, indefinitely circles around its impossible object. Here, the critic is asking how a despotic signifier incorporates Other signifiers into its system of intelligibility. Griggers' excellent discussion of faciality provides a model for this step which emphasizes those processes of deterritorialization and reterritorialization that give face to (in other words, make intelligible or perceptible and material) one set of actions, gestures, expressions, or whatever, rather than another. In addition, this step asks the critic to analyze an encounter with a regime of signs as a transformational process that enables a coordinated regulation of sign-flows, matter, and energy. Questions might include: how is resistance to reactionary forms of intelligibility (e.g. the projection of nontraditional identity formations such as RuPaul's, the popularization of marginalized narratives of subaltern groups, etc.) ultimately accountable to a regime of faciality (Griggers, 1997)? What traditional modes of rhetoric literally organize the face into a coherent sign system and designate a mobilization of bodies and populations? How does, for example, the face of George Bush function as a

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metonym for the country, his patronizing smile directly linked to a nationalistic agenda

predicated on a purely affective register? How do resistant formations (madness, system

breakdowns, other lines of lines of flight) call forth a series of institutional mechanisms

(e.g. psychopharmacological, military, academic, etc.) to channel difference into their

own regimes of discipline or control? More work could be done here relating the regime

of faciality to governmentality and Deleuze's (1992) *Postscript on the Societies of*

Control, which comments on the shift from disciplinary societies to more mobile and

roving systems of conducting conduct.

Duration, flight, becoming

The fourth step in the method is crucial and most problematic for scholars of

communication as it involves analysis of the unmediated and direct connection between a

regime of signs and the potential for difference. This step foregrounds a minor politics of

intensity: given the descriptions of the previous three steps, what forms of agency (as in

the unconscious potential to affect and become affected) are made possible in an

encounter with the biunivocal structurality of a regime of faciality? In other words, given

the discursive range of subject positions made available within a given system of limited

variation, what are the immanent lines of flight, the becoming-woman, becoming-animal,

becoming-imperceptible, that carry the potential to deterritorialize the face? Deleuze's

(2003) study of Francis Bacon, especially the sections on his paintings of the head are

exemplary in this respect. Deleuze argues that "painting directly attempts to release the

presences beneath representation, beyond representation. The color system itself is a

system of direct action on the nervous system" (p. 45). Editorially, this is probably the

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only truly poststructural section of the method in that it disregards the spatializing gestures of discursive arrangement in favor of a critique of the nonspatial, unrepresenting, and inhuman durative properties of encounters that challenge the despotism of the face. Indeed, Deleuze demonstrates that Bacon is a painter of heads, not faces, and "the head-meat is a becoming-animal of man" (p. 25). In short, this step asks the critic to describe those practices that dismantle the face (i.e. make it, in Deleuzo-Guattarian language, a body without organs) to offer a description of those elements that though composite with the face differ in kind rather than in extensity.[5]

The method is not meant to be exhaustive and could be approached from a variety of angles. In devoting as much space as I have to the theoretical underpinnings, I hope to have warranted my departure from the literature reviewed in chapter one. Furthermore, and as a reminder to myself, I would caution against rigid application of this method; it is purposely ambiguous in places to allow for a variety of redefinitions, extensions, and alterations to emerge.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have reviewed some of the theoretical tools I borrow from Deleuze and Guattari to articulate a method I consider beneficial for rhetorical studies as we endeavor to continue our analysis beyond the long shadow cast on our discipline by the ideological and psychoanalytic turn in criticism. I have identified a key component in their work which addresses the production of the intelligible through a system of signification that functions along axiomatic principles of abstract machines. In as much as an abstract machine makes possible one mode of "being" in the world it closes off

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others; those others are the emphasis of my entire work. The field of communication and rhetoric in particular are well-equipped to deal with the questions posed in this method. We have a long history of involvement in the relationship between materiality and discourse. This method does not seek to put forth an entirely new system of criticism, but rather, to articulate the tools rhetoric already deftly makes use of through its myriad applications with the real insights of poststructural theory.[6] The primary concern of the following two case studies is two-fold: (1) determining the utility of a practical application of this method and (with guarded naiveté) (2) determining the possibility for altering the grid of intelligibility, rather than simply expanding the degree to which variation is permitted.

Footnotes

1. Deleuze and Guattari (1987) write "one can proceed as though the formalization of expression were autonomous and self-sufficient" (p.111).

2. Deleuze and Guattari (1987) argue "thus the sign has already attained a high degree of relative deterritorilization; it is thought of a symbol in a constant movement of referral from sign to sign" (p. 112).

3. Deleuze and Guattari (1987) write

> the signifying regime is not simply faced with the task of organizing into circles signs emitted from every direction; it must constantly assure the expansion of the circles or spiral, it must provide the center with more signifier to overcome the entropy inherent in the system and to make new circles blossom or replenish the old. Thus a secondary mechanism in the service of signifiance is necessary: interpretance [sic] or interpretation. The time the signifier assumes a new figure: it is no longer the amorphous continuum that is given without being known and across which the network of signs is strung. A portion of the signified is made to correspond to a sign or group of signs for which that signified has been deemed suitable thus making it knowable. To the syntagmatic axis of the sign referring to other signs is added a paradignmatic axis on which the sign, thus formalized, fashions for itself a suitable signified. (p. 114)

4. Compare with the summation of the theory by Deleuze and Guattari (1987, p. 117).

5. This step is a condensed, abbreviated, and all-too-brief description of the intuitive method initially proposed by Bergson and developed by Deleuze (1988). So far, I

discussed the face as a mechanism of abstract homogenization by which everything that it

comes into contact with it can differ only by degree—not coincidentally this is a classic

component of Marxian economic theory of value and is discussed in relation to the mode

of production in the first case study. Contrarily, duration, because it expresses the quality

of difference from itself and other things, bears the only real potential for differences in

kind (Deleuze, 1988, p. 31).

6. I'm thinking primarily of Cloud's (2003) work on consolatory function of post 9/11

discourse which draws upon classical understanding of epideictic rhetoric to critique its

conservative deployment and Lain's (2003) use of Burke's concept of perspective by

incongruity to analyze the political significance of Hayashi's panoramic images beyond

the logic of identitarian realism and recognition.

CAPTURING *MONSTER*: A CASE STUDY OF NARRATIVE AND IDENTITY IN

POPULAR FILM

Monster (2003), a recent film based on the life and death of Aileen Wuornos, was

released into a cultural milieu preoccupied with proscribing identity scripts that deviate

from the regime of acceptable otherness. Speaking of this proscription with common

candor, Eagleton (2003) notes that ours is "a society which is shy of death [and] is also

likely to be rattled by foreigners. Both mark out the limits of our own lives, relativizing

them in unpalatable ways" (p. 212).[1] The (contemporary U.S.) traditional Western,

heterosexual, liberal, and white (i.e. majoritarian) model of identity, though supposedly

inscribed within a discourse of tolerance, multiculturalism, and diversity, operates

through the capitalistic axiomatic of deterritorialization and reterritorialization which

serves to strip difference of its radical properties and reinscribe it within a grid of

intelligibility and profitability (Deleuze and Guattari 1987).[2] Put otherwise, acceptable

otherness, in this sense, may only come to signify and become sensible as a packaged

commodity; if it does not (and doubly, sometimes even if it does) it will turn from a line

of flight (i.e. turn away from the majoritarian regime of signification) into a line of

abolition or death. As Griggers (1997) notes, "breakdowns in the machinic production of

the feminine as an intelligible body of signs…mobilize[s] the machinic workings of

various social institutions that channel, mediate, and regulate—not to mention diagnose,

arrest, and turn a profit off of—her arational and adestinal becomings" (p.x).

Wuornos, by some accounts, typifies existence in minor space outside of the

codified legal, sexual, and economic territories of the abstract machine of white

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femininity (Broomfield, 1992, 2003; Griggers, 1997).[3] In fact, to distinguish the minor as

a space outside of said territories invokes some misleading imagery. There is no outside,

so to speak, insofar as the outside is considered through a spatial metaphor relying on

measurements of extensity for quantification. Rather, the minor is the lived and material

deviations always already ensuing the stratification and coding (double articulation) of a

specific territory (e.g. the feminine) (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987). In and of itself, we do

better to consider the minor from the perspective of intensive difference, difference that,

in other words, varies in relation to itself rather than a stable point. Drift from (again

"from" is still somewhat misleading; it is a from without being to) the economy of

equivalence established by a center-margin hierarchy is held within a degree of variation

by processes mentioned above by Griggers; they are the instantiations of methods of

control specific to a historical circumstance. To restate her point before embarking into a

description of the thesis of this essay, trauma, considered as a drift that threatens the

machinic production of the feminine (as a regime of signs), is a primary force, or surge,

of intensity, producing a series of defense mechanisms to insure the survival of a given

degree of variation (Griggers, 1997).

 This essay analyzes narrative production in *Monster* (2003) to broaden our

understanding of the intersections of identity, narrative, and the possibilities of agency in

the age of postindustrial capitalism. Marking the extraordinary plasticity of capitalism,

which as noted, is sustained by stripping and *inclusion*, not simply exclusion, through the

over-signification of the inarticulable trauma associated with her material deviations from

the majoritarian segmentations of bourgeois identity,[4] *Monster* makes visible how

narrative may recuperate Wuornos' life into an identifiable grid for audience understanding. Furthermore, the epideictic rhetorical discourse that serves as a vehicle for this process produces a range of subjective responses that deter social antagonism, and perhaps a space for deliberative action, instead inviting audiences to identify with the slighted protagonist. The continuation of state-sanctioned violence against minor women is one consequence of this process. The progression of this analysis is as such: I first review a selection of literature informing this study. I pay special attention to the poststructural thought of Deleuze and Guattari (1987) and Badiou (2003), for their contributions to understanding how narrative is implicated in the current mode of production, and for their understanding of identity as always constructed within a historical framework. Following this review I turn to an analysis of *Monster*. In the analysis I focus on the ways in which the minor deviations from the majoritarian grid of sense-making are recuperated into a palatable range of variation. In the concluding portion of this essay I caution against the going consensus that increased visibility, and indeed, movement from the margins of lumpenproletariat liminality into the limelight of bourgeois Hollywood, signifies a shift in power (i.e. a reallocation of material resources).[5] Contrarily, I argue along with Cloud (2004) that the dominance of consolatory discourse throughout media narratizations of traumatic events (e.g. Wuornos' violent and asignifying encounter with the despotic faciality of white femininity) contain krisis inherent in every such event. The rules governing this containment, made possible through the deployment of narrative within a larger framework of epideictic rhetorical discourse, instructing audiences to identify with Wuornos' need for emotional

reassurance and comfort, and thereby providing a therapeutic answer (a love story) to the complex and asignifying trauma associated with the events of her life, are made visible through my analysis. I find them troubling because they signal a larger trend of displacing the potential of radical difference inherent in the potential of krisis to reconstruct deliberation in terms of a politics of intensity.[6] Thus, rhetoricians may wish to reevaluate their relationship with the master term that has guided our disciplinary endeavors since the turn to Burke in the middle of the previous century: identification.[7]

Reviewing Narrative

The role of narrative in the production of identity receives much attention from rhetoricians, social scientists and philosophers. This section briefly reviews a selection of this work to provide an orientation to how I conceptualize the value of studying narrative. More specifically, drawing on the work of Deleuze and Guattari (1987) and Badiou (2003) I argue that their Marxian brand of continental poststructural thought provides a sobering account of the value of narrative for politics beyond identitarian logic.

Fisher (1987) conceives of humans as essentially story telling animals. He goes so far as to create a Latin category (homo narrans) and a genus-species distinction for his theory, presumably to articulate his work into the larger Western canon of the history of ideas. He argues that a narrative paradigm is more inclusive of the human experience than the rational paradigm; thus "dramatic and literary works do, in fact, argue" (p. 57). This argument provides a much needed enlargement of our understanding of what may constitute the rhetorical and a critique of the dominance of rationality, syllogistic logic, and inferential arguments in the process of understanding human experience.

Fisher (1987) also implies the intrinsic value of narrative. Reading his seminal (1987) article, it is clear that Fisher wishes to hold up narrative rationality (principles of narrative probability and narrative fidelity) as the fundamental criteria for the evaluation of humanity. For example, he argues that "the most engaging stories are mythic, the most helpful and uplifting stories are moral" (p. 76). He goes on to catalogue those stories that are accorded high value in terms of narrative rationality: Lao-tse, Buddha, Zoroaster, Christ, the Iliad, the Odyssey, Shakespearian drama, etc. Each of these examples is not valuable merely for logical reasons, but for their "reaffirmations of the human spirit as the transcendent ground of existence" (p. 77). We might, generously, add *Monster* to this catalogue.

Fisher's liberal humanistic approach to the intrinsic value of narrative puts off questions of the constitutive power of language, the mode of production, the international division of labor sanctioning a Western mode of evaluating narrative, the provisionality of Truth, and the interested status of the myth of Human Nature. In short, seemingly good stories may be reifications of the existing order of unequal distribution of wealth and power. More current work in narrative analysis attempts to deconstruct the dominant narratives that structure a single transcendent vision of humanity in favor of locating subaltern and marginal narratives as fluid moments of resistance to rigid hegemonic discourses and their corresponding identity slots (Flores, 1996; Fiske, 1987; McKerrow, 1989, Riesmann, 2003). I now turn to Riesmann for an updated version and application of narrative analysis.

Following in the wake of Fisher's initial foray into the study of narrative and drawing on the work of sociologist Pierre Bordieu et. al. (1993), Riesmann (2003) analyzes the performance of identity through illness narrative in a comparative study of the construction of masculinity in two men diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis. Riessman concludes that a holistic (my words) approach to narrative analysis (including focus on nonverbal behavior and the feedback loop between analysand and analyzer) provides a richer understanding of how social structures are interwoven into fluid and "locally articulated identities, consistent with symbolic action theories" (p. 23). Furthermore, she concludes that individuals with a rigid conception of their identity are less capable of dealing with a loss of physical agency.

Riesmann's (2003) study reflects an ongoing assumption that spans across discourse areas and modes of research that the formation of a fluid and articulated identity is not only potentially healthy but resistant to rigid identities as provided by the hegemonic narratives that structure our ideologically saturated existence. Thus, in the postmodern moment, a proliferation of narratives that counter master narratives become an ideological weapon articulating struggle at the level of identity formation (e.g. Flores, 1996; Fiske, 1987; McKerrow, 1989).

As previously suggested, a different, more Marxist, conception of the value of narrative in the production of identity, is also available to socialists and social critics. Following Marx, Badiou (2003), argues that capitalism functions by way of configuring the world in its own image. This world as configured by capitalism will reflect the tendencies of the market. Therefore a shift in the mode of production from industrial

production, rigid class demarcations, and development of capital based on the distribution

of goods to a postindustrial (otherwise known as late capitalism) finance economy based

upon flexibility, fluidity, potentiality, and other intangible regimes of commodification

will be extended to a cultural milieu marked by increasing fragmentation, pastiche, and

fluid identity boundaries. As the often cited Marx quote portends, under capitalism "all

that is solid melts into air."

This configuration relates to what Badiou (2003) terms a "rule of abstract

homogenization" (p. 10), which roughly corresponds with and extends Marx's conception

of generalized commodity production, and Deleuze and Guattari's concept of faciality.

This rule or axiom states "everything that circulates falls under the unity of a count, while

inversely, only what lets itself be counted in this way can circulate" (p. 10). In other

words, to become recognizable within something like the cultural grid of intelligibility

during our current mode of production, one must first be counted, or rather, given value

within a system of exchange wherein value is determined by an interconnected economic

and social system.

Each side of this axiom must be examined—as it functions as double articulation

that we find evidenced in *Monster* (2003). On one side the deterritorializing cultural

institutions correlative with postindustrial capitalism provide the conditions of possibility

for shifting and fluid identities. On the other side of the articulation, individuals are

bound in a process of reterritorialization, "taking the form of communities demanding

recognition" (p. 10). As Badiou (2003) argues, "each identification (the creation of

cobbling together of identity) creates a figure that provides a material for its investment

by the market" (p. 10). Indeed, Badiou and Deleuze make the striking claim that identity is a primary site for the potential realization of future capital. Yet as capitalism continues to destabilize the identities and communities of identities the process becomes more of a continual production of possible identity slots, each one corresponding with a possible narrative as its grounding mechanism. Thus, as one or a community establish an identity, that identity is already a looking back upon an imaginary past—as capitalism always is carrying it off into an unforeseeable future investment. Therefore one always will have been some identity. This tense, the future perfect, is more suggestive left un-translated from its French equivalent: postanterior (will have been).   Put succinctly by Badiou, capital demands a permanent creation of subjective and territorial identities in order for its principle of movement to homogenize its space of action…the capitalist logic of the general equivalent and the identitarian and cultural logic of communities or minorities form an articulated whole" (pp. 10-11).

    This quote highlights our departure from the former rhetorical and social science literature I have reviewed, which attempts to demonstrate that an increased capacity for the subject to perform fluid identities through narrative is the condition of possibility for an increased sense of agency; whereas Badiou and Deleuze and Guattari are more committed to understanding identity as a conservative (if often necessary) reterritorialization attuned to the fluidity and complexity of (fragmented) postmodern culture and postindustrial capitalism. In other words, a fluid and shifting identity may be a valuable mode of identity for a market dependent on the continual creation of new niches (e.g. the metrosexual is less a kind of resistant and hybrid identity than it is a nodal

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point for the creation of things and services people can consume in order to become).

Capital seems to operate by shoring up potential differences and interlocking articulations

(e.g. Gay-Black, Liberal-Hawk, Female-Serial Killer, Straight-yet-Stylishly-Queer, etc.)

that, quite insidiously, appear as oppositional identity formations but are rather unrealized

potential for the ever-intensifying reach of the market (Badiou, 2003).

It is now clear how narrative is conceptualized and evaluated in this schema:

narrative, as one tactic of the abstract machine of faciality for the insertion of individuals

and signs (content) into specific identity slots (form); it may be the primary tool for the

imperialism of the market into as yet unrealized modalities of identity. Therefore,

analyzing narrative production is valuable as a tool for critique inasmuch as it makes

visible the emergence identitarian politics predicated on multiculturalist and relativist

ethics of diversity and its accompanying ideological commitments (Badiou, 2003). As

Nietzsche might say, analyzing narrative aids in the development of understanding how

humanistic, all too humanistic, narratives, narratizations, and stories are articulated to the

logic of contemporary capitalism, serving the reactionary goal of perpetuation of the

current mode of production, despite their ostensible and well-intentioned claims to the

contrary. A primary methodological question of this analysis then becomes: how do

narratives, coded with recognizable signifiers of realism and ostensibly suggestive of a

humanistic discourse, make visible the existing axioms governing the formation of sub-

altern identity in postindustrial capitalism?

Rather than go on speculating about the political significance of this somewhat

counter-intuitive Marxist and anti-humanist programme, in the following sections of this

essay, I demonstrate that the popular and mass distributed cultural narrative surrounding Wuornos in the recent film *Monster* (2003) signify a specific reterritorialization of narrative identity (the scape-goat narrative) suited to the interests of the mode of production.

As stated, this portion of the essay describes and analyzes selections from the recent and popular film *Monster* (2003). Following from the previous section, I take as my point of departure this guiding question: how do narratives, ostensibly suggestive of a humanistic discourse forming the identity of an asignifying minor force, reify the existing axioms of postindustrial capitalism? I argue that, through narrative, the film forms a specific identity for Wuornos commensurate with the demands of a society that requires a scapegoat to persecute the female-lesbian other and simultaneously renders visible a need to emotionally identify with the scapegoat. Prior to this analysis I provide a recap of the narrative of the film.

<div align="center">The Narrative of Monster</div>

In this portion of the essay I retell the narrative of Wuornos ("Lee" hereafter to distinguish the film character) as depicted in *Monster*, paying particular attention to the opening and framing sequence, which sets the stage for an our understanding of the rest of the film. *Monster* tells (a portion) of the story of Lee (played by Charlize Theron), the so-called first female serial killer. The film opens with a black screen upon which, in white letters, the phrase "based on a true story" appears, signifying the films affinity with the true-crime genre and suggesting, with black and white newspaper-like graphics, the historical reality of Wuornos' life as reflected in the film. What follows is a brief dream-

like sequence, accompanied by a voice over of Lee, where the audience learns about Lee's past. Because of the importance of this voice-over sequence, which frames the remainder of the movie despite, or perhaps because of its brief duration, I quote it at length:

> I always wanted to be in the movies. When I was little I thought for sure one day I could be a big big star. Or maybe just beautiful. Beautiful and rich. Just like the women on TV. Yeah. I had a lot of dreams. And I guess you could call me a real romantic. Because I truly believed that one day it'd come true, so I dreamed about it for hours. As the years went by I stopped sharing this with people. They say I was dreaming, but back then I believed it whole heartedly. So whenever I was down I would just escape into my mind, to my other life where I was someone else. It made me happy to think that that all these people just didn't know yet who I was gonna be [sic]. But one day they'd all see. I heard that Marilyn Monroe was discovered in a Soda Shop and I thought for sure it could be like that. So I started going out real young and I was always secretly looking for who was going to discover me. Was it this guy, or maybe this one? You never knew. But even if they couldn't take me all the way, like Marilyn, they would somehow believe in me just enough, they would see me for what I could be and think I was beautiful, like a diamond in the rough. They would take me away to my new life, and my new world, where everything would be different. Yeah, I lived that way for a long long time, in my head, dreaming like that . It was nice. And one day it just stopped.

During the voice-over, images of Lee as a dejected small child visually narrate her early history. We see a young suburban girl, withdrawn into the world of fantasy, looking at books with images of Prince Charming and Cinderella-like white heterosexual couples, and modeling jewelry in the mirror. An anonymous adult hand takes her by the shoulder and she is abruptly turned about. In the next scene we scene young Lee with a black eye being scolded for some unknown reason, followed by a shot-reverse-shot close-up of her face and the face of an old man. Then the sequence turns into a description of her adolescent life as Lee is magically transformed into her later teenage years. We see her first being rejected by other female teenagers and then employed by a group of boys to whom she reveals her breasts. Finally we see Lee (perhaps in her twenties by now) being picked up by a man in a car as she walks down a (presumably Floridian) rural road. The images suggest that Lee then has a sexual encounter with a man in a different car and he, to her surprise, attempts to pay her. They have an argument and the man roughly shoves her out of the car. In the final scene of the opening sequence she is seen running behind a car streaming off into the night.

The story then continues with Lee contemplating suicide before she is befriended by Selby (Tyria Moore, played Christina Ricci) in a bar. After some hesitation about her sexuality, Lee begins a relationship with Selby. Selby leaves the comfort of her suburban home to live in a motel with Lee, who barely supports them by "hooking" (working as a sex worker) and most of the movie depicts their tribulations as young lovers attempting to make it on their own.

One night, Lee is raped by one of her clients. During the rape she is able to free her hands, finds a gun, shoots the man, and steals his car, which Selby eventually crashes. In the movie, this *event* marks the beginning of her path to murdering several other men (seven of which she was convicted her for), some of which did not try to assault her. After the police circulate sketches of Selby and Lee, she busses Selby back to the comfort of her parents' home. Eventually Lee is picked up by the police on an obscure charge and is set up by Selby (under pressure from the authorities) to confess after the police have wire-taped a conversation between the two lovers.   The film then cuts to a court scene where we see, but do not hear, what is presumably, Selby's testimony against Lee. We do not hear the conviction but are only privy to Lee's (as in Wuornos' characteristic) outbreak in the courtroom: "Thank you judge. May you rot in hell, sending a raped woman to death. And you all [to the people watching] you're a bunch of scum, that's what you are."   Then there is a final voice-over which frames the conclusion of the film with a catalogue of clichés:

> Love conquers all. Every cloud has a silver lining. Faith can move mountains.
> Love will always find a way. Everything happens for a reason. Where there is
> life, there is hope [sigh]. They gotta tell you something.

Finally the screen fades to white and in black letters we learn that "Aileen and Selby never spoke again" and that "Aileen Wuornos was executed on October 9th, 2002, after 12 years on Florida's Death Row."

Analysis: Framed by Love

The formal arrangement of the film manages trauma, and the force of trauma understood as the un-representable and asignifying material deviation from the despotic face of white femininity; aligning it with an intelligible grid for audience understanding and instructs the audience to console rather than deliberate.

The introductory portion of the film serves two framing purposes: it provides a foundation for audience identification with Lee and, at the same time, produces as expository moment from which the larger tale of love may then unfold. The film proceeds in a linear pattern beginning with a brief and dreamlike recollection of Lee's adolescent development. The entire opening sequence of flashbacks lasts under two minutes. Within the two minute frame of the introduction, Lee's physical characteristics are coded with the signifiers of youthful suburban femininity. She is a white young blond girl who watches television and dreams of heterosexual romance and fame to escape the boredom of (perhaps, lower) middle class life. As such she is generalized into the girl next door—although, the one who, as we will soon find out, didn't turn out like the rest of us, may yet be deserving of sympathy. As the introduction progresses, things become more dismal for Lee, providing the audience with an identifiable trajectory of a life gone wrong—following a folksy one thing leads to another appeal—that mobilizes a logic of causality to account for the abysmal state where we find at the outset of her relationship with Selby at the close of the (expository) introduction.

This portion of the film makes visible the path of deterritorialization and reterritorialization charted by the tactics of identification; the condition for this being:

Lee can be different but not too different. Indeed, to be somewhat consubstantial with

the viewer of the film, a common background must be established. Lacking any

empirical, objective, or aesthetic modes of establishing consubstantiality, the myth of an

abstract standard (the generalized girl next door) is therefore employed. This is not to

mystify what "really" happened, but an expression of the attempt to circumvent the

impossibility of signifying anything outside of the public face of intelligibility. However

the affective space of the film is still relatively deterritorialized and requires further

tactics to recuperate the now heightened emotional awareness of the audience with an

identifiable mode of expression (as grief, or mourning, etc.).

The majority of the film is devoted to portraying the love affair between Lee and

Selby. This selection also evidences the burden of identification that the film is made to

carry. The relationship between the two lovers attempts to give a consistency to the

dematerialized emotional space of the introduction. In other words the generalized

affective reciprocity between the viewers of the film and Lee, as established in the

introductory portion through the employment of the generalized girl next door, is made

specific, that is, further understandable, through the tropes of heterosexual romance.

Crucially, this gesture articulates affect with emotion. The uninstructed prepersonal

resonance, that is, the relatively deterritorialized emotional residue lingering from the

dreamlike sequences of the introductory scenes, becomes articulated within a sensible

mode of understanding.

This articulation develops out of the space of consolation afforded by the limits of

liberal diversity. The two lesbians may be identified with, but we are made quickly

aware that the condition for this identification is their inscription within the dyadic codes

of traditional heterosexual roles (Lee is identified as the masculine, aggressive, provider,

dominant, and experienced agent; Selby is identified as feminine, passive, consuming,

naïve and subordinate). As such, the limits of the liberal faciality machine are again

exposed. But crucially, the corresponding affect, mobilized by the heterosexual

intelligibility conferred on the minor deviation from traditional sexuality (the becoming-

major), becomes linked with an instruction for the audience to grieve with Lee as the

romance deteriorates, culminating in the expression of grief as the quintessential reaction

to the film.

The concluding sequences of *Monster* provide the final closure to what has

become a harrowing love story. Though it is ironic to use a series of clichés to end a film

that is little more than an assemblage of bourgeois stereotypes, there more is at stake

here: by using a series of anonymous quotations, Lee's voice, again, isomorphic with the

opening of the film, personifies a disembodied and knowing perspective of the events of

the film, and, by default, Wuornos' life. The clichés are issued with a sarcastic tone, as

Lee is, presumably, now elsewhere, beyond the limit of intelligibility for the middle class

viewing audience, which must nevertheless find a way to make sense of her post-Selby

life and death. The film recuperates the asignifying trauma of her state sanctioned death,

with, again, the construction of a character epitomized by the desire to be loved, to look

for the good side of things, to have faith in love and reason; but also a character who,

now like the audience, is reflexive about the possibilities of naïve belief in those same

clichés in a world where lovers are only human; and indeed, everyone has been betrayed.

In another striking example of oversignification, that is, the attempt to signify that which is asignifying, the screen fades to white and, as previously noted, the audience is informed that "Aileen and Selby never spoke again" and that "Aileen Wuornos was executed on October 9th, 2002, after 12 years on Florida's death row." Indeed, the voice-over has been from beyond the grave. Even dead women have been mobilized into the service of assuaging bourgeois guilt over their complacency in a society inundated by violence against women. But most importantly, the conclusion of the film marks the range of audience intelligibility: with the love affair ended, the film has little reason to continue; so it doesn't. The degree of suspense afforded by drama between Lee and Selby may not continue into the asignifying space beyond the intelligibility their clichéd romance.

Clearly, the rules governing the production of an acceptable range of variation were made real by the narrative upon which an identity for the characters is formed and identifications with the audience were scripted. But what is so far missing from our analysis is an understanding of the way in which the narrative works as an apparatus of capture, channeling the material force of minor deviation away from its potential as an asignifying rupture of intelligibility. We must briefly return to Deleuze before proceeding.

In widely popular book on Nietzsche, speaking of the neutralizing activity of reactive forces, Deleuze (1983) argues:

Reactive forces 'project' an abstract and neutralised [sic] image of force; such a force separated from its effects will be blameworthy if it acts, deserving, on the

contrary if it does not….Although force is not separated from its manifestation the manifestation is turned into an effect which is referred to the force as if it were a distinct and separated cause….Force, which has been divided in this way, is projected into a substrate, into a subject which is free to manifest it or not….the force thus neutralised is moralized [sic]. (Cited in Mullarkey, 1999, p. 69)

Translating Deleuze into our analysis reveals the following: the narrative of *Monster* projects a molar image of the force of the minor, that is, an abstracted and individualized expression of her essential and inherent potential for a high degree of deterritorialization. This force, abstracted into a form, the Lee character, is also then, neutralized, that is, thus separated from the force of minor deviation through a molar representation, becomes separated from the capacity to affect and become affected along the minor line of becoming. Thus molarized (in other words identified), Lee, the molar abstraction of the minor power of Wuornos's concrete deviation from the despotic face of white femininity, separated from her potential, may become blameworthy if she acts and deserving if she doesn't. Although force is never separate from its manifestation, the manifestation is turned into a machine of meaning-production (interpreted as Lee) and culpability (assuming Lee is responsible, freely choosing minor deviation). The minor, thus personified, conditions the possibility for her expiation and scapegoating (what Deleuze refers to above as moralizing). This scapegoat function of the abstract machine of faciality is an expression of Nietzsche's slave morality (ressentiment and bad consciousness). Dangerously, the abstract molarization has real effects: the fiction of the repressibility of force actually does repress force. And here is the rub: expanding on

Deleuze's formula, the molar Lee character is not only culpable and scapegoated, but, personified as such, a vehicle for identification. If the film instantiates a (fictive) repressive mechanism, it does so through the production of an emotional pattern within which sense can be rendered intelligible.

Put plainly, the events surrounding the life of Aileen Wuornos, marked as they are by lesbianism, prostitution, early childhood trauma, violence, etc (cautious as I am of re-victimizing Wuornos, as I think the film does), present the limits of femininity that bourgeois sensibility instinctively avoids—as the events introduce an element of singularity into a system of equivalence, a leaking of force out of power. Without attributing one class or other as the causal agent behind the representation of Wuornos life does not eliminate an interrogation of the process of sense-making oriented towards the recuperation of this difference into an acceptable range of variation; a close description of *Monster* to disclose the rules governing this process is what I have, at least, attempted. I have discovered that providing the possibility for an identification with her, in other words, giving her enough agency to be victimized and culpable at the same time, produces what Burke (1954), Deleuze (1983), Deleuze and Guattari (1987), and Griggers (1997)—all following Nietzsche—identify as a scapegoating function. The scapegoat function (linked with Wuornos through a narrative structure), is basically the representation of an event or series of events from within a faulty logic of causality, in other words, blaming, that takes as its condition of possibility a logic of influence predicated on sovereign elements acting in a fully delimitated, indeed present and knowable, context, or scene. What's more, the condition for making a scapegoat

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sensible, in other words, to identify some thing or other as scapegoat, requires a certain

unfitness, or as Burke (1954) says, following Veblen, trained incapacity. Is *Monster* not

a Hollywood rationalization of a society that requires a certain permissible level of

sanctioned forms of violence? And isn't Wuornos an expression, or rather, symptom, of

this system, with *Monster* being the corresponding representation of the symptom from

within a framework that systematically denies its status as an effect of the intersection of

competing forces through the fictitious enabling of the symptom with a certain level of

agency? To be clear, my argument is, indeed, that this is the exact function of the film.

Conclusion

I have argued that the narrative of the film offers audiences a range for

understanding, not only the life of Wuornos, but metonymically, the deviant other, within

a framework of valuing her individual character. I have demonstrated that from within a

close analysis of the film larger forces of reaction are made visible, namely those

isomorphic with the mode of production demanding a degree of variation that at once

puts off and imperializes difference through identification. These processes, I have also

demonstrated, work at an affective level in the film: the asignifying charge of minor

variation as recuperated through a process of identification reveals narrative as epideictic

tactic wherein praise and blame coexist, calling upon rhetoricians to revisit the taken-for-

granted nature of their distinction. Finally, the blurring of epideictic lines cuts the legs

off deliberation as a response to the film. The audience, positioned to identify with Lee,

is absolved of any real action outside of the identitarian logic of multicultural politics.

Put otherwise, if the audience decides to act, which is unlikely given the emotional

expectation to grieve as the ultimate expression of identification with Lee, the film

positions Wuornos-as-Lee within a center-margin hierarchy wherein the limits of liberal

tolerance smack into the wall of their hypocrisy; this positioning profoundly limits the

possibilities of tolerance to challenge the diffuse and structural arrangements that are the

very condition of its ostensible existence.

Eagleton (2003) reminds us that Marx considers the proletariat as a class which

represents the dissolution of all classes, "signifying as it does 'a total loss of

humanity'…an empty signifier of an alternate future. The challenge facing contemporary

Marxists, other than rescuing communism from its own disrepute, is to confront the

gestures of humanization with the force of this asignifying future (Guattari and Negri,

1990). It seems ironic that at a moment in history when the U.S. wields Empire as the

global expression of an imperial agenda, there is a growing intolerance to broad (Marxist)

theoretical claims. It also seems ironic that fashionable lauding of otherness within

certain theoretical circles is the mirror image of capitalistic reterritorialization of

otherness as a consumable and punishable identity-commodity. Similarly, *Monster*,

serves as a quintessential example of an event within popular culture which results in an

increase in visibility (indeed, fame, for a woman who in taking flight into the asignifying

plane of an alternate future mobilized the technologies of capture associated with the

dominant regime of feminine significations), but not a redistribution of the arrangements

of the material conditions for proletarian existence.

Footnotes

1. Despite Eagleton's (2003) untoward attitude to poststructural theory, in this chapter I establish a direct link between Marx, Badiou, and Deleuze and Guattari and therefore find no qualms with putting him to work as well.

2. Holland (1999) sums this Deleuzian understanding of axiomatic up nicely:

> Capitalism…organizes society impersonally, by means of the market: the value of good and labor-capacity—along with the persons and behaviors that take them to market and back—is determined by the 'cash nexus,' by quantitative relations embodies ultimately in the abstract, universal equivalent of money. Capitalism undermines or 'decodes' all established meanings and beliefs, replacing them with sets of axioms that govern the conjunction of decoded flows—of money, labor-capacity, raw materials, skills and technologies, consumer tastes, and so forth—in pursuit of surplus value. (p. 148)

And of the relation between capitalist axiomatic and the critique of representation, Holland goes on to argue that, for Deleuze, that difference and multiplicity subordinate, or rather, are primary in relation to identity and representation. Mechanical or machinic activities that reduce difference to a logic of equivalence (a divergence of degree), such as the capitalist axiomatic, result in identity (repetition of the same) and betray or distort the creative process of repetition which is a given property of matter and energy. We have buried here, in the early Deleuze of *Difference and Repetition*, and some of his commentators, a profound philosophical backdrop for a new materialism based on the

immanence of material ontogenesis (Delanda, 1999, 2000; Deleuze, 1994; Holland, 1999; Mullarkey, 1999).

3. Grigger's introduces "faciality" as term for the process of producing model femininity metonymically through the despotic face of white femininity in popular culture. Griggers defines faciality as:

> a conceptual formation that, when activated, legitimizes not only an overcoding of signifiers and meanings but also specific assemblages of organic and nonorganic properties by channeling the molecular flows of signs and matter. In this sense, femininity is an overcoded, abstract faciality mapped over the surface of actual bodies. (p. x)

Importantly, the despotic face of white femininity is abstract, that is, the unliveable regime of signs designated by the condition of possibility *and* impossibility of a molar standard: an unlivable double bind swallowing white women and women of color alike into its purview.

4. Oversignification is my own term to specify how attempts to signify the minor always miss the mark, resulting in a surplus that is isomorphic with the minor itself. To deal with this remainder a number of rhetorical tactics may be deployed to reterritorialize the asignifying force of the minor within a majoritarian regime of signs. Popular culture, considered from this perspective, seems replete with examples, and generally speaking, evidences this otherwise invisible or asignifying process.

5. The rhetorical method that I apply to my analysis to support these claims is drawn from a previous chapter of my thesis and is based on the work of Deleuze and Guattari

(1987). I articulate a four step process that includes (1) a close description of the material mode of composition of a specific regime of signs, (2) a description of the transversal use of tactics constituting the specificity of regime of signs, (3) a description of the dual processes of deterritorialization and reterritorialization that imperialize difference in kind to difference by degree, and (4) a postulation of the potential for an event to take flight from a regime of signs. The method in this chapter roughly corresponds as (1) a historicization of the mode of production within which the film was dispersed, (2) a discussion of the mobilization of narrative as a tactic of epideictic rhetoric to establish faciality as a specific regime of intelligibility and commodification, (3) a description of the process of stripping the all-too-different difference from the majoritarian regime of faciality, and (4) a cautionary note about equating an increase in visibility with an increase in resistance to the status quo.

6. According to Cloud (2004) "Hauser argues against critical scholars who bemoan the inherently conservative tendencies in ceremonial discourse" (p. 75). But, I concur with Cloud's regard of epideictic discourse, "at least as it happens in late capitalist society, as inimical to or containing of krisis, the moment of judgment and action that depends on its cognate, criticism" (p. 75). She goes on to say that "without condemning all epideictic discourse, I would suggest that in such situations [when used to justify violence], it can be profoundly undemocratic because it rules inappropriate and unwelcome anyone offering questions, criticism, or a plea for rational though" (p. 75). It is in this last plea that I begin to differ with Cloud, especially in her call for "a guiding normative ideal of critical rationality" (p. 78)—which is strange sounding given her earlier (1994) emphasis

on materiality. This normative ideal of rationality and its accompanying pestiferous normative ideal of deliberation is isomorphic with the modern Habermasian ideal speaking situation and a nostalgic style of democracy that I am cautious of; as it is really an example of a conservative reterritorialization of the potential for a politics of becoming-intense as a form of deliberative action.

7. Again, I follow Cloud's (2004) articulation of identification with an epideictic mode of rhetorical discourse. See also Charland (1987) for a seminal work on identification in rhetorical criticism that seems to have paved the way for identification as the master trope critical rhetorical endeavors.

DANCING IN A MINOR KEY: RETHINKING COMMUNISM AND RHETORIC THROUGH *DANCER IN THE DARK*

Rhetorical studies—considered from the perspective of those publications and activities that self-identify as such—have adopted some of the assumptions, methods, and vocabulary of the Derridean (e.g. Biesecker, 1989) and Foucauldian (e.g. Biesecker, 1992a; Goankar, 1982; Greene, 1998; McKerrow, 1989) schools of poststructuralism. The work of articulation theory (e.g. Grossberg, 1992; Laclau and Mouffe, 1985) has also found its way into our journals (e.g. Deluca, 1999). More recently, we have witnessed the popularity of Lacanian influenced new psychoanalysis (Biesecker, 1998; Gunn, 2003). This work has primarily situated itself in a political economy vis-à-vis the act of criticism, assuming that the act of critique occupies a shared field with the object-events under scrutiny; among other important advances, the assumption of an immanent critical method (1) undermines a number of rhetorical methods aiming at the elevation of rhetorical criticism to the level of a science, (2) privileges the discursive production of reality rather than a economic base-superstructure model, and (3) imposes an ethical obligation on the critic, asking her to consider her textual production as implicated within a network of power. Furthermore the poststructural models share a concept of the message as neither unified nor uni-directional; rather, they focus on messages as fragmented and emphasize analysis of those practices that articulate (or as the early Biesecker argues, finesse) the fragments (or originary différance) of postindustrial life with a coherent (often ideological) message. Lastly, the poststructural turn in rhetorical criticism has challenged the autonomy of the individuals involved in the act of

communication, thus bringing the notion of communication as a process of mediation between sovereign actors into crisis.

Marxists scholars of rhetoric have reacted to this poststructural turn, primarily because the advances discussed above create the conditions for the emergence of a perceived threat to the potential for rhetorical action to serve a mediating role between the proletariat class and its rendezvous with history (Aune, 1994; Cloud, 1994, 2001). Turning away from high-Marxist doctrine that "adopted an implicit theory of language and communication that was an unstable mixture of romantic expressionism and a positivist dream of perfectly transparent communication" (Aune, p. 143), such critiques have not assumed that capitalism will provide the means for it own undoing and have, in the case of Aune, argued that the role of the rhetorical critic is to demystify and mediate the relation between proletariat agency (struggle), and the mode of production (structure). Implicit in this critique is the suggestion that especially post-Marxist influenced poststructural rhetorical criticism leads to a proliferation of the study of New Social Movements, favoring symbolic recognition over redistribution of material resources (e.g. Cloud, 2001); or, in Aune's case, such criticism innocuously leads to a

> logic of a certain kind of leftist cultural politics…to affirm division. This affirmation of division—in the form of identity politics—is conducted in the name of a sort of internationalism, a Benneton Left incapable of devotion to a country wall or cowslip. (p. 107)

Cloud's concluding comments on her essay on the Indonesian Revolution provide another example:

We cannot witness the starving people of Indonesia—and the first of what will be many waves of tumultuous conflict in Asia and around the world in our time— without also recognizing the continuing relevance of a revolutionary project aimed at not just symbolic recognition but also a material justice. (p. 256)

In this essay I deconstruct the binary situated at the intersection of impasse between material justice and symbolic recognition, not by way of demonstrating the quantitative materiality of symbolic recognition, but by appealing to the philosophical line of inquiry proposed by Deleuze and Guattari (1987). This underutilized line of inquiry opens a way of performing rhetorical theory considering the advances of poststructuralism discussed above without following into the trappings of identitarian politics and with an eye towards the relations of production so often invoked by Marxists without structuralist reductionism.

My argument is complimented by a case study of *Dancer in the Dark* (2000). In this case study I demonstrate that Deleuze and Guattari, read alongside Kenneth Burke (1954), offer a complimentary series of conceptual tools and vocabulary for understanding the modalities of arrangement (assemblages) fixing and unfixing the mode of production with the articulation of identities. More specifically, I argue that the film undoes, or put Deleuzoguattarian-like, deterritorializes the abstract machine of faciality which assembles organic and inorganic flows of the socius into a coordinated regime of signification and identification predicated on the scapegoating and destruction of the feminine Other.[1] Rather than utilize narrative to form an identity for the protagonist within this facial grid of intelligible difference and thereby individuate and humanize the

characters thus allowing audience the identify with her misery, the film is itself an actualization of molecular or affective politics. Challenging the abstract regime of faciality through perspective by incongruity,[2] the film, displaces interpretation and consolation in favor of disassembling the molar relations between stable identities involved in the mass production and distribution consolatory discourses and their corresponding audience instruction to sympathize rather than deliberate (intensively or otherwise) about the events which they patently claim to represent.

Deleuze and Marx

A primary thesis of Deleuze's entire philosophy would be difficult to arrive at. Though he, along with Foucault, has been referred to as a prophet of difference in some circles (e.g. Spivak, 1988), such nomenclature generally explains less than it obfuscates. Such obfuscation has as much to do with his work as it does with the political climate and mood of places in which it has been received and is perhaps in-part responsible for the general North American reception of Deleuze as a philosopher of schizophrenic anarchy with little to offer for the pragmatic socialist or academic rhetorician (Thoburn, 2003). In any case, with few exceptions (e.g. Jameson, 1999; Holland, 1999; Thoburn, 2003) little attention has been paid to Deleuze as a philosopher of Marxism, where the primary articulation of his philosophy of difference often emerges. Instead, most of the research and analytic activities associated with Deleuze have centered on the clinical aspect of his collaborative efforts with Guattari, especially *Anti-Oedipus* (1983) and *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987); this is unfortunate. No doubt, these efforts have resulted in the creation of a valuable toolbox for examining discursive machines that attempt an articulation with

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the otherwise, providing series of powerful examples from such diverse arenas as popular culture, politics, semiotics, noology, mathematical theory, and complexity. However, despite this contribution, the primary thesis of Deleuzian difference remains understudied and too much time is ill-spent musing on what Foucault (1983) warns against: "the games and snares scattered throughout the book [*Anti-Oedipus*], rendering its translation a feat of real prowess" (p. xiv).

Deleuzian difference is intimately bound up with his association with Marxism, and indeed, is impossible to think without Marx's theory of capitalism as immanent. When interviewed, he comments,

> Félix Guattari and I have remained Marxists, in our two different ways, perhaps, but both of us. You see, we think any political philosophy must turn on the analysis of capitalism and the ways it has developed. What we find most interesting in Marx is his analysis of capitalism as an immanent system that's constantly overcoming its own limitations, and then coming up against them once more in a broader form, because its fundamental limit is capital itself. (Cited in Thoburn, 2003, p. 2)

And as Thoburn (2003) notes:

> For Deleuze, following Marx, the capitalist socius is premised not on identity – like previous social formations – but on a continuous process of production – 'production for production's sake' – which entails a kind of permanent reconfiguration and intensification of relations in a process of setting, and

overcoming, limits. In this sense, difference and becoming – or a certain form of

becoming – is *primary*. (p. 2)

The relationship between Deleuze and Marx inevitably raises questions of politics and of

what exactly the imaginable worlds are that would express a Deleuzian communism (cf.

Marx, 1978a, 1978b). Perhaps a return to Marx is the most useful way to articulate a

Deleuzian futurity:

> Communism is for us not a *state of affairs* which is to be established, an *ideal* to
>
> which reality [will] have to adjust. We call communism the *real* movement which
>
> abolishes the present state of things. The conditions of this movement result from
>
> the premises now in existence. (Cited in, Thoburn, p. 3)
>
> Rather than speculate further on the global programme of a Deleuzian
>
> communistic

agenda, I now turn to a fuller explanation of the common and abstract principle to both

Deleuze and Marx: becoming (a certain kind of difference), is a primary process within

and therefore potentially against the current mode of production. I then identify *Dancer

in the Dark* (2000) as one local example of an event creating the conditions for a minor

politics aimed the dissolution of the despotic face of white femininity.[3]

<center>Major and Minor Poles of Difference</center>

There are two poles of Deleuzian difference, major and minor. According to

Thoburn (2003), processes along the major axis "are premised on the formation and

defense of a constant or a standard that acts as a norm and a basis for judgment. As such,

major relations are fixed and denumerable…they are relations of identity" (p. 6).

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Deleuze and Guattari (1987) and Griggers (1997) have discussed the face as a primary site of majoritarian processes, especially involving specific regimes of signification predicated on a biunivocal structure. The face of femininity for example—is it black or white, fashionable or outdated, young or old—exists as a range of acceptable variation rather than the authentic expression of an individual.

The face is first and foremost a politics. The politics of faciality reflect the majoritarian model of difference in that difference is allowed, even necessary for the continued operation of the system, but only insofar as the difference may differ only in relation to the major or invariable element. Importantly, major (otherwise described as molar) processes are immanent to all of the socialization processes involved in the mode of production, yet they are abstract, a rule that no one ever achieves. As Thoburn puts it, "the molar standard exists across the plane of life to judge and determine the configurations of life, and in this it is necessarily 'nobody'—it is an abstract type which induces the world to conform to a model, but which itself cannot fully exist in concrete form" (p. 7).

Contrarily, processes along the minor axis exist as the concrete or material deviations from the abstract majoritarian model. They exist as actualizations, as callings forth from the virtual infinity of potential for variation, of divergence from an abstract model than attracts matter and energy even as it is forever unattainable. As such, they retain a high coefficient of deterritorialization, and exist within a milieu partially stratified by the majoritarian model but also always undercut by minor fluxes of variation.

Together the two processes form the capitalist socius: an assemblage of two immanent poles forming the absolute limits of difference: multiplicity and intelligibility. On the one hand, majoritarian processes have accompanying forms of political expression predicated on nationality, identity, race, ideographs, peoples, parties, genders, etc. Such majoritarian expressions exemplify the politics of inclusion or, as Biesecker (1992b) puts it, affirmative action. On the other hand, the flows of matter and energy (bodies, marches, slogans, etc.) are more than (not a subtraction from) the major process (apparatuses of capture) that attempt to capture energy-potential and are the minor remainder of the various (sub)divisions of major configurations.

In one (minoritarian) sense, it is silly to lament even the most conservative of rhetorician's calls for a reinvigoration of the ideal of deliberative spheres within public life to expand the prospects of democratic decision making (e.g. Hauser, 2001). Even in the most traditional manifestations of this ideal (e.g. the State), a minor process is always at work. The senate is always roving along on a body without organs. Even Republicans can not escape their very own lines of flight from their most nostalgic and reactionary visions. However, it is also dangerous: Fascism is itself a molecular line.

Within this vocabulary, minorities are the majoritarian terms for differentiating and accounting for difference (e.g. class, African-American, Woman, Hispanic). It is from within this regime of division and subdivision (the majoritarian regime of signification) that politics predicated on identity recognition reterritorialize difference into a chain of equivalence. Being under the auspices of the majoritarian axis, exceptional difference, that is, difference that cannot be ascribed within a major key, is

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purged for the unpalatable threat of relativizing the model. Therefore the double

articulation of the molar model when faced with a relativizing event is such: (1)

deterritorialize difference in kind and reterritorialize difference as degree--usually in

commodity form (this is expressed as the inclusion of the exotic other inasmuch as the

other reflects the face of the model while retaining enough "authenticity" to merit a price

tag) and (2) activate a series of institutional mechanism to control unreterritorializable

difference (these are expressions of the pharmaceutical, military, judicial, academic, and

otherwise state varieties that may recuperate madness, sloth, deviant sexual behavior,

violence, guerrilla activities, drug use, or otherwise minor practices) (Deleuze and

Guattari, 1987).

Minor politics are not for a people or a thing. They are not confined to a subject,

a class, or an identity formation. Indeed, they precede the subject. Speaking candidly

about the distinguishing characteristic of a minor politics, Thoburn (2003) adds:

> Minor politics, then, is not a pluralist process of minority groups 'speaking out',
>
> [sic] of voicing an identity…the minoritarian is concerned with expression…such
>
> expression is not 'communication' in the sense of the manifestation of an identity
>
> of a process of bringing people into a public sphere where all may be hears. The
>
> question is rather one of the invention or creation that occurs in a cramped space.
>
> The minor political question are not 'are we communicating enough?' or 'are we
>
> all heard?', [sic] but are of a different order, concerned with how we are
>
> composed and how we create in fashions that deterritorialize dominant or major
>
> forms. (p. 20)

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In sum, major abstract machines (e.g. faciality, commodification, identification, surveillance, etc.) segment minor becomings in dual process of deterritorialization and reterritorialization. Minor flows and changes are always primary in relation to grids or segmentation; primary because they are the condition for the expansion of the system which continually suffers the entropy inherent in a hermetic structure (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987). The minor provides enough energy and matter for the model to update itself as a response to its own deterritorializations and impossible expectations. Also, the fact that minor processes are the inherent, inevitable, and immanent response to the structurality of a system returns us full circle to Marx's predictions about the mode of production; in somewhat outdated fashion, Trotsky (1970) reminds us of this:

> it was not Marx's aim to discover the 'eternal laws' of nature. The history of the development of human society is the history of the succession of various systems of economy, each operating in accordance with its own laws. The transition from one system to another was always determined by the growth of productive forces. (p. 9)

Understanding that communism is not a majoritarian formation (e.g. the molar USSR) but a process of deterritorializing the mechanism of major formations beyond the appeal of inclusion, recognizing the nuance of Marx's theory of change (i.e. that capitalism finds only itself as a limit), and permitting the strictly philosophical Deleuzian theory of difference (i.e. that "the most exact, most strict repetition has as its correlate the maximum difference' as it seeks 'the pure repetition of the former text and the present text in one another'" (as cited in Thoburn, 2003, p.149), not to mention the elaboration of

this difference in his collaborative efforts with Guattari in describing the politics of the major and minor poles of the socius, it is no accident that a productive relation emerges between Marx's theory of communism and Deleuze and Guattari's discussion of politics.

Deterritorializing Rhetoric

Furthermore, given the productive resonance between immanence and capital, scholars of rhetoric may be inclined to rethink their affinity with Marxism and poststructuralism. As a minor process, or rather, as a minoritarian politics, the former can produce none of the teleological assurances that accompany major versions of Marxist criticism. Neither can they be for one class of people rather than another. Strikingly, minor politics (communism, in other words) is happening at every level of local and national government and is always apace with the modifications of the global capitalist system. It is the leakage supplemental to and often fodder for the ranging schizophrenia of the capitalist system of relations. Minor politics are always global and local, tapping into the unmediated connections between abstract machines producing concrete bodies and things that correspond with one market derivation or another or calling forth the various recuperative apparatus of the state or privatized police, military, or psychiatric to suppress surges that may otherwise threaten to tip the system beyond its current level of complexity (Griggers, 1997).

On the other hand, minoritarian politics challenge the new social movements lamented by Cloud (2001) for falling into the trappings of majoritarian formations. If there can be no subject of history, neither can there be subjects of history.[4] Contrarily there are two and only two perspectives: (1) the majoritarian perspective which identifies

politics as a model of pre-formed agents acting in a designated political arena (implying a rhetoric of the possible) and (2) the minoritarian perspective, which views politics as the material deviations from all major models (implying a rhetoric of potential).[5] Communism is a political process that engages with the potential of the minor for a people yet to arrive, in yet unthinkable worlds (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987).

Communication scholars (e.g. those self-identified Marxists mentioned earlier) can go on talking about materiality in the same old ways and calling themselves Marxists but only from the perspective of the major key or perspective. As such, they resemble all the reactionary manifestations of a reterritorialized Marx: either in the image of the failed social democratic model in the north, or of the failed dictatorships of the global south: intellectuals standing at the gate of academic Marxism, providing state-sponsored justification for the continuation of a major pole of so-called radical thought (one imagines pictures of Bernstein lining the halls of the State Schools across the U.S. much like those of Marx line the Kremlin).

There is (and must be) already a sense in which rhetoric, as a discipline, is caught up in its own struggles for recognition as a major model as well as its own becomings and multiplicities that carry it off into new directions. Ballif (2001), is solid on this point in her assertion that rhetoric is seductive, in DeleuzoGuattarian language, involved in becoming-woman, "the possibility of displacing the binary system" (p. 13), somewhat circularly, minor.

Crucial, is not losing touch with the material modes of cultural production in our analysis of the unique and wandering fluxes of social life *and* not allowing Marx to return

as the figure of the father to reign in our aberrant communism; much more explanation should be offered here, but is rejected in favor of applying the above considerations. I offer the following rhetorical analysis as one possible communist expression, or material deviation, from the traditional modes of rhetorical criticism and critical rhetoric—both of which are still not abstract enough to reach the plane of consistency mentioned above.[6]

Dancer in the Dark

Earlier I mentioned the abstract machine of faciality, arguing that, in relation to despotic white femininity, it assembles organic and inorganic flows of the socius into a coordinated regime of signification and identification (a kind of terministic grid of sense-making) predicated on the scapegoating and destruction of the feminine Other (Griggers, 1997). I suggested that the film, *Dancer in the Dark* (2000), does not primarily utilize narrative as a mode of epideictic discourse to (1) form a identity for the protagonist, (2) humanize her within the acceptable limits of consolation, and (3) instruct (or organize the bodies of the) audience(s) to emotionally identify with her as the consummate act of viewer agency.[7] Rather, narrative is utilized as a point of departure for a more powerful and immediate filmic composition that disrupts the molarizing gestures of most so-called positive portrayals of minoritarian women (c.f. with those associated with Aileen Wuornos in *Monster*, 2003) and in doing so signal an instantiation of series of communist tactics associated with the Burke's (1954) perspective by incongruity. These tactics are the subject of this following analysis. To be clear, it is *a selection of tactics* that are under analysis. To provide a more traditional film analysis it would be necessary to haul in and situate myself within a large body of literature dealing more specifically with film

studies, as well as, perhaps, deal with the reception of the film, its mode, generic

characteristics, the auteur, etc. All of these questions are purposely side-stepped in order

to divorce the tactics mobilized within the film from any causal logic or deterministic

agent.

The specific organization of this analysis is as follows: first I briefly summarize

the narrative of the film. Second I offer the critical response to the film as evidence of

popular ambivalence toward the scapegoating effects of state-sanctioned violence against

minoritarian deviations within the larger U.S. cultural formation. Third I trace the

affective strategies mobilized in the formal elements of *Dancer in the Dark*.[8] I conclude

with an evaluation of the film insofar as it projects the potentiality of deliberation based

on intensity.

Dancer in the Dark tells the story of an immigrant, working-class, single mother,

Selma (played by Bjork), raising her son Gene (Vladica Kostic), while going blind, in

rural Washington, circa 1964. Selma, from Czechoslovakia, works the dayshift in a

factory while her son is either in school, or looked after by a local policeman, Bill (David

Morse), and his wife Linda (Cara Seymour). Selma and Gene live in a backyard trailer

they have rented from Bill and Linda. The plot of the story hinges around two secrets:

Selma's and Bill's. We learn Selma's secret when she passes it on to Bill: she is quickly

going blind from an inherited, but preventable disease, which she has passed on to her

unknowing son. Selma maintains her job at the factory, until she is eventually fired for

breaking a machine, in order to save enough money for an operation to cure Gene. At

night, her second income comes from her side job stuffing hairpins. Bill also confesses

his secret to Selma: he is broke, about to have his house repossessed, and in danger of losing his wife. The secrets collide when, after Selma finally saves enough money for Gene's operation, Bill steals her money. In Selma's attempt to retrieve the money, Bill frames her for his own murder. Before the police capture Selma, she is able to get the money to a doctor who agrees to perform the operation on Gene. She is subsequently convicted of first degree murder, sentenced to death and eventually hung. Her only consolation is that Gene does not discover the secret—as stress, we are told by Selma, could render Gene's eyes inoperable—whether he receives his operation is left open.

Film critics don't so much point anything out as remark on the obvious: the narrative is sappy, downright overly melodramatic; another example, one critic notes, of Lars von Trier's sadomasochism. Former organizer Daraka Larimore-Hall (2000) of the Young Democratic Socialists warns, "you can see the movie or I can punch you in the stomach right now and get it over with" (personal communication). Mezzabotta (2001) writes that it "won the Palme d'Or at Cannes to a mixed reception of cheers and hisses, a reaction that has accompanied the international opening of Lars von Trier's bold, controversial cinematic experiment throughout the world" (p. 1). Other film critics (Cheshire, 2000; Graham, 2001; Henderson, 2000; Vaux, 2000) echo Mezzabotta in their discussion of the "controversy," which for the most part revolves around questions of genre or mode. Is it a musical, a martyr epic (Henderson, p. 2), or a European art film (Cheshire, p. 1)? These are the so-called controversial questions that have attracted the attention of popular film critics. Similar to the lack of a communist-feminist response to other portrayals of women suspected of murder in popular culture, the lack of attention

paid to the political significance of *Dancer in the Dark* betrays the tendencies of liberal would be auteur-genre critics.

Most revealing is how the majority of critics responded to the nine musical sequences interspersed throughout the film. Critics explain the function of the music-dance sequences in similar ways: as "fantasy" (Mezzabotta, 2001, p. 1), as "anti-realist" (Graham, 2000, p. 3), or similarly, as "grandiose extensions of Selma's increasingly necessary imagination" (Henderson, 2000, p. 2). In every case the musical scenes are considered somehow less than real: the fictive imaginings of a woman who temporarily, if musically, loses touch with the reality of her situation. Contrarily, I argue the juxtaposition of the musical and nonmusical sequences of the film articulates what Burke (1954) describes as a perspective by incongruity. Burke's discussion of perspective by incongruity refers to a transitional modality of orientation, and "involves a shattering or fragmentation, analogous to the stage of 'rendering and tearing' (or sparagmos) in tragic ritual" (p. 69). Such perspective is generated by linking molar categories generally held to be mutually exclusive,[9] and, in this film, disrupts majoritarian sense-making, upon which, identity politics are primarily based.[10]

In juxtaposing the fantastical musical scenes with ultra-realistic nonmusical scenes, the film exhibits an infidelity with the "truth" or "reality" of its subject. The formal alignment of the musical sequences, interpolated nine times throughout the film, cut a transversal line across the documentary-style perspective offered during its nonmusical portions. Each perspective merits a brief discussion.

The nonmusical sequences are filmed with a handheld digital video recorder, giving a gritty quality to the images, coded through and through with the signifiers of documentary realism. During these portions of the film, Trier *points* at singularities within the field of the camera rather than frames subjects, like a cameraman first to arrive at a burning building and stands to close to the fire creating an image of looking in to or at individual features, or singularities of the flame. Thus characters are not wholly established as autonomous identities, but rather, only virtually individuated as a collection of singularities in movement. This process of filming is isomorphic with the process of viewing the film.[11] Virtual distance from pre-existing (i.e. major) grids of sense-making is continually reached as the film progresses. The state of sense-making for the audience is in a perpetual deviation from a major mode. Put otherwise, the film proceeds along a line of deterritorialization, first and foremost through its too accurate repetition of the codifications of documentary style realism. Because it is hyper-realistic, in other words, abstract enough to reach the real, pointing (in this instance) has as its correlate, the maximum potential for divergence from "reality" or the major codes of realism.[12] Most characteristically, pointing autonomously governs the immediate interactions between the body and the moving images, rather than the content or deep meaning of the film. In other words, pointing does anything but mediate.

During the musical scenes, Trier pulls the camera back to frame the larger movements of the dance, rather than point in at the singularities of the characters. As such the musical scenes form the diastolic counterpart to the systolic intimacy established during the pointing sequences.

The singularities of individual dancers are abolished in favor of framing the movement of the whole: motion and rests, speeds and slowness, intensities and rhythmic convergences of organic and inorganic matter. Although, according to Trier (2000b), 100 cameras are positioned throughout each musical sequence, the impression is not one of captured entirety, but rather, that the camera has expanded to frame a larger singularity (attractor) organizing the dancers into a mode of self-organization (dissipative structure). The musical scenes, it could be added, are not representative of the psychoanalytic imaginary, that is, the fleeting fantasies of a women dreaming of patronymic escape; rather, they organize a new field of the visual, a new condition of possibility for the sensible. Thus, becoming drawn out from the intensity of pointing, the musical scenes frame the action on the screen, and in doing so relieve the perceptual apparatus from the material clutch of the systolic camera techniques.

Throughout the film we experience this dual movement of pointing and framing that forms a material assemblage between the body and the screen. Each implies the existence of the other as two poles that organize the thresholds of deviation from majoritarian sense-making throughout the duration of the film. Furthermore, the juxtaposition of the hyper-realistic technique projected in the nonmusical sequences with the ultra-fantastical imagery of the musical sequences disrupts the simple linearity of the corresponding narrative. Indeed, through both modalities of filming (pointing and framing), and their juxtaposition, the viewer is denied a centered position from which to establish a stable perspective; this, not despite, but because of the (hyper) fantasy-(ultra) realism dialectic that the film plays on. If the film is characterized by anything, it is

movement from one mode of sense-making without being towards another. It is in this sense that the sequences of the film that compose its larger movements can be distinguished as a process of becoming-imperceptible: if sense-making is considered as a composite set of conditions, the nature of the conditions change as new changes feedback into the previous conditions—as it moves it changes and vice versa.

Unlike other films attempting to represent the lives of individual minoritarian women (e.g. *Monster*, 2003), this film performs the minoritarian process, drawing viewers into the loss of perspective that accompanies the space of the minor. Put differently, rather than utilize narrative to form an identity for Selma within a screen of intelligible difference and thereby individuate and humanize her (thus allowing audience the identify with the misery of a woman despite the fact that she murders a cop), the film is itself an actualization of communistic rhetoric: an instance of material deviation from the dominant discourses of consolation. As a deviation from the standard mode of understanding the plight of minoritarian forces, the film deterritorializes identity and therefore the corresponding politics of recognition that accompany so many consolatory manifestations of epideictic discourses. Prior to concluding, let us rephrase these findings from within the categories introduced by Deleuze and Guattari and Burke and disentangle the virtues of their promiscuous application.

Perspective by incongruity offers us a useful way of understanding juxtaposition in *Dancer in the Dark*. More specifically, musical and nonmusical durations of the film are juxtaposed as two (unrealistic) modalities of viewing (hyper real and fantastical) that deny the audience-subject a stable or centered position from which a molar model of

sense-making (a major perspective) could be established. As mentioned above, the incongruousness of perspective afforded by the continual feedback of one mode of sense-making into another is *intensely* political. Intense in that it does not project a political programme (what is possible), but a shift in sense-making that realigns everything that came before it. Thus, the film offers a Deleuzian model of change based on recursive futurity; to paraphrase Massumi (2002), the film folds back onto its own unfolding.[13] The final result is not perspective by incongruity, but incongruous perspective, in other words, a minor deviation propelled by its own variation, not from a centered model, but from itself—a striking example of minor politics.

It is now clear that the film enacts the condition for the emergence of a process of deliberation based on intensity rather than possibility; the distinction being: deliberation based on intensity augments the capacity to affect and be affected as it unseats previously sedimented modes of sense-making without projecting the decentered subject(s) towards a given destination or course of action; whereas deliberation based on possibility plans a course of action based on a process of reasoning or weighing options (Cloud, 2004).

Concluding Re-Marx

In this chapter I have discussed the potential for rhetorical criticism based on the politics of communism. Rather than understand communism as a molar programme or formation (Leninism, Trotskyism, etc.), I have sought a philosophical definition of communism—stretching from Marx to Deleuze and Guattari—to ground the possibility of pragmatic rhetorical criticism. This definition of communism relies on Marx's conception of communism as a perpetual critique of everything existing and the ultimate

abolition of all classes, rather than a remaking of the world in the image of the proletariat.[14] I have noted that Deleuze's conception of difference relies on Marx's understanding of capitalism as a force of immanence whose potential for change lies (to use somewhat misleading imagery) within itself. This has challenged me to rethink the assumptions guiding post-Marxist rhetorical criticism that stops short of understanding the potential of the productive forces of society to create the conditions for their own becoming-otherwise in favor of analyzing the rhetorical construction of the possibilities for symbolic recognition (as lamented by Cloud, 2001). I have also argued that Marx and Deleuze must be thought together as theorists of the minor, of communism, then, as the material derivation of all modes of intelligibility made possible by reterritorializations of the inherent force of production. Finally, I have offered an analysis of *Dancer in the Dark* as one brief example of continuing rhetorical criticism beyond the symbolic recognition/materiality binary. Utilizing Burke's concept of perspective by incongruity, I have demonstrated that, contrary to other popular representations of deviant women reterritorialized into epideictic discourses instructing audiences to view them with sympathy, the film functions as a minoring force, that is, a communistic deviation from the major mode of sense-making associated with experiencing the trauma of the other. I concluded by arguing that *Dancer in the Dark* signals the potential of deliberations based on a minor (reconstructed) materialism rather than normative idealism.

The extensity of the ground covered so far is paralleled by the vastness of questions I have left unaddressed, and perhaps, raised. Most importantly, bringing questions of the minor to the forefront of rhetorical analysis opens up a new mode of

understanding the potential of agency within a deliberative space of intensity. To think

of rhetorical action at this level, it is imperative to, as Greene (2004) argues, "focus our

attention on the multitude's becoming, and their new innovations as forms of experience

and experimentation in the desire for human community" (p. 170).[15] Along with Green, I

argue that the study of rhetoric after the reconstructed materialist ontology of Deleuze

and Guattari (1987) must include study of the unmediated practices of reterritorialization

and deterritorialization immanent to the global socius; it is here, in the molecular

potential of becomings and stratifications, rather than the plane of representation and the

simple logic of influence, that claims to the future are fought for and territorialized.

Footnotes

1. Attias (1998) notes that

> it helps to read Deleuze and Guattari's essay 'Of The Refrain' to understand
>
> coding and decoding as spatial practices. In this essay, a bird song is understood
>
> in an etholgical sense as a marking of territory. Each act of territorialization is
>
> marked by an internal difference of deterritorialization, and hence decoding, as
>
> the means of moving from one assemblage to another. This internal difference (or
>
> more accurately, distance) figures Guattari's bifurcated understanding of
>
> capital… (p. 108)

I discuss faciality at length in a previous chapter of my thesis. Griggers (1997)

defines faciality as:

> a system of signs and a system of subjectivization that not only assembles
>
> signifiers and signifieds into biunivocal facial units, but also regulates possible
>
> degrees of divergence between those units and any number of nonconforming
>
> singularities…does the individual face conform to socially intelligible limits? Are
>
> its deviations intelligible? Does it pass? Faciality serves a policing function. (p.
>
> 4)

2. Burke's (1954) discussion of perspective by incongruity involves the juxtaposition of

impious perspectives, as exemplified in Bergson and Nietzsche (pp. 89-96). This

perspective, by way of the shock of the irreconcilable, the shock to thought, to paraphrase

Massumi (2002), anticipates one pragmatic political application of Deleuze (1983) as

outlined in the preface to *Anti-Oedipus* by Foucault (1983): "develop action, thought, and

desires by proliferation, juxtaposition, and disjunction, and not by subdivision and pyramidal hierarchization" (p. xii), and "what is needed is to 'de-individualize' by means of multiplication and displacement, diverse combinations" (p. xiv).

3. The despotic face of white femininity is one abstract machine that reterritorializes difference into an acceptable degree of divergence and actualizes this reterritorialization with the material stuff of existing bodies. Guattari (1984) writes:

> A capitalist does not have power in a general sort of way: he controls a specific territory, a specific factory, in a particular country, and in each one he depends on a certain number of those transformers of signification – concrete machines. In each of thee situations, the dominant facial features – those of the mother, father, teacher, cop, judge, pop-star, boss, etc. – determine the possible survival of the other, more 'archaic' concrete machines: the being of animals, scenery, etc. which are connected with the deep-seated territorialized forces of action belonging to childhood, the countryside, primitive societies and so on. Establishing these concrete authority machines is the only means whereby a capitalistic system can tolerate, and turn to its advantage, the lines of escape inherent in the development of productive forces and the deterritorialization of production relations. (p. 156)

4. Similarly, the vegetal model of minor organization is the rhizome:

> Unlike trees and their roots, the rhizome connects any point to any other point, and its traits are not necessarily linked to traits of the same nature; it brings into play very different regimes of signs, and even nonsign states. The rhizome is reducible neither to the One nor the multiple. It is not the One that becomes Two

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or even directly three, four, five, etc. It is not a multiple of units but of

dimensions, or rather directions in motion. It has neither beginning nor end, but

always middle (milieu) from which it grows and which it overspills. It constitutes

linear multiplicities with n dimensions having neither subject nor object, which

can be laid out on a plane of consistency, and from which the One is always

subtracted (n-1). (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 21)

5. Not coincidentally, this answers the questions that Foucault's genealogical poses in

terms of why study one subaltern group rather than another.   Furthermore, since the line

of flight is primary, the question of resistance is not an issue for Deleuze (1994) in the

way that it is for Foucualt, who assumes the power dispositifs, rather than assemblages of

desire, are primary (Thoburn, 2003).

6. In the analysis that follows I emphasize the fourth step in the method that I have drawn

from the fifth plateau of Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) *A Thousand Plateaus*. The

method involves a four step process that includes (1) a close description of the material

mode of composition of a specific regime of signs, (2) a description of the transversal use

of tactics constituting the specificity of regime of signs, (3) a description of the dual

processes of deterritorialization and reterritorialization that imperialize difference in kind

to difference by degree, and (4) a postulation of the potential for an event to take flight

from a regime of signs. The fourth step, as mentioned above, is the primary focus of this

chapter and I consider this to be a welcome addition to a rhetorical criticism that studies

not only those practices and tactics of reterritorialization (which in kind would emphasis

the first three steps, as demonstrated in the previous chapter) but also those events that stake out minor potentialities, or becomings-otherwise.

7. In the previous chapter of my thesis I identify narrative as a primary tactic of the abstract machine of identification that scaffolds majoritarian politics, substituting consolation for deliberation.

8. Communistic tactics are primarily affective, that is, asignifying and intense, creating the conditions for incorporeal transformations (new relations between bodies minus the bodies themselves) without necessarily suggesting a specific trajectory. The primary definition of affect (to be circular) involves understanding of the capacity for bodies (broadly, here) to affect and be affected as a potential inherent in all material relations. Deleuze argues that relation that increase of a body's capacity to affect and likewise be affected results in an increase of power (puissance) understood primarily as a form of unconscious agency. As such, affect is a nonmolar, or rather, molecular, tactic fit for a communistic programme rather than a politics predicated on the conscious knowing-acting subject.

9. Lain (2004), summing up Burke's argument, writes:

> the juxtaposition of two seemingly incompatible terms creates new meanings that break the previous frame or reference. The perspective itself allows new practices that problematize the trained incapacities of convention. (p. 231).

Although Lain does not articulate his project with a communist agenda in his analysis of Hayashi's panoramic photo-collages, he demonstrates how the images exist as material

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deviations from preexisting memory formations predicated on the presence of "real" identities (pp. 230-231); as such, we are allied.

10. Lain (2004) discusses majoritarian sense-making as a "logic of recognition based on [a minority]…as a stable, homogenous, identity" (p. 232).

11. Pointing establishes intimate material connection between the visual scope of the film and the audience. To not look in at the moving singularities establishing the character as such creates an experience of discomfort. The distinction between the movement of the camera and the diagetic placing together of singularities disqualifies the distinction, to be blunt, between the way one sees and what's seen.

12. I am again reminded of Deleuze's argument that "the most exact, the most strict repetitions has as its correlate the maximum difference…the pure repetition of the former text and the present text in one another" (Cited in Thoburn, 2003, p. 149).

13. In a related manner, speaking of the ethics of Deleuzian linguistics, Massumi (2002) writes the following:

> The atypical expression puts the screws on the system of language in a way that forces its actual operation to overlap with its zone of potential. The same experimental torture also brings out the transitive element of [C.S. Peirce's concept of] thirdness, in a recursive mode, by 'causing the last term to react upon the preceding term, back through the entire chain'. The combined result is a recursive futurity. Language folds back on its own unfolding. Wrapped up in itself, language falls into a state of utter tension: intensity. Language has been

made to coincide, 'on the near side or beyond' of its conventional usage, with its

own intensity. (p. xxiii)

14. Marx (1978a), in a letter to Arnold Rouge, bemoaning his utopian and reformist

contemporaries, argues that socialist kritik should not be about

designing of the future and the proclamation of ready-made solutions for all time

… but instead a ruthless criticism of everything existing, ruthless in two senses:

the criticism must not be afraid of its own conclusions, nor of conflict with the

powers that be.

The socialist principles of kritik imply that the aim of criticism is the destruction of the

conditions of possibility for said criticism to proceed.

15. "Multitude" here refers to Hardt and Negri's (2000) understanding of the material

force of production on the laboring side of the international division of labor from a

minor perspective.

EPILOGUE

Crazy talk is not enough –Deleuze and Guattari, 1987

An epilogue traditionally functions as an author's final word on things, a concluding part of a literary work, or a monologue addressed to an audience by an actor in a play. The historical origins of the word are from the ancient Greek epilogos, for, end of a speech. The epilogue is bound within a classic agent-centered understanding of textual production, and as such, is eminently bound a conservative understanding of rhetoric that is decidedly *pre*-Marxist. The dominant, though not uncontested mode of rhetorical studies is founded precisely along the lines suggested in the etymology of epilogue, thus, the word itself renders visible one expression of the humanist paradigm within which rhetoric becomes intelligible. This paradigm, according to Goankar (1997a), is

> based on a reading of classical texts, especially those of Aristotle and Cicero, and
> its governing feature is the positioning of the rhetor as the generating center of
> discourse and its 'constitutive' power. The rhetor is seen (ideally) as the
> conscious and deliberating agent who 'chooses' and in choosing discloses the
> capacity for 'prudence' and who 'invents' discourse that displays an ingenium
> and who all along observes the norms of timeliness (kairos), appropriateness (to
> prepon), and decorum that testify to a master of sensus communis. Within such a
> paradigm, while one does recognize the situational constraints, including the
> specificity of the audience addressed, they are in the last instance, so many items
> in the rhetors design. The agency of rhetoric is always reducible to the conscious

and strategic thinking of the rhetor…such is the model of intentional persuasion,

still dominant but under trial. (p. 49)

The epilogue, however, must be riveted from its conservative humanistic moorings if it

will serve any purpose for us. Instead, drawing on the finding of previous chapters and

heeding the quotation that opens this section, I offer a brief manifesto for minor politics,

intended primarily as a provocation.

To begin with a refusal: politics of the new materialism (i.e. minor politics or

communism) do not strictly rely on a process of strategic and conscious decision making

through the existing (or idealized) civic spaces of democratic participation; and will

furthermore not attempt to interpret such practices from within a logic of influence.

Similarly, reading strategies based on minor politics do not attempt to interpret,

symbolize, or represent one thing or another, but, as Goankar (1997b) argues

"recapitulates [sic] the essential tension of rhetoric…by making visible its abstract rule-

governed structure in contingent and locally unstable time-space events, be they texts or

performances" (p. 331). Going on, he argues, "thus the 'eventness' of rhetoric in all its

specificity is made to disclose the abstract machine that inhabits it without ever being

able to govern it" (p. 331). Recalling Spivak's earlier definition of rhetoric as "the name

for the residue of indeterminacy which escapes the system" (cited in Ballif, 2001); the

goal is not to recodify lines of deterritorialization, but to destroy the very conditions of

their codification (cf. Biesecker, 1992a).

Put differently, I have been talking about reinvesting the ungovernable potential

of the minor back into its own becoming. Minor politics involves a two pronged effort:

(1) locating the inherent deterritorializing force of (even the strictest) repetition and (2) articulating this force with what it can do (Deleuze 1994; Mullarkey, 1999). I have shown how this two pronged effort is evident in *Dancer in the Dark* (2000): the incongruousness of perspective afforded by the continual feedback of one mode of sense-making into another is *intensely* political. Intense in that it does not project a political programme (what is possible), but a shift in sense-making that realigns everything that came before it in a model of change based on recursive futurity, or, in other words, potential. The final result is a minor deviation propelled by its own variation, not from a centered model, but from itself—a striking example, I said, of minor politics. Striking, I now add, because it locates perspective by incongruity through an aesthetic expression and, instead of codifying, or attempting to establish a stable perspective through the juxtaposition of incongruous frames, the composition of the film retains its singular character, that is, its continual process of taking leave from itself.

As the filmic example makes clear, minor politics are not for a people or a specific cause (though they may be articulated with one or the other). Their goal is not to increase communication through a process of inclusions so as to pluralize the public. The goal is not to increase access for previously excluded identity formations within a multicultural thematic. The questions concerning minor politics are biopolitical in nature: what is the stuff that makes as we are and what potential exists for this to become otherwise? Perspective is much more a problem of the abstract machines that capture the potential of matter-energy than it is ideology. Matter learns. The power of minor politics is strictly in its capacity to provide the material deviations from molar arrangements. Put

differently, the creative forces of life, the inherent singularity, or asignifying force of what happens, that is, life-as-event, is the condition of possibility for the intensification of capitalism, as well as the potential for its anomalous becoming otherwise.

Another thing the film makes clear: the smallest event (e.g. the juxtaposition of two incongruous sets of images) contains the seeds for the proliferation of a series of difference. The minor, that is, materiality from the perspective of its deviation from molar abstractions, is simply what is. As such, it is always articulated with its own potential for reinvestment and proliferation. The trick is the capture of the force of the minor within itself (things can't just be schizophrenic) in a way that prevents its intensity from falling out, that is, becoming captured and codified by the abstract machine and brushed aside as unintelligible or murdered as a scapegoat (Massumi, 2002).

At the risk of globalizing rhetoric, it does seem to be preeminently about politics, about the pragmatic and necessary moves made by real folks given the abstract stratifications of molar and moralized life, and about studying those texts and discourses that suggest the lines of flight and apparatus of capture attempting to harness creation into their impossible grip. The question is not of struggling with the choke chain of molar political formations and majoritarian regimes of signification, but of tacking onto the pre-existing lines of flight that are imperceptible, real, and always occurring around us. I now enlist an analogy to summarize the point.

Beckett (1957) says that "habit is the ballast that chains the dog to his vomit" (cited in Massumi, 1999, p. 47). By analogy this phrase could be extended to act as a summary and conclusion to my argument. Habits are transpersonal sedimentations of

major modes of sense-making and as such are a primary organ of reterritorialization. The

dog is the minor potential inherent in every body (conceived of as broadly as possible) to

become-animal (which in no way involves mimesis), and vomit is the molar projection of

the impossible standard to which the nonhuman energy is linked, or rather, articulated

through a chain and the dog, separated from his force, is accountable for his action (bad

dog for getting sick!). Through this analogy, it becomes clear that people don't have

habits, contrarily, habits have people. Similarly, any political engagements must be at the

level of the transpersonal forces that articulate conservative reterritorializations to

specific bodies, individualizing them as culpable subjects. Such engagements, to restate

the point a final time, require a rhetorical method that, as Goankar argues, "recapitulates

[sic] the essential tension of rhetoric…by making visible its abstract rule-governed

structure in contingent and locally unstable time-space events, be they texts or

performances" (p. 331).

      In this thesis I have aspired to rethink the materiality of rhetoric in a minor key. I

have reviewed poststructural and psychoanalytic endeavors to position rhetoric from

within the postmodern and poststructural critique of the subject. I have attempted to

move beyond the logic of influence (dependent on a flawed conception of object) and

hermeneutics (the correspondingly flawed methodology). In this endeavor I have

primarily enlisted Deleuze and Guattari (1987) for a conceptual apparatus that enlivens

the "thinness" of rhetoric's (neo)Aristotelian conceptual design (cf. Goankar, 1997a,

1997b). I offered *Monster* (2003) as a case study, analyzing the discursive expression of

nondiscursive abstract machines to draw out the reterritorializations of the later.

Recognizing the impossibility of complete reterritorialization I have mapped out one attempt to reinvest difference in itself, *Dancer in the Dark* (2000). Finally, in this epilogue I have provided a brief recapitulation of minor politics, and offered a brief summarization of the utility of rhetoric.

Some further research is implied in my work that I would like to address. First, a Deleuzian read of Kenneth Burke could be of paramount importance; my work on the relationship between the perspective by incongruity and minor politics signals the potential for a productive intervention. Second, I have attempted to foreground the material without giving an extended discussion of the ontological characteristic of its eventfulness that gives new vision to materiality, encumbered as it is with the reductivist doctrines. Further research is needed into the ontogenetic properties of matter-energy as event; it will be crucial to any attempt at a Deleuzian inspired communist version of rhetoric to understand the physical mutability of repetition; Delanda's (2000) work is exemplary in this direction. Third, further research is needed into the history of the material-as-concept as a discrete formation within the field of rhetoric. On a related note, research is also needed into the abstract machine of masculinity ordering a binary series of concepts that provide the structure of our discipline. Norton's (1997) work with Irigaray is extremely important in this respect. My attempt here to considering the material as, at once, molar and molecular, major and minor, is one minor attempt to follow her lead. From a political perspective, more work is needed to disclose the hypocrisy, danger, and consequences of the myth of tolerance and multiculturalism that structures so much of our current pop cultural milieu in the U.S. Finally, rhetorician's

would do well to work around the going assumption that the cyborg, as the human-machine assemblage, is something unique to the 21st century. This thesis has made it clear that the organic-inorganic machinic assemblage is a virtual arrangement; desire, affect, matter are not spontaneous a priori foundations, but always exist in milieu, stratified by the mode of production and one regime of signs or another. As such actual prosthetic devices put us on the wrong track of understanding the immanence of our virtual organic and inorganic activity.

It is no secret (or accident) that rhetoric has become decentered in my work. Rather than preserve a strict identity for rhetoric (rhetoric is this or rhetoric is that), the luxury afforded by my relatively deterritorialized position within the field (an underpaid teaching assistant) allows me a certain ambivalence about the preservation of disciplinary identity based on conceptual fidelity. This is a virtue to a communist rhetoric that seeks to destroy the conditions of its own possibility; that seeks, to paraphrase Foucault, to have done with the face. Finally, the process of decentering is promiscuous, and Deleuze and Guattari are no less a victim to material drift. The opportunity afforded by a complex interaction between their work and rhetoric far outweighs the security provided by a strict interpretation of their philosophy.

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