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Tactical Encounters:Material Rhetoric and the Politics of Tactical Media

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TACTICAL ENCOUNTERS: MATERIAL RHETORIC AND THE POLITICS OF
TACTICAL MEDIA

by

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to two people. First, I dedicate these pages to Justine Wells, whose keen eye and ear have influenced their content and form immeasurably, and whose spirit, passion, generosity, and companionship have brought their author a greater level of happiness than he had imagined possible.

I also dedicate these pages to my mother, Donna Stagliano, who has taught me everything, and to whom I owe everything.

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I would like, first, to acknowledge the tireless guidance of my committee, Mindy Fenske, Byron Hawk, Mark Cooper, and Christine Harold, without which the present pages would remain an unmolded lump of ideas. Without their inspiring, incisive questions and comments, the work here would not have taken as clear and precise a direction, and if there is anything of value in what follows, that owes much to their conceptual brush-clearing. I thank Pat Gehrke for his comments on an early draft of the materials forming Chapter 2. I also must thank Pat for something more important. In the five years I have been at the University of South Carolina, Pat has demonstrated a generosity of time and energy that is unparalleled, and which serves as a constant reminder that intellectual labor is a collective effort. In the many courses and conversations I have had over the years with John Muckelbauer, I have been challenged and pushed forward in my thinking in multiple directions that will continue to resonate and return for years to come. Put simply, Muckelbauer's influence is stamped on every page of this document. I must also return here to Byron Hawk and Mindy Fenske, both of whose friendship, kindness, humor, and compassion I will continue to learn and grow from well into the future.

ABSTRACT

Tactical Encounters: Material Rhetoric and the Politics of Tactical Media articulates the concept of material rhetorical tactics, discrete rhetorical moves effecting political and social change, however ephemeral. I argue that *material* rhetorical tactics do not necessarily originate or conclude with a human subject, and that to understand this, we must reorient our conceptions of rhetorical action, agency, and, ultimately, its relationship to the *demos*, to include actions, actors, agents, and events that are not, in themselves, human. I build on recent work in rhetorical theory that has conceptualized the function and nature of rhetoric as involving agents human and nonhuman, linked together in ecologies that exceed intentional, human rhetorical “situations.” I argue that these ecologies still need a concept of rhetorical *tactics*, which I develop in this dissertation. To develop this concept, I analyze a media practice called “tactical media,” which is the use of media devices and systems for social and political change through hacking, altering, perverting, or redirecting their functions. This practice shows itself as a privileged site for this analysis, since it attempts to effect sociopolitical change by and through technical media. I develop a concept of material rhetorical tactics that implicates multiple materialities and forces, to model effective tactics once the role of human agency is reoriented.

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INTRODUCTION

Nine Eyes

It's not a question of asking whether the old or new system is harsher or more bearable, because there's a conflict in each between the ways they free and enslave us. . . . It's not a question of worrying or of hoping for the best, but of finding new weapons.

—Gilles Deleuze, “Postscript on Control Societies.”

A car is flipped on its hood, smashed down in the front, while several men stand around a flatbed tow truck studying the wreck. In the background is an apartment building, split down the middle in that unmistakable visual disjunction that Google Street View performs on the world, the stitched image—from nine cameras atop a car—never quite hiding all its seams. In another image, a group of masked police, machine guns slung over their shoulders, stares back at Google's cameras, while nearby a group of school children, who may be staring at the cameras, stand, their faces smudged and smeared by the Street View privacy features. Sometimes, people perform interactions with the Street View car, staging momentary performance pieces, to be recorded into the archive Google is making of our world's streets, routes, highways, and freeways. The images I describe here are part of Canadian artist Jon Rafman's Tumblr project *9 Eyes*, which catalogues the many very weird and often disturbing images he finds on random Google Street View map searches.¹ That project is a good image to begin this study with, as it reorients the

strange nexus of digitality, materiality, and vitality something as banal as Street View performs. But issues of power are never far away, as the masked police remind us. Meanwhile, the question is open about what manner of interactions, interventions, or methods for (political) invention with and within such materials are available.

This dissertation is about these forms of invention. More specifically, it is about the rhetorical *tactics* available in the material *encounters* in and through which such inventions take place. If tactics can be defined as inventive *misuse* of the things in the world, I claim that while *we* are inventively misusing the things in the world, there is some way that they are actively misusing each other as well. That claim suggests three key questions: What kind of tactical manipulation exists in the interactions, networks, assemblies, and the like, among the many nonhuman things that we make and the things they encounter? How could our worlds, and the possibility of their re-working, *depend* on these nonhuman tactics? And, if agency *cannot* be reduced to human action, *what do we do*, tactically, rhetorically, politically, in the world?

To answer these questions, I argue for a materialist understanding of rhetorical tactics, in which they are emergent from the encounters between different entities, evince ontological change, and are irreducible to human intent. I connect the claims of material rhetoric—that there is a constitutive rhetoricity in materiality that cannot be reduced to human control—to the practices of *tactical media*, an interventionist art practice, which has yet to be studied in the context of the material turn. This reveals new facets of rhetoric’s “vital” materiality and reframes what constitutes rhetoric’s publics, while also suggesting new ways to view what *kinds of things* count as rhetoric, as action, as *political intervention*. I argue that in the tactical interaction among many different matters, and

kinds of materiality, there is much rhetorical possibility. I argue, too, that the rhetorical tactics theorized here have an ontological character, they change what things *are* in their encounters. Finally, I argue that in recognizing this dimension of material, ontological rhetorical tactics, the possibilities for conducting interventions in the world are multiplied in unexpected ways. To build this argument, I analyze tactical media projects that consciously reorient media devices, machines, and systems, to effect political or social change, however micropolitical or disruptive it may be. These projects are explicitly rhetorical in the ordinary sense, that is, as symbolic manipulations aimed at effecting change in some particular audience, and can easily be analyzed as such.

But Rafman's *9 Eyes* project recalls another dimension that needs to be attended to: the weird, strange, and often uncanny encounters between materialities of different types. These encounters are where I locate the "tactical," and exactly where I look for different things to say about rhetorical materiality. Rafman's subtly appropriated archive performs one part of the functions I conceptualize here, in that redirecting and reorienting *how* Street View imagery is in the world, phenomenologically, it makes these images something else. This is to say that I do not want to understand the work done by the project as a "resignifying" gesture, or Situationist *detournement*.² It is not incorrect to analyze it in either of those ways, but that misses the elements I emphasize here. In revealing such projects as resignifying or "appropriating," the possibility of analyzing the kinds of material encounters involved recedes. I look at these encounters as moments of ontological change, and I locate within them a sense of rhetorical materiality that is as charged with political possibility as it is shot through with risk. That risky possibility is

their tactical dimension, the way that they may—successfully or unsuccessfully—*misuse* the other *things* they come up against.

Louis Althusser said it well in the fragments of his *Materialism of the Encounter*, when he said that “every encounter might not have taken place, although it did take place; but its possible nonexistence sheds light on the meaning of its aleatory being. And every encounter is aleatory in its effects, in that nothing in the elements of the encounter prefigures, before the actual encounter, the contours and determinations of the being that will emerge from it” (193). Althusser draws on the “swerve” or “clinamen” from Epicurus, to conceive of the “aleatory” materialism of the encounter. This swerve is how things happen, how things change, and how things come to be. A truly phenomenological strain exists in his encounter, and the many minor, material, and perhaps odd encounters that happen to something affect what it is. Rafman’s *9 Eyes* is not Google Street View; it cannot help you get to these places (not that, with many of them, you would want to). But it is made from an encounter with it, and in that encounter, something is tactically reoriented. Perhaps. It could have just as well not taken place, as Althusser reminds us. Or, as he also points out, it might not last, as “nothing guarantees that *the reality of the accomplished fact is the guarantee of its durability*” (174, emphasis in original). That is, when tactical media projects, say, hack cell phones, as in the Transborder Immigrant Tool, to provide aid to people entering the US through the California desert, there is such a tactical reorientation and encounter that is on a different register than the stated claim of the project’s authors to “help reduce the number of deaths along the border by developing a common cell phone device into a navigation tool that will help migrants locate life saving resources in the desert such as water caches and safety beacons.”³ That indeed

does happen. Or, at least it could, like the encounters at the level of materiality that I am looking at. But in any case, it *relates* to and through the enactment of encounters, and *interfaces* between other matters and things.

So the problem from which I move forward in this dissertation is twofold. First, there is an ordinary gap in knowledge that can be addressed by asking about the *material* rhetoricity of tactics. The answers that follow connect the claims of material rhetoric—that there is a constitutive rhetoricity in materiality that cannot be reduced to human control—to the practices of tactical media, which has yet to be studied in the context of the material turn. This will reveal new facets of rhetoric’s “vital” materiality. It will reframe what constitutes rhetoric’s publics, while also suggesting new ways to view what *kinds of things* might count as rhetoric, as action, as *political intervention*. The second fold of the problem, which I see as inseparably overlapping the first, is the question of action, noted above and which bears repeating. If agency *cannot* be reduced to human action, *what do we do*, tactically, rhetorically, politically, in the world? Given the conditions of life under neoliberalism, this is not an idle question. As I return to in detail in the final pages of this dissertation, my ultimate argument is that re-conceptualizing the tactical in this material way, and attending to the encounters through which it emerges is a means by which to begin answering that question and to find the “new weapons” Deleuze suggested were needed in his “Postscript on Control Societies.” As will become clear throughout the pages that follow, those weapons are not wielded only by human agents.

This dissertation unfolds in three movements. First, it will establish a posthuman, materialist sense of the “tactical,” in which not all participating “tacticians” nor their

tactical actions can easily be called (wholly) human. Second, it will analyze the material contours of the encounters through which entities unlike human subjects rhetorically, and tactically, affect each other. And third, it will examine the rhetorical nature of the event of the encounter itself, arguing that it, too, is shot through with absence, which is the key to understanding its rhetoricity. In the final chapter, these insights are directed at recent attempts to “remake” democratic participation.

Chapter 1, “The Material Rhetoric of Digital Resistance,” argues that material rhetorical tactics are discrete rhetorical moves within ambient rhetorical ecologies, which have been recently theorized to replace human-centered rhetorical situations. I begin there with a lengthy survey of the current state of “new materialist” inquiry, relating it to other materialist inquiry, orthodox Marxism in particular, and identify three particular strains in the “new materialist” mode of analysis that are useful for the present work to distinguish: an attention to *vitality*, an attention to *relationality*, and, through Science and Technology Studies, an attention to the *contingency* of materiality. In rhetorical studies, this important work in new materialist philosophies has in turn informed current theories of material rhetoric that have displaced the human subject as origin or destination of rhetoric’s movement, moving the force of things, objects, and affects moved from their role as background in the rhetorical situation to more active participants in rhetorical ecologies (Edbauer), assemblages (Hawk) and ambience (Rickert). Yet the tendency has nevertheless been to leave open the question of how things, people, objects, and so forth *encounter* each other and affect each other rhetorically in discrete rhetorical actions. I argue that material rhetorical *tactics* are what happens in these moments.

This will be established in Chapter 2, “Electronic Disturbances,” which considers at length the tactical media project “Transborder Immigrant Tool,” developed by the Electronic Disturbance Theater. I conduct my analysis of that project through considering Michel de Certeau’s concept of the tactics alongside the new materialist concepts surveyed in Chapter 1, to “retool” that concept for a posthumanist approach to rhetorical theory. The rhetorical tactics examined here show themselves to be emergent from within the material relationships linking media technologies, space, and power with human efforts and agency. Material rhetorical tactics, I argue, take a rhetorical form that is not only aimed at persuading policy changes but in persuading different connections to emerge between bodies, places, technologies, and affects. I conclude Chapter 2 by revisiting a notion that emerged out of the Transborder Immigrant Tool project, “geopoetics,” and compare it to my expanded notion of material rhetorical tactics.

Having established the retooled concept of tactics, I turn to the question of encounters. If, as I am arguing, entities irreducible to human subjects can rhetorically, and tactically pervert or reorient each other on encounter, then understanding the tactical and rhetorical nature of such materiality invites investigation of the nature of the encounter. Encounters are assumed in rhetorical theory, pedagogy, and practice, but are under studied. Chapter 3, called “Surface to Air,” will examine the emergence of material rhetorical tactics with a close eye to the encounters between things, through analysis of a project that intervenes into the problem of drones, “Anti-Drone Wear.” This simple intervention—a line of clothing treated with metalized coating to prevent body heat from communicating to the thermal sensors on drones—offers an excellent opportunity to study encounters in this way. My argument in Chapter 3 makes two key advances from

the preceding chapter's work. First, it adds detailed study of the encounter, and through which it argues that the *drone itself* is ontologically altered in its encounter with Anti-Drone Wear, and is enrolled into its own avoidance. And, second, it argues, that in encountering human bodies as objects, the encounter between drone and radiating human body heat, reminds us that human bodies are things too, and that Jane Bennett's "thing-power" discussed above, and in that chapter, applies to human bodies. This means that the conceptual orientation that asks us to attend to nonhuman agency and "vital" materiality in no way asks us to turn away from questions of human embodiment, but, rather, invites the reframing of those questions.

The third conceptual movement takes place in Chapter 4, called "Of other Archives." While the preceding chapters have all been careful not to assert a materiality of simply present objects that have rhetorical force in their bare facticity, this chapter argues that the encounter's own presence is displaced by absence and virtuality. In focusing this chapter on the archive, I center the difficult conceptual problem of material agencies that are not *simply* present. The archive is always haunted by absence, the past and the future, and material rhetorical tactics that emerge from it are not only there in a simple sense. In Walid Raad's invented media archive of the Lebanese Civil War, the "Atlas Group Archive," this haunting absence and the tactical encounter implicated with it describes material and political circumstances of great risk. Rhetorical notions of ambience and ecology are subtly reframed by this absence.

Chapter 5, "Making (Rhetoric) Do," synthesizes the arguments from the preceding chapters, with an eye to elaborating the relationship, and distinction, between my concept of material rhetorical tactics, and the canon of rhetorical invention, through a

brief survey of the three theoretical inquiries into invention most influential on my own thinking, Debra Hawhee's "invention-in-the-middle," John Muckelbauer's Deleuzian "future" of invention, and Peter Simonson's recent appeal for a concept of "inventional media." I then follow the implications of what I have argued for through a sketch of recent turns to "remake" political participation, in relationship to emerging media systems and practices. I suggest there that the concepts developed in the present analysis would be helpful to analyze the possibilities and limitations of "maker" culture approaches to politics.

NOTES

¹ <http://9-eyes.com/>

² The connections between tactical media and situationism may appear obvious. I am, however, bracketing this historical and conceptual continuity to emphasize the tactical and the ecological over the "situation" and the question of the spectacle, which was a central concern of Situationist thought and activity.

McKenzie Wark's books on the Situationist International, *The Beach beneath the Street* and *The Spectacle of Disintegration*, as well as the *Situationist International Anthology*, and Guy Debord's influential *Society of the Spectacle* would inform an argument that engaged more explicitly these relationships. Additionally, Claire Bishop's *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship*, connects a legacy of 20th century political art through the Situationists to the recent "social turn" in contemporary art. Though media art generally, and tactical media specifically, are excluded from Bishop's work, her trenchant criticisms of "social art," also known as "relational aesthetics," would inform a larger argument that connects a new materialist reading of the politics of tactical media to broader movements in aesthetic practices.

³ According to a promotional poster for the Transborder Immigrant Tool.

CHAPTER 1:
THE MATERIAL RHETORIC OF DIGITAL RESISTANCE

I begin with an outline of the contours of what I call “digital materiality,” and how it informs the present analysis. I do this in three movements. First, I will sketch the emergence of tactical media as a discrete activist and artistic practice. A close look at these projects *as rhetoric* can teach us much about some of the current contours of the relationship between rhetorical invention, artist invention (“creativity”), and knowledge production (“science,” “technology,” or even “philosophy”). But, as these projects perform some form of activism, I argue throughout this dissertation that the home of material political change is at that intersection between suasion and creation. And it is my bet that attending to the rhetorical tactics evident in material encounters is the way to ask and begin to answer this question. Second, I outline the emergence of material rhetoric as a disciplinary concern, to lay the conceptual foundations for the analyses that follow. Third, I think through some of the stakes, for this dissertation’s questions, of relating the “digital” and the “material.”

In recent decades, tactical media has proliferated, after first being conceptualized at the influential Next 5 Minutes conferences, held four times in Amsterdam between 1992 to 2003. Several other conferences, book-length studies, museum exhibitions, and direct political interventions have come in that time and since. By most accounts, tactical media objects are deployed as engaged, politicized interventions into contemporary

sociopolitical problems, such as barriers to political participation, the secrecy and permanent war associated with neoliberalism, and the biotechnologizing of life. Meanwhile, analyses and deployments of tactical media and related activist uses of media have often adopted a modification of the classical avant-garde position, in which a problematic status quo is disrupted or altered by the intentional political deployment of avant-garde aesthetic tactics. Thus, according to Rita Raley's definition, in her book-length academic study of the practice, tactical media "engage in a micropolitics of disruption, intervention, and education" (1). That is, they are tactical in their usefulness for existing political aims and goals, but the form of politics they enact is local and subversive, rather than party-driven and institutional. This understanding of media activism has been valuable in that it helps us study many real, material effects that result from the activist deployment of media, and the logics motivating them. In relating activist effects only to clear activist intent, however, this understanding causes us to take a too narrow view of activist effects, and to risk missing effects operating in and through the materiality of the media themselves and their moments of encounter with each other, the material surroundings in which they are deployed, in addition to their human users. In other words, to fully account for the rhetoric of tactical media, we need to frame away from a perspective on activism and politics that analyzes whether intended effects are produced, or, alternatively, if their underlying logics are flawed, and instead look to changes in the media themselves as materially enacting their rhetoric. As is evident in Raley's definition, tactical media cut across not only the usual disciplinary walls separating art practices from political activism and rhetoric, but also between those domains and the domain of knowledge production.¹

So, in one obvious sense, tactical media is already well understood as a material rhetorical practice, in that it relies on communicative objects, events, and devices that do not precisely map onto speech or writing, but which are designed with *explicit* rhetorical purpose in the traditional sense, aimed at affectively moving a human audience to different beliefs, values, and actions. Moreover, as a practice that emerges in the visual arts as much as political activist communities, it is a material rhetorical practice in that it relies on *affective* influence and exchange as much as (or more than) the communication of a suasive message. Keeping this in mind, though, this dissertation will zoom in on several tactical media projects to view material rhetorical relationships and exchanges that are not reducible to human intentions, thoughts, feelings, or values. This material rhetoric exists where there are interfaces between different materialities and objects related to, but not wholly governed by the activists/technicians/artists creating the tactical projects. In other words, I argue that the “tactical” in tactical media does not *necessarily* originate or conclude with human interests and intentions. Instead, there is a range of tactical interfaces between different materialities in all encounters with media (as with all materialities). I argue that there is a tactical encounter here that is not person to person, person to media object, but media object to media object (or other form of matter/thing/etc). The political, rhetorical, and social outcomes of these projects, in the domain between people or between people and the media objects is necessarily linked to this other order and depends on it in ways that are not reducible to the intentions of those circulating or using these projects. My aim is to suggest this range of projects as a way to view *tactical* and *political* interactions, exchanges, and relationships that are not examined in analyses that focus mainly on human communities and subjectivity.

Recent advances in the theory of rhetorical activity have moved past speaker and writer as autonomous subjects deploying self-present and unproblematic discourse toward intended goals and have, in turn, theorized rhetoric's ecologies and networks (Edbauer; Rickert), objects (Marback; Blair; Barnett), and things (Rickert again), while others have expanded theories of "public rhetoric" to include the influence and action of nonhuman agencies (Hawk; Rivers). I put these into play in a different way, and ask how things bump up against each other, whether we view them in ecologies, as objects in the withdrawal of their being, or as complex things gathering a world around them. The relationship between this register of rhetorical materiality and the register of human users and intents is ripe for specific analysis. I argue that in looking closely at the possible rhetorical and tactical dimensions of the interactions of non-human entities in these projects, we can open up new ways of viewing and imagining what political change is and what it does.

In this way, my project is connecting to the "new materialist" or "object oriented" developments currently emerging in rhetorical studies. I also, though, answer Jussi Parikka's call, in 2012, for media studies to develop a "thing theory" of media objects and processes of mediation.² In analyzing the ways that media at the level of materiality are inherently *oriented* and that there can, and do, emerge *tactical* reorientations of these in specific interfaces and encounters among them, I aim to participate in the rearticulation of the level, agent, site, and scale of rhetorical activity. When I say "orientations," I mean, as will be discussed below, that each thing appears *in some way*, and that way of appearing is its orientation, or leaning. A cell phone is not just a cell phone as inert object; depending on who (or what) it encounters, it is either an empowering, useful

thing, a thing that marks a constant, permanent tether to work, or a reassuring thing, allowing us to know our loved ones are reachable.³ But it also encounters and interfaces with signal towers and satellites, and appears to these in a particular way, one that can be altered. That is, these orientations are not fixed; there is no necessary relationship between a thing and how it appears: these orientations are unstable. They can be perverted, diverted, or converted and channeled into different tendencies. This triplet forms a bedrock part of my definition of the material rhetorical tactics I theorize here. The goal here, though, is to add more than just another plea for attention to rhetorical ecologies, objects, and things. I also want to rethink activist *tactics* at that level. Many of the artist, activist, or technician-driven projects analyzed here evidence a deep awareness of and concern about the material influence of media systems and objects. The explicit or implied intent in many of them, though, is to effect an alteration in what *people* think, do, or say when interacting with these media. My claim is that, meanwhile, there is another world of activity at work, which influences not only on the people interacting with the objects and materialities, but on each other too.

This domain of material rhetorical interaction is not isolated from the realm of human action, though. The tactical projects analyzed here show the many ways the material and human interface and how those interfaces influence what the media are, how they are used, how they relate to other objects, things, and people, and who uses them, why, and when. This is a rhetorical change, and not (only) an artistic one, since the outcome is ultimately similar, even if subtly, to the outcome of classical understandings of rhetoric: an altered sociopolitical world. In short, these works change and rearrange ways of being, doing, seeing and saying, in the way Jacques Rancière means in his

concept of the “distribution of the sensible,” which I will discuss more fully in the coming pages.⁴ This dissertation intervenes in the current possibilities for activist media art as *material*, “rhetorical things,” and will examine the complex ways that rhetorical materiality underwrites their political possibilities.

At the same time, I argue that the particular terrain of intervention for this class of activist media objects is what I call *digital* materiality. By *rhetorical* materiality, I mean a mode of understanding materiality as *itself* an agent of change. By *digital* materiality, I mean the deep imbrications between the material world now (cities, borders, public and private life, policing, war), and digital media. As noted below, since the rush of 1990s digital futurism manifestos, the sharp division between “the streets” and cyberspace has proven untenable. Moreover, the materiality of internet media has pressed itself more urgently into public consciousness. The media projects analyzed here all enact a qualitative change in the relationship among their constitutive elements, a change that affects the broader set of relations, or rhetorical ecology, from which they are emergent, and thus they enact their materiality *rhetorically*. In Rancière’s terms, they innovate ways of seeing, ways of saying, and ways of doing, innovations that by their very nature are political. This effect, the alterations of their digital, material, and sociopolitical sets of relations, is the material rhetoricity that they embody, because of its specifically sociopolitical consequences, however subtle or fugitive those consequences may sometimes be.

But I choose to analyze this domain of media for two other important reasons, one of which was hinted at above. First, by analyzing the rhetoricity of tactical media projects, both at the level of human affairs and the material encounters they effect, I am

explicitly rejecting the lingering preference for taking persuasive, public speech or writing as the domain of rhetoric. This distinction is no longer sustainable (if it ever was). The technologies and techniques of communication available at present complicate existing notions of rhetorical activity, and alter the very terrain of what is called thinking in the first place (see Flusser, *Writings*). This technological and communicative situation alone is enough to urge general attention to materiality in rhetoric, and specific attention to the materiality of media. A second reason, though, more deeply informs my selection of tactical media as examples *par excellence*. The domain of art practices has changed dramatically over the past four decades (at least), and its activities frequently overlap or coincide with those of traditional knowledge production and dissemination. This is especially true of the many tactical media projects analyzed here. For much of its history in the west, rhetoric had to fend off attack, especially when it was in the realm of the political, from those who wanted to hold the line between knowledge production on the one hand and the easily manipulable transmission of messages on the other. The activities of professional “artists” were not frequently part of this debate. This has much to do with the general bias toward language that has been with philosophy and rhetoric throughout their histories. If the current technologies of mediation and communication (and thus persuasion) do not always map onto language or serve as analogues of it, the specific activities of rhetoric now take different forms of symbol manipulations. The methods, forms, activities, and results of many of these tactical media projects are at once rhetorical and scientific, poetic and technical. As Vilém Flusser anticipated in the 1970s, the *form* of thought available now (the form of producing knowledge) is different from that of an historical moment enthralled with the linearity of written text.⁵ In moving my

analysis back and forth between the encounters enacted among these media systems and objects and the domain of creative/inventive tactical activity, I examine the ways that rhetoric's troubled (and troubling) relationship to knowledge has not vanished in an historical moment when the forms of thought and knowledge available exceed the logic of texts. But this in no way is meant to be a "visual rhetoric;" relating rhetorical invention, artistic invention, and knowledge production through the terrain of media art practices is not to demonstrate a visual dimension or visual logic in rhetoric. Instead, by analyzing how these forms of change relate and converge, through an analysis of the activity of the different materialities involved, I aim at deepening our understanding of rhetorical materiality. Whatever linguistic or visual symbolization is deployed rhetorically, it too would depend on the encounters between different things, objects, or networks.

Materialisms Old and New: The Changing Locus of (Rhetorical) Invention

In the preceding section, I introduced the material turn in rhetorical studies, to begin to build the conceptual foundations of this project's intervention, which will develop a "new" materialist, and posthumanist sense of the tactical. In this section, I relate the developments of "new materialist" theories that have been emerging across the humanities and social sciences. I do this in two ways. First, I will relate a classical Marxist analysis of technological change in neoliberalism, from David Harvey's *A Brief Introduction to Neoliberalism*, and distinguish its domain of analysis from that conducted here and by theorists of new materialism generally. Then I will survey the emerging

theories of new materialism, through mapping three main tendencies: vitalism; phenomenology; and the sociology of science.

There has been a rush of activity in the critical humanities, science studies, and social sciences around a cluster of concepts loosely bundled under the vague term “new materialism,” which, implicitly or expressly, is opposed to the limitations of existing materialist discourse. What, though, is the materialism that the new materialism is meant to replace? The briefest answer is, of course, Marxism and its descendants.

Take as an example of a Marxist analysis of contemporary political economy, David Harvey’s *Brief History of Neoliberalism*, a text that will prove helpful here in highlighting many of the contours of the global character of political problems that the “micropolitics” of tactical media is ultimately opposed to, even when they do not directly address the problem of neoliberalism (though many of the projects analyzed here in fact do). Germane to the subject here, in his discussion of technological change in neoliberalism, Harvey argues that there is a connection between “technological dynamism, instability, dissolution of social solidarities, environmental degradation, deindustrialization, rapid shifts in time-space relations, speculative bubbles, and the general tendency toward crisis formation,” because the “neoliberal theory of technological change relies upon the coercive powers of competition to drive” the movement of technological development. This ethic itself becomes a “fetish,” in which for every problem imaginable there is a technological solution. Furthermore, under this regime, “talented” inventors can “mobilize technological innovations to undermine dominant social relations and institutions,” and “even reshape common sense to their own pecuniary advantage” (68-69). Harvey in no way is meant here to stand in for all Marxist

and related forms of materialist analysis, but as a particularly perceptive and fundamentally useful performance of Marxism's main tenor and lens of analysis. There is no doubt in the passage quoted here that political change has a material character; ideas take the form of new technologies, new forms of capital, which then transform the material relations among *people* who then find their social institutions dissolved, and their livelihoods in jeopardy. At the level of global economy and the driving forces of the development of neoliberal ideology (the union of the freedom of the individual to the unfettered market, the transformation of all social relations into market relations), this appears to me to be precise and accurate. The interesting thing, for the purposes of this project, is the *kind* of materiality and material change that is presupposed here. What happens in technological development, happens, more or less, to one kind of matter, call it, say, the recalcitrant physicality of the world, and then circuits through human social relations which are determined by, and dependent on that world. Placing *all* political change, and all politically interesting understandings of matter at that level risks losing sight of the many different registers of and encounters among different matters that not only determine human subjectivity and political economy but also have other, more mysterious effects that nevertheless can circuit back through human projects, affecting them in unexpected ways. In other words, the agents of change, and the space for rhetorical action, is, in key respects, limited to the domain of institutions, and material conditions change at the level of the developmental movement of history. Micropolitical practices, biopolitics, or even Althusser's understanding of aleatory materiality are less emphasized here. We need Harvey's analysis, though, even if the developmental view of material, political, and social change ought to be questioned. What is needed is a

materialism that does not ignore these important insights, but adds to them sensitivity to materiality at different registers, and through different philosophical lenses, an understanding of materiality itself *acting* tactically.

New materialism as that alternative view roughly names a wide stream of thinking. And while many versions of it seem hostile to Marxist cultural and political analysis, other streams bear continuity with it. Moreover, there are different turns being made in the new materialism, beyond their relationship to Marxism. Much of new materialism is concerned with, on the one hand, working past the perceived limitations of conceiving a binary opposition between idealism and materialism, and, on the other, in redressing the logocentric excesses of recent social constructivist theories that reduce all materialities and actions to the operations of discourse. This is the trajectory of Diana Coole and Samantha Frost's 2010 edited volume *New Materialisms*, which concretizes (and pluralizes) the term new materialism, while identifying a genealogy of the new materialisms emphasizing complexity theory and phenomenology, attenuating the background of Marxism. Here I want to dig even deeper into the genealogy of "new" materialism, to suggest that there are three distinct conceptual trajectories to be found there, which are taken up by rhetorical studies, and which can inform the media materialism Parikka called for.

First, there is the *vitalist* philosophical tradition including Baruch Spinoza and Henri Bergson revived in the late 20th century by Gilles Deleuze.⁶ This trajectory sees materiality in terms of "assemblages," and "rhizomes," and "affectability" wherein bodies are affective in that they can affect other bodies and can themselves be affected. This affectability is expressive of a deep relationality, in which causality and agency are

distributed throughout an ecology. Second is the *phenomenological* tradition, especially the work of Martin Heidegger, whose work has been used to underwrite a recent interest in speculative realism or object-oriented ontology, first theorized in Graham Harman's two books on Heidegger and phenomenology, *Tool-Being* and *Guerrilla Metaphysics*. According to this perspective, there are specific characteristics of things, or objects, that elude their place in ecological or networked relations, and there is always something about objects, or things that is inaccessible, or "withdrawn" from relations in general and access to human consciousness in particular. And third is the project of *Science and Technology Studies* and its related *Actor-Network-Theory*, which over the past few decades, and through the work of ANT's main theorist Bruno Latour as well as Annemarie Mol, John Law, and others, articulates a social theory of relationality *and* the agency of objects. In short, the work associated with Latour and his colleagues aims at undermining in social theory, science, and social sciences a faith in human-centered agency, and develops a theory of agency and action in which humans (and their intentions) are "actants" among many others in complex, heterogeneous actor-networks. In any case, in all of these conceptual lineages, which rarely appear alone, there is a significant modification of the notion of agency and, thus, change, that is worth close analysis.

These, in short, are the three broad, interlacing conceptual trajectories in the new materialisms that feed material rhetoric today: a *vitalist* tradition represented most recently by Deleuze and his many interpreters; a *realist* turn most visibly represented by the "speculative" realists including Graham Harman, Levi Bryant, and Ian Bogost, and drawing from Heidegger's work; and finally, the project of *Science and Technology*

Studies. STS meanwhile draws together realist and vitalist strains (as well as others) aiming at a sociology of technology and scientific practice. Likewise, three main concepts have emerged in rhetorical studies to attend to the rhetorical agency of materiality. Rhetorical *ecologies* (or assemblages, or networks) have been theorized to attend to the relational and distributed character of rhetoric in material situations; these prioritize the rhetoricity of relations between entities. Rhetorical *objects* have been sketched to attend to the active agency of the physical and technical entities in rhetorical activity; these prioritize the rhetoricity of entities, over their relations. And, finally, rhetorical *things* have been theorized to attend to the ways a “thing” is both physical matter, object, and process of “gathering” or “disclosure,” an issue, concern, or way of relating to the world; these prioritize the relationship between an entity and its orientation. The rhetoricity of “things” will be what I devote the most energy to in this dissertation, and I will have many occasions to revisit their elusive definitions.

It needs to be emphasized here that there is no simple or direct correspondence between the theoretical lineages noted above and the rhetorical concepts. I am not trying to say that, for instance, vitalism in the new materialist thinking corresponds directly and only with, say, rhetorical ecologies. Nor am I suggesting that those who conceptualize, say, ecologies are not interested in objects or things, or vice versa. Instead, I am marking different emphases that have real conceptual consequences that are worth analyzing. I am suggesting that in tracking how contemporary material thinking appears in rhetorical theory, at different moments supporting different (if usually related) concepts, we can begin to tease out another way to read the political potential in materialist theory in rhetorical studies. While current trajectories in rhetorical theory have articulated well the

stakes of rhetorical things, objects, and ecologies, work remains to be done in examining how the materialities of these phenomena *act* rhetorically *and* politically. If we should accept an “ambience” that is rhetorical attunement (Rickert), or the viral economies circulating in rhetorical ecologies (Edbauer), it is still necessary to zoom in on local interfaces between different materialities, and the influence borne through and in those interfaces. These points of contact, these moments of encounter are the terrain of this dissertation. In articulating a tactical sense of influence at these levels, I am consciously connecting this rhetorical activity with the possibility for political change. But it is political change of a different stripe than periodic votes, deliberation, or legislative solutions to publicly debated problems.

In looking at new materialist ontologies here, I chart the itinerary of invention and influence at the level of the encounter, or interface, and ask how things, objects, or ecologies bear influence on human actors and each other. The *way* things or objects appear is *what they are* in these interactions. This manner or mode of appearing also has *influence*—that is, it itself is rhetorical. I also focus most of my attention on the ways materiality is open to perversion, diversion, or conversion, or, as in Sara Ahmed’s words, which are discussed below, reorientation or disorientation.

Materialist Questions Concerning Rhetorical Technology: Networks, Assemblages, and

Ecologies

In this section, I further elaborate the material turn in rhetorical theory, by focusing on the conceptual itinerary of *relationality* in recent materialist rhetorical theories, especially Jenny Edbauer’s and Thomas Rickert’s, which will help lay conceptual grounds for later

analyses of the way that matter is not *simply* present in rhetorical encounters. The ontological relationality of materiality is central to my reconceptualization of the concept of tactics.

On one view found in many of the various new materialisms, objects do not appear as discrete entities in the way materiality is usually understood in modern thought. Among the conceptual consequences of new materialist tendencies is an approach to matter, things, and objects from a perspective of relationality, which holds that entities are always in deep connection and mutual entailment with each other. Moreover, even what appear as discrete bodies themselves are shot through with microorganisms, different forces and rhythms of matter, thus revealing themselves to be simultaneously porous and opened upon an outside, while harboring within many different kinds of matter and relations. Thus, many who theorize contemporary materialist thinking conceptually emphasize networks, assemblages, or ecologies. Of course, networks and ecologies are themselves entities in the world, but they also serve as conceptual tools for understanding the relatedness of materiality. Conceptualizing networks and ecologies prioritizes a sense of relationality among entities that are connected along many vectors (some of which are emergent properties, and therefore elusive of quantification). Thus, a common articulation of the network or ecological sense is understanding the individual agent or event as a “node,” related to many others. Assemblages, on the other hand, are a bit different, in that instead of prioritizing what elements come together in making the relational situation or entity, the assemblage *itself* is prioritized and theorized. Nevertheless, in both cases, what was once understood to be discrete, say a rhetorical act of language use, is rethought through concepts of relationality.

This approach is best evident in the recent theoretical work of Jenny Edbauer and Thomas Rickert. Both prioritize a relational model of rhetoric, emphasizing an ecological understanding, while drawing on different conceptual trajectories. For Edbauer, Deleuze's work proves useful in articulating her conception of "rhetorical ecologies" to update Lloyd Bitzer's rhetorical situation. In Rickert's 2013 book *Ambient Rhetoric*, Heidegger's work is used to theorize the titular phenomenon, an explicitly ecological, environmental conception of rhetorical activity and materiality, which is keyed toward place and space. Meanwhile, both frame the urgency for their rethinking of rhetorical activity within the expansion of computational and digital new media, that is, within "network" culture. Thus, in some way, a digital or technical relationality is seen as model and impetus for a theory of relationality that is materialized and, at least in language choice, slightly naturalized. This relationship, between informatics and digitality on the one hand and the material world on the other will be analyzed at length in the next chapter. For now, I wish only to mark that the turn toward the *material* world in rhetorical studies (and, as with Jussi Parikka, in some branches of media studies) is occasioned by the advent of a *digital* world. Thus, while I am arguing that there is a discrete, emergent field of study within rhetorical studies that operates under the sign "material rhetoric," it is inherently bound up with and inseparable from "digital rhetoric." Within the material turn in rhetorical theory, even when it is concerned with ecologies involving many different kinds of matter, and even when it uses language drawn from the natural sciences and vitalist philosophies (as in the "ecologies," "environments," "viral intensities," etc. discussed below), the privileged concept is often the technological, informational, digital network. Material rhetoric, in short, is (*new*) *media rhetoric*.

Edbauer, in “Unframing Models of Public Distribution: From Rhetorical Situation to Rhetorical Ecologies,” theorizes what she calls a “rhetorical ecology” to replace the standard view of the rhetorical situation, dependent as that is on public speech as its form of change. Edbauer claims that part of her intention is to “add the dimensions of history and movement (back) into our visions/versions of rhetoric’s public situations, reclaiming rhetoric from artificially *elementary* frameworks” (9). In this ecological view of rhetorical activity, “place becomes a space of contacts, which are always changing and never discrete,” and “the contact between two people on a busy street is never simply a matter of these two bodies: rather these two bodies carry with them the traces of effects from whole fields of culture and social histories” (10). Accounting fully for its ecological and material nature, as Edbauer encourages, such a contact would also have to include in those “fields of culture and social histories” the street, the traffic, the buildings, the conceptual apparatus of the city, and so forth.

Borrowing a concept from Deleuze and Guattari’s *A Thousand Plateaus*, Edbauer argues that the rhetorical activities she means “operate within a viral economy.” The sense of the viral and the contagion, as Deleuze and Guattari describe it, is a “transversal communication between different lines,” which “scramble[s] the genealogical trees” (11; qtd. in Edbauer 14). The virus transfers DNA material between different, seemingly unrelated species—in Deleuze and Guattari’s image, baboons and domestic cats—creating an assemblage that is irreducible to the orderly hierarchy in “genealogies.” In other words, there are relationships among elements in an ecology, or an assemblage to use the Deleuzian term, that cannot be accounted for in the genealogical model. According to Edbauer, rhetoric, from this perspective, “is not *contained* by the elements

that comprise its rhetorical situation (exigence, rhetor, audience constraints).” Rather, “a rhetoric emerges already infected by the viral intensities that are swirling in the social field.” In such a rhetoric “what is shared among” its elements “is *not* the situation, but certain contagions and energies” (14, emphases in original). Thus, on Edbauer’s view, as we will see with Rickert, the interesting thing is *not* only or mainly the materiality of discrete entities and their effect on each other, but rather an economy of relations through which energies, forces, or intensities pass but which exceed the entities that they affect.

The fullest theorization of this relational understanding of rhetoric is Rickert’s *Ambient Rhetoric*, a large, wide-ranging book that touches on much, if not all, of the current territory in material rhetorical theory. Therefore, I will have opportunity to return to this book when discussing rhetorical objects and, especially, rhetorical things. But the main point of Rickert’s argument is to articulate the way in which rhetoric functions in an “ambient” environment now, and that we need to think of material relationality if we are to theorize the agency of rhetoric, either in its traditional symbolicity, or in the agency of objects and things. Ambience, for Rickert, is a technical term, and describes the distribution of agency and action as “emplaced” and “enworlded.” Drawing on Heidegger’s phenomenology, the object-oriented school of new materialism, and the branches of cognitive neuroscience that study embodied cognition, Rickert’s view on ambience is that intent, agency, and action can no longer be restrictively housed within the human head, that whatever we do takes place within, and as emergent from, an active, vibrant, dynamic environment. Rhetorical activity and agency, then, cannot simply be wielded by a public speaker or writer, who then aims at moving an audience. Too many other factors and emergent properties are involved for us safely to make that claim now.

Rhetoricity, on Rickert's view here, is "the always ongoing disclosure of the world shifting our manner of being in that world so as to call for some response or action" (xii). In this way, the action of rhetoric is still "ours," still a project of human beings, but is emergent from complex material ecologies. Furthermore, the result of rhetorical actions is not, here, cognitive, as "rhetoric does not just change subjective states of mind," but also "transforms our fundamental disposition concerning how we are in the world, how we dwell" (xiii). Dwelling is another term that Rickert uses in a Heideggerian sense, and I will return to it below. But I will say here that what we see in dwelling, ambience, and this *ontological* sense of rhetoric, is that human being, and being itself is performed (disclosed) through a rhetorical process, and as such, Rickert argues that rhetoric is "world-transforming for individuals and groups immersed in vibrant, ecologically attuned environments" (xv). Rhetoric, in short, is not persuasive speech or writing. Those are indeed rhetorical in their movements, but rhetoric exceeds them, and it appears here as a term for the general movement of influence and change, which takes place in a relational, ambient environment.

In his chapter on *chora*, however, Rickert shows that it is not possible to describe conclusively this ambient environment, and taxonomize its properties. In a close analysis of the term *chora* from Plato's use to Julia Kristeva's, Jacques Derrida's and Gregory Ulmer's, Rickert shows that the inventive movement of material rhetoric, its "choric" properties, is ever emergent, and is itself the altering force that changes what is involved in the process of change as it happens. So, in this way, the environment that ambience describes here is not *simply* present matter that can be objectively determined, and then accounted for in future speech or writing situations. Rather, it is itself a rhetorical process

as much as it is an existing background. To study rhetoric's materiality in this way is to let go of rhetorical analysis or criticism (or strategies) that depend on the commonplaces, and accept the presence of an indeterminable, emergent dimension in the movement of rhetoric, even in its material forms.

In his subsequent chapter on *kairos*, he clearly defines the stakes of making such a move. "It is misleading to suggest," Rickert argues, "that a rhetor is subjectively responsible for an audience's reaction" to her discourse. But responsibility, a term here that Rickert questions, is not taken away from the rhetor. Instead, it is "dispersed throughout the situational environs, and the environs themselves are expanded to include formerly ignored or at least undertheorized variables" (82). We can still see, then, the possibility of identifying a problem, and circulating rhetorical discourse to influence an audience. We cannot, though, expect its success or failure to hinge solely on the individual speaker or writer's skill, nor, importantly, in the representative functions of the discourse itself, if we accept the dispersion of "responsibility" for (influence on) the effects on an audience, as the audience, according to Rickert, is "only one facet" of "the manner in which a skilled rhetor would respond to *kairos*" (ibid). *Kairos* here is both a fitting moment, the opportune time for rhetorical discourse, *and* a spatialized *opening* or gap in which that opportunity comes into being. What is important for my purposes here is not only the revised, and materialized, definition of technical terms like *kairos* or *chora*, but also the articulation of environmental, spatial, and relational characteristics of the function of rhetorical activity. These elements, moreover, in Rickert's book, are material in the literal sense; they are space, place, location, the *terroir* of wine, and so forth (ix). In this way, the human subject is displaced from its commanding location with

respect to theorizing rhetorical activity (90). And this opens the way toward theorizing the possibilities of rhetorical encounters between entities that are unlike human subjects, even as these indeed relate to human projects, problems, hopes, and failures. This is a move that, though he opens its path, Rickert does not make. Furthermore, while Rickert's relational, "ambient" rhetoric is important to my thinking in this dissertation, and I will not disagree with it (and will also make use of it in future chapters), this wide-view attention to materiality and relationality in their complex, emergent interactions does not, by itself, theorize the specific interactions between different kinds of materialities, the *interfaces* that I am after, through which the ambience of rhetorical activity in fact emerges. In other words, now that this important conceptual terrain has been mapped by Rickert, we need next to attend to specific moments and movements of interaction and encounter through which material rhetoricity is enacted. A close theoretical engagement with tactical media provides just that opportunity. Moreover, there is a subtly apolitical tone to his and Edbauer's work. By shifting my work into a more explicitly political domain—the activist practices embodied by tactical media—I open up conceptual and critical questions about material rhetoric that are not raised in their works.

Jane Bennett's work in *Vibrant Matter* is perhaps the best example of how the relational and ecological sense of materiality can be used in developing a materialist theory of political change in a different key from Marxism.⁷ In that work, she articulates a "vital materialism" which would undergird a reimagined political theory that does not depend on the agency, intentions, or actions of humans alone, but accounts for the "agency of assemblages," while placing change in a similar terrain to that which Rickert places it, as an emergent property of complex assemblages. Borrowing this use of the

term from Deleuze, Bennett defines the assemblage as the “contingent tableau” things form with each other, and through which “*objects* appear as *things*, that is, as vivid entities” exceeding human categories and concepts and “never entirely exhausted by their semiotics” (5). Bennett’s work of materialist political theory is explicitly developed through the vitalist tradition noted above, the chief recent proponent of which is Deleuze. Bennett’s Deleuzian politics is grounded in a notion of agency and materiality that undermines the subject/object distinction at the root of the modern tradition of democratic theory, as well as Marxist dialectical materialism. Materiality, for Bennett, is not merely the backdrop on which human political action takes place, either enabling or constraining the possible intentional choices humans can make in their political lives (xii). Instead, Bennett sees in her vital materialism a wide distribution of agency, in which human intentions participate, but are far from the primary agents of political life.

Object Disorientations

Not all new materialist ontologies prioritize relationality, though. In this section, I will trace the contours of theories of materiality that prioritize the *object* in its resistance and “withdrawal” from relations. This survey first moves through some of the key claims of Object Oriented Ontology, especially as elaborated in Graham Harman’s and Ian Bogost’s respective works. According to the “object oriented ontology” school of contemporary philosophy, first developed by Graham Harman, there is always something about an object that is withdrawn from or inaccessible to all relations. There is something *specific* about each object that does not enter into relations nor is determined by them. This withdrawn characteristic of each object funds both a “speculative realism” and an

Object-Oriented Ontology.⁸ Next, I turn to Sara Ahmed's work as a corrective to some limitations in the object oriented approach.

The "speculative" realism that Harman's Object Oriented Ontology (called OOO, henceforth) presents is opposed to "naïve" realism, which would simply take objects as brute matter and suggest that there is nothing to say about them. The speculative realist position is that there is much to say, but there is also much that, because it is withdrawn from human access, cannot be brought into representation and relations. This realism, then, continues efforts to restore agency and activity to matter while avoiding doing so through anthropocentrism. At the same time, the withdrawal of certain aspects of objects from human interpretation necessitates the speculative aspect of this ontology. If we assume that objects interact with each other in a way that is inaccessible to human cognition, but which nevertheless bears influence in the world, then we cannot simply fall back onto calling that the mysterious realm of *noumena* and leave it at that. Such a speculative philosophy, according to Ian Bogost and Harman, has to operate with and through metaphors.⁹ Thus, even in its own realm, object-oriented philosophy is *rhetorical*. But I argue that accepting, as Sara Ahmed does, orientation as a key concept, and the encounter, as Althusser does, we have the grounds for a politically charged version of material rhetoric, one in which objects, through the right encounters, can tactically alter their orientations, and ripple outward in their effects. This is not precisely endorsed by the Object Oriented philosophers, whose ontological work is often posed as if it is apolitical.¹⁰

Though, as noted above, Graham Harman was the first to articulate OOO, I am going to focus here on Ian Bogost's articulation in his recent book *Alien Phenomenology*.

I turn to Bogost for at least two reasons. First, Bogost as a media scholar and video game programmer and critic, runs his object-oriented philosophy explicitly through examples of and questions about digital media and computation. Second, Bogost innovates alternative practices for philosophy, “ontography” (a term he gets from Harman), and “carpentry,” that I will transform and make use of in this project. Ontography, according to Bogost, is a parallel activity to ontology, in that ontography can be mobilized as “a general inscriptive strategy, one that uncovers the repleteness of units [things] and their interobjectivity” (38).

Bogost and Harman both find humor and value in the uncommon term “ontography.” For Bogost, it serves as the practice of registering the world and activity of things that are not *directly* accessible to human apprehension (38). As Bogost notes, Latour’s and Harman’s propensities for lists is a form of ontography. The list marks off the surface existence of a world thick with things. But, it is not the only form of ontography. Bogost also describes visual ontographies, as well as games that are ontographic in their function. My addition of rhetorical to the front of it is to keep in clear view that the project of writing this kind of work is itself rhetorical, that it can never comfort itself into believing it is merely descriptive. Ontography, then, is inherently a rhetorical practice, whether it takes the form of a list, a dissertation, a game, a set of photographs, or a tactical media project. Also, though, I want to mark the different aspects of the encounters among things analyzed here from those analyzed or theorized in Bogost’s or Harman’s respective books. The features on the ontological landscape that I wish to highlight and describe are always those that bear influence, that alter, however ephemerally or subtly, the entities in which they come into contact. In his analysis of

Stephen Shore's photography as an ontography, Bogost highlights Shore's "unironic" "registration" of a world of "unseen things and relations" (48-49). The challenge I face here is to follow such an analysis, and show in an ontographic performance in this dissertation the rhetorical ontographic performance enacted by the tactical media projects analyzed here. In other words, I see in rhetorical ontography another term for the tactical encounters I study in these media projects. If, as Bogost and Harman have it, there is a whole world of activity and being that does not only exist for human subjects, then it follows that it also *registers* for these entities in some way that we can only access through metaphors. Even saying it "registers" is metaphoric. Nevertheless, the aim of relating the ontography performed in my writing to the ontography performed by the tactical media projects analyzed here, is one of grasping, if ever so fleetingly, a glimpse of that other reality. But, a *rhetorical* ontography differs in that its aim then is to show the suasions and influences that happen in that reality, and their effect on the one we inhabit, that has been the domain of rhetorical and political activity thus far. A rhetorical ontography, as performed here, is one that articulates and calls into being the tactical suasion between beings that are unlike people, but which in their effects on each other are not unrelated to (or free of the influence of) human projects and actions.

Rhetorical ontography will be one of the methods I employ in this dissertation. In other contexts, such as conferences and online journals, I would be tempted to open up this ontography beyond descriptive and analytic discourse, and deploy as well many of the mediated techniques used by the tactical media practitioners I look at here. This is, subtly, where I diverge from Bogost, in that I do not think that academic discourse *cannot* or *does not* perform "ontography," as if to preserve the wall between its form of being

and that to which it relates. Rather, I think the way of performing that work in academic discourse is unique to its form of being and how it relates to other beings. This, of course, is consistent with my basic claim that forms of being relate to each other *tactically* through the ways they are oriented in the world, and this is not only a matter for or of conscious, self-present intentions. But making that claim means that the kind of being that is closest in character to what humanism has imagined self-present intentions to be (the deployment of limpid non-fiction discourse), itself performs in that way, but through relations to other kinds of matter that are different from it is usually understood in a humanist frame.

Bogost's carpentry of philosophy, meanwhile, is an argument for a practice of generative, inventive philosophical labor that does not take the form of academic writing or commentary on academic texts. As I note below, there are contradictions in Bogost's book in his articulation of this project, but I view it as another way of describing the *tactical* in the tactical media. These projects often are explicitly developed within the horizon of knowledge production, and analyzing these aspects with Bogost's concepts in mind will illumine much that would not otherwise be visible. After detailing Bogost's articulation of the need for and stakes of object-oriented philosophy, I will briefly note some of the flaws in his articulation that are relevant for the present project. I will then turn to Sara Ahmed's phenomenology as an approach that can address some of the weaknesses in the OOO approach.

The target of the OOO school of thinking and its associated theory, speculative realism, is something they call "correlationism," the theory that the world and mind correspond in representation, that "the world is best characterized by the way it appears

to the self-conscious mind” (Bogost, 4). This correlational theory is attributed to the legacy of Kant, whose philosophy most perfectly designates, for Bogost and others, the correlationalist tradition of theorizing the world through human “access” (Bogost 4-5). The alternative they pose is a theory of things, objects, or stuff, of a reality that does not depend on the intending human subject. The interactions among many different things and different *kinds of* things would be as valuable and *real* as the interactions between these and humans, or those interactions that can be shown to bear on human affairs. These things, then, would be seen to come into and disappear from being with or without human apprehension. Being in this regard would not be the special province of humans or those things that matter for humans. This ontology is called a “flat” or “tiny” ontology, where the specialness and centrality of the human (intending consciousness) is displaced from its throne, and forced to share rule with the whole world of things.

Where I disagree with Bogost and others on “correlationism” is that they take their alternative to be dissolving the question of a mind-independent world, when if we take seriously the insights of Heidegger and other phenomenologists (as well as contemporary feminist theory), it is the notion of a world-independent mind that needs to be dissolved. Reason and cognition are hardly all that constitutes what it means to be human; that much is widely accepted in the humanities now, as is the work of embodiment theories and theories of gender. Where Bogost goes wrong is opposing to his “alien” phenomenology a notion of humanism that has long been discarded anyway. In other words, Bogost’s attempt to upend the specialness or centrality of the human species depends on his insistence on that specialness and, perversely, the constant return of that centrality. For instance, in his chapter on Carpentry, Bogost seeks to undermine

philosophical labor's dependence on the written word as its form, an aim that I agree with. His orientation in his book, though, reveals his acceptance of, indeed insistence on, a sharp distinction between nature and culture. But the value of his project, despite this flaw, is in troubling that distinction in the first place (90-91).

What is useful for my purposes in the concepts developed in the OOO school of thought is not a way to set aside human political problems as real issues to deal with, but the widespread belief that, as problems, they depend only on self-conscious, intending human actions for their constitution and solution. That is, believing that politics depends on people believing, thinking, reasoning, deliberating and creating and solving all their problems through those actions is itself what OOO and related theories help dissolve. What they add to existing theories of embodiment, I would hasten to argue, is that there is a tendency in those theories to imagine *human* bodies at the center of their philosophical dramas.¹¹ We can move them from the center, though, without removing politics from our storehouse of problems to analyze, or methods of analysis. When Bogost, for instance, worries that Latour is too human-centered in thinking of a *politics* involving things, he complains that it is an error not to flatten existence. But here he mixes two different philosophical projects without acknowledging it. At the bottom of page 7, Bogost argues that Latour's analysis "still serves the interests of human politics," while on page 8, in the same general complaint about those who get it all wrong, Bogost avers that

we need not discount human beings to adopt an object-oriented position—after all, we ourselves are of the world as much as musket buckshot and gypsum and

space shuttles. But we can no longer claim that our existence is special *as existence*.

This slippage recurs throughout Bogost's book. On the one hand, Bogost wants to insist that there is nothing special about human being. On the other, to demonstrate that, he builds walls around work that is too "human-centered" too far in service to "human politics" or draws bright lines between culture (words, textual production) and nature (the world), as he says here: "when we spend all of our time reading and writing words—or plotting to do so—we miss opportunities to visit the great outdoors" (90). So, in arguing that the human way of being in the world is *no different from* the way of being of buckshot, gypsum, or space shuttles, he demonstrates many different ways that human being *is* different. This is not to reject Bogost or his argument. In fact, I accept his main argument, and I think this contradiction, despite the seeming intents of these sentences, performs his main claim, which he summarizes thus: "in short, *all things equally exist, yet they do not exist equally*" (11). What his book demonstrates is that despite his own flattening of the variety and complexity of human being into one singular thing over and against a world of plenty, that there is rich varieties of ways of being in human being-in-the-world, as well as among the things of the world encountering each other (with or without human "access"). Expelling the world of human politics from the domain of ontological work does so only in buying the claim that Bogost rejects, that the domain of human affairs is isolatable from other kinds of being, that it is singularly stable in its *kind* of being, and that it relates to other kinds of being only through conscious, intending, representational "access" in the mind. And in subordinating the word "human" under the sign of Kant's subjectivity, Bogost undersells the resolutely anti-humanist, anti-

subjectivist philosophical project of Heidegger. That is, Dasein is not anything like Kant's subjectivity; the relationship of Dasein to world is not "correlationist" in the sense Bogost and his peers mean. Human, as a term, describes a wide variety of comportments and styles of being, many of which are part of the subjectivity theorized by modern philosophy, many of which, though, are not.

In other words, one thing that Bogost paradoxically gets and misses at the same time is that in the ontology he builds on, namely Heidegger's, the upshot is any being that is *is in some way*. That is the crux of Bogost's claim that all things are equally real but not real equally, as well as Harman's theory that objects, entities always interact within an "as-structure," disclosing some aspect of their being, but with others always in withdrawal.¹² By evacuating historicity and temporality from Heidegger (whose most widely cited book, of course, is called *Being and Time*), Bogost's version of OOO misses what it insists on, when dealing with how objects, or things, interact with people. Things—say, media objects—interact with people *as* historical entities inserted in relations of power and bearing that structure. To set that aside completely, to ignore how humans and objects reveal themselves to each other and at the same time withdraw from each other, Bogost needlessly amputates a large part of his project, in the avowed interest of overturning humanism. But despite them, this project can be connected to and mobilized in the interest of a material political analysis. To build that bridge, I turn to Sara Ahmed's phenomenology, which under the concept "orientation," elaborates the political stakes of that "as-structure," in the interactions between things and people. It will be my task to add to that an elaboration of the underlying material *rhetoric*.

While it is important to understand the general dynamic of disclosure and withdrawal, and to do so in a speculative ontology that does not assume all play of being *need* loop through the human world, there is a risk in Harman and Bogost in making it appear as though the dynamic play of being—withdrawal and disclosure—is the same everywhere, that the different ways beings disclose and withdraw is itself of no ontological importance. But this misses one of Heidegger’s main conceptual points. The way things disclose and withdraw *is* the play of being. Disclosure and withdrawal serve as conceptual tools to identify the reason that being is not itself an entity, *a* being. A pair of examples from Heidegger will be useful here, two examples that I will have occasion to draw on throughout this dissertation. In comparing how beings are arranged and disclosed in “Age of the World Picture,” as objects set over against a subject, to how they are arranged and disclosed in “The Question Concerning Technology,” as enframed standing-reserve, it becomes clear that the lesson is not withdrawal and disclosure *as such*, but that the specific dangers and affordances in *ways* of disclosure and withdrawal warrant analysis. Neglecting this side of Heidegger, as Harman does, cuts off an important, and large, element of his philosophical system, and tends toward a politically neutered reading.

But, if Heidegger is more useful than Harman makes him to be for an analysis *and intervention into* any given present moment, his work still risks making it seem like there is at any moment *a* way of encounter with being. In “Age of the World Picture,” that way of encounter is as a subject over against a world of objects in a picture, an encounter with the world *as* picture. In the moment of enframing, the objects recede even in their objecthood and appear as resources, as standing-reserve. Humans, too, Heidegger says,

appear as resources to be exploited, used up, and managed in the most efficient calculable way. Such conditions make possible a whole host of capitalistic abuses of humanity, the world, and other species. This strain in Heidegger's thinking is picked up by Rickert in *Ambient Rhetoric*, especially in his section on the case of Toronto Island, in which the residents of the island experienced it as a world in which they *dwelled* and the residents of Toronto city enframed it as standing reserve, to be exploited (254-61). I wish to add a couple wrinkles to Rickert's deployment of Heidegger in rhetorical theory. First, I want to take seriously Harman and Bogost's call to imagine the dynamics of being without human subjects, a move that Rickert accepts but does not enact in *Ambient Rhetoric*. Second, I want to argue that there are more local, more tactical maneuvers available to reorient or disorient the ways things are disclosed to each other. Rickert's version of rhetorical being is closer to Heidegger's spirit than I want to be, in that for him, Rickert, what is important is "how a particular object fits with other objects into a pattern of life, that is, the characteristics marking a particular culture or dwelling practices of a community" (23). This emphasis on the conditions of possibility for a being to appear in one way rather than another is important for many reasons. I wish to argue a different point, though, one that would analyze not how an object's appearance *fits* within a particular horizon of being, but in which its performance of being *reorients* or *disorients* itself or other beings in encounters with them. Rickert and I both see in Heideggerian phenomenology tools for a rhetorical understanding of being and for projects toward altering the disclosure of the world. My argument is directed toward the local, tactical encounters between beings, in which their rhetorical materiality is enacted. For that tactical, local dynamic of rhetorical being, I turn to Sara Ahmed.

In her contribution to the *New Materialisms* collection, Ahmed articulates the ways that “Orientations Matter” for bodies, objects, and things when they encounter each other. Since, as Ahmed argues, bodies are affected by the way they are “directed toward things,” then matter itself is “dynamic, unstable, contingent” (234). “Orientations affect,” Ahmed argues, “how subjects and objects materialize or come to take shape in the way that they do” (235). The project of her essay is to link a Marxist historical materialism to phenomenology to demonstrate that there is a history of laboring grooved into every oriented thing and body and that there is political action in “disorientation” or “reorientation” (253). Her analysis takes place through a reading of the many tables in philosophical writing. First is her extended reading of Husserl’s two-volume *Ideas*, in which he elaborates the phenomenological reduction by an analysis of his own writing table. Ahmed notices that the particular domestic orientations of Husserl’s table are bracketed away when it comes to be “the” table in Husserl’s analysis, that when “Husserl brings ‘the table’ to the front, the writing table disappears” (239). This dynamic of appearing and disappearing is also deeply important to Heidegger’s philosophy in general, and his thing theory in particular. For now, though, it is important to stay with its implications for Ahmed’s argument. The “background” that phenomenology depends on, Ahmed argues, can also have a temporal dimension, the history of laboring and shaping that formed the writing table. Husserl himself encountered the table with his own history, habits, and physical marks of toil in life. In the encounter, Ahmed argues, there have to be at least two entities that arrive and are brought forth. In this case, Husserl and the table. This encounter is a “co-incidence,” with Ahmed insisting on the hyphen, as without it “would turn shared arrival into chance.” But Husserl’s analysis alone, according to

Ahmed, does not attend to this historical background, the temporal dimension of the background. For phenomenology to account fully for the background, Ahmed says, it must give an account of “the conditions of emergence” of an entity (240). This account she finds in Marx.

She thus turns her attention to another philosophical table, the table in Marx’s *Capital*. There, Marx argues that the table is formed wood through labor, which “becomes value only in its congealed state” in the embodied form of the thing (qtd in Ahmed, 241). But rather than accept wholesale Marx’s distinction between use-value and commodity-value, Ahmed wants her deployment of Marx to keep our phenomenologies grounded in this history of labor, and prevent their disappearance into the “background.” The table’s story, she argues, would not just be its present, or in its “changing hands,” as she cites Igor Kopytoff, but “how things come to matter by taking shape through and in the labor of others” (243).

Writing tables, though, are not gender or politically neutral, and orientations are not simply about toward which kinds of objects our bodies are directed. Ahmed argues that writing tables *tend* to face and expect, are oriented toward male bodies, and this gendered sense of the writing scene shapes the orientation, the very physical composure, of the writing body, which in turn orients it toward the writing apparatus. Bodily orientations, which she notes in both Merleau-Ponty and Husserl were called “sedimented histories” are the “habitus” of Pierre Bourdieu, the “repetition of gestures, which is what gives bodies their dispositions or tendencies” (246). But, as the writer’s desk and room *tend* to be gendered masculine, Ahmed argues, orientations do not only shape bodies, but “they also affect how spaces take shape around certain bodies” (250). The writing table

“waits” for certain bodies, certain kinds of bodies, and Ahmed notes that Virginia Woolf’s *Room of One’s Own* marked a political act in merely occupying, in setting aside a writing space that awaited a feminine body (252). Meanwhile, class and race cannot be glossed over, as it is more often white middle- or upper-class women who can establish “rooms of their own” and women of color or working class women have to reorient working tables and spaces for different activities. Ahmed suggests this poignant fact in the very name of the women of color press, “The Kitchen Table.” “To use the table that supports domestic work to do political work,” Ahmed argues, “is a reorientation device” (253).

This political reorientation of how an object appears is what I will return to in the coming pages. It is a phenomenological ontology, which also addresses the shortcomings of less politically articulated phenomenologies, while providing conceptual tools I find the most useful and accurate for the projects I discuss here. If the common orientation of media objects, networks, and devices, means that they “await” (and simultaneously produce, as can be understood through Heidegger) certain kinds of bodies, certain kinds of encounters (and I will expand the notion of body here beyond where Ahmed is in this essay, to include other nonhuman entities), then *reorientations* of these media objects is itself a political act. Just as important, though, is the need to remember that this describes a material rhetoric. The material influence these orientations exert on bodies and other nonhuman entities is itself rhetorical, just as the acts of disorienting or reorienting them will prove to be. The intervention, then, is not a rhetorical one into operations that are not themselves rhetorical, but into rhetorical operations that are so sedimented that they recede into the background. As Ahmed makes clear, pulling the background forth makes

things not seen appear, and others disappear. The trick, of course, is to understand that there are myriad ways that this dynamic involves forces and materialities well beyond the control of consciousness, as well as rhetorically and politically significant encounters not primarily involving human bodies or intentions.

Such a view and approach is a corrective to a weakness in the OOO approach, as presented in Bogost's *Alien Phenomenology*. Rather than flatten out our ontologies and set aside how objects, things, or—in Bogost's terms, units—come into being, Ahmed's phenomenology reads their histories into their orientations, and with that the politics of their orientations. The encounters between entities in Ahmed's articulation not only take place with those orientations and histories, but also invite the (political) possibility of disorientation and reorientation. Moreover, on Ahmed's reading, being is not the same thing as presentness, and Ahmed is closer to the phenomenology of Heidegger when temporality and *orientation* are crucial features of an object's being. In this way, Ahmed's object orientation holds more potential for an analysis of the tactical encounters between media objects and media systems (as well as user's bodies) than unvarnished OOO does.

Despite Ahmed's attention to the way objects have their own orientations, as in the way the table awaits the writer's body, her study of material orientations still circuits *primarily* through human bodies. Her analysis, and its astute political insights, thus needs to be joined with an analysis of the orientations in materialities and the way things can tend to encounter each other. After an analysis of the difference between objects and things, which will throw much light on this problem in itself, I will discuss the way, through a brief reading of Althusser's late work, orientation is *within the thing*, and

functions as its swerve, putting it into contact, in Althusser's terms "encounter," with other objects, without necessary recourse to human bodies. Althusser's project there shares some characteristics with both the ecological view noted above and the object-oriented view just discussed. This reading will be followed by a closer look at the recent work of one of Althusser's former students, Jacques Rancière, who mobilizes a theory of political change that draws together many of the disparate threads seen here. Moreover, in emphasizing *only* the object's history as source of its orientation, Ahmed's view risks on the one hand reducing these entities to discrete objects, but which now are endowed with personal histories. On the other hand, the labor history of media objects is not the only vector along which they are oriented. Nevertheless, Ahmed's "orientations," with necessary modifications, is quite useful to the present project.

What's the Matter with (Rhetorical) Things?

Heidegger drew a sharp distinction between objects and things, and developed over the course of several works a robust analysis of the emergence of things. The language in at least one of these essays, "The Thing," is notoriously opaque, but setting aside for a moment what the "fourfold" might be and what its constituent characteristics are, Heidegger's notion of the thing is useful to turn to here. As noted above, in "Age of the World Picture," Heidegger critiques the representational mode of apprehending objects, and argues that what appears as an "object" of representation appears so only as a function of modern subjectivity, that holds the world and its objects as presented *to* a subject. The object can only exist as such, according to this argument, once humanity becomes "subjectum," and the world is presented as picture for the visual apprehension

of an “objective” observer (67). What this means, ontologically, for Heidegger, is that once the world is apprehended *as picture* for humans as subject, “[humanity] becomes the being upon which every being, in its way of being and its truth, is founded” (66-67). “Whenever we have a world picture,” he continues, “an essential decision occurs concerning beings as a whole” and the “being of beings is sought and found in the representedness of beings” (68). The ways things *can* be in the world, the way that they may appear to each other and us is restricted in this operation, Heidegger argues, in that *being* now corresponds only to being able to be represented “in the picture.” This line of argument appears, in different forms, in many of Heidegger’s texts, especially those dealing with “things.” In “Building, Dwelling, Thinking,” and “The Thing,” things for Heidegger are not *mere* objects precisely because they matter differently and are not presented *as* objects of observation. To say that they matter *subjectively* is to miss Heidegger’s point. They co-emerge with the humanity that they encounter, and it is a *kind* of human activity that is involved in the emergence of “things,” that precludes both “subject” and “object.”

Contrary to many common readings of Heidegger, in his work “being” is not something deep, hidden, or occulted behind or below phenomena as they appear. Being *is* the appearance.¹³ It is what happens, and only that. A metaphysics that holds being as a secret mystery misunderstands the important insight of developing a rhetorical theory of “things.” That insight is easily summarized, if it needs careful elaboration to gain purchase. A thing is an object *in its mode of appearing* otherwise than as mere object for theoretical or rational contemplation. A thing is not reducible to the brute facticity of material, nor does it disappear into its usefulness. This is an *ontological* claim for

Heidegger. The Seine *is* something else with the bridge across it.¹⁴ This difference is a resolutely qualitative one, even if the materiality of river without bridge is empirically different from the materiality of river plus bridge. Rickert glosses over this nuance in Heidegger, and emphasizes Heidegger's choice of things to analyze, when he claims that for Heidegger, "only certain things earn the label 'thing' (e.g., old farmhouses, jugs, peasant shoes, the bridge at Heidelberg), with the rest being mere *objects*" (23). But this misses the mark a bit, and reads off Heidegger's obvious preferences in examples, an essentializing move that need not be read there. Some things are "mere objects" in our world because that is *how they appear to us*. Suggesting that that for Heidegger "mere" objecthood is essential to, or *within* the object is to attribute to him a position that is repeatedly rejected throughout his work. Indeed, that rejection motivates the very "question of being" that was at the center of his entire career. Taylor Carman marks this distinction clearly when he writes, in the foreword to Heidegger's *Basic Writings*, "the way out of what Heidegger calls the 'danger' of technology is not simply to *undo* it, to break our machines and retreat into naive fantasies of preindustrial life," but, instead, to let "technical devices—airplanes, radios, computers—*be* the things they are, [to let] them shine radiantly *as* entities, as opposed to letting them sink into inconspicuousness and oblivion" (xv-xvi). What is important here is that a thing, like the orientations in Ahmed's articulation above, gives a view into the dynamics of being. And these dynamics are inherently rhetorical; they alter or influence other things they come into contact with. The encounter between entities is always a rhetorical one, in this way. The uptake of this view for understanding the material rhetoricity of tactical media art projects is that in reorienting, disorienting or otherwise altering the way the media's

materiality appears in the world, these projects appear as rhetorical *things* altered from their place in the web of everydayness. Letting them “shine forth” is not the same thing as taking their mere facticity or usefulness as given, but in perverting their ways of appearing, so that they do not “sink into” oblivion as mere tools of capitalistic enframing and exploitation. In articulating them this way, I am not arguing that they exist because they effect the changes imagined by the artists or technicians who make them. They may indeed fail to produce the intended effects (or what we suppose they were intended to do); they may not, though, fail to produce *any* effects. This is the rhetorical adventure of tactical media as phenomenological things. The question remains, though, as to the precise nature of the rhetorical *politics* entailed in such an adventure.

Bruno Latour, in “From Realpolitik to Dingpolitik” seemingly offers an answer, in that he argues, under the explicitly rhetorical sign of a “new eloquence,” for a return to the “things” that gather, as “matters of concern,” various publics who are joined and divided by such things. His Dingpolitik claims that mere, basic facticity is not there in the objective realm, and that we need to own the possibilities of a “parliament of things” in which reality and the matters that matter most are debated and argued about. This parliament does not form a “body politic” which resolves difference into unity and identity, but defers and displaces such appeals to unity, and only aims at the debatable and unstable process of conflict, once the “thing” has gathered its public around itself as a matter of concern. Latour’s parliament is a representational sort of parliament, in which matters are taken seriously, but in which the things do not seem to argue or make much direct claim on us. Their claims are merely gathering. The public that gathers is human. In a way, though, Latour’s view here is of a piece with the view of Alexander Galloway,

which will be discussed in detail in the next chapter, in that what he is calling a “thing” is viewed as a process, regardless of whatever materialist language he uses. In the next chapter, I will address the difficulties in choosing process over object, or vice versa.

For his part, Rickert parts company with Latour’s Dingpolitik, arguing that Latour “smuggles humanism back in” right when it is meant to be displaced:

We cannot simply and directly choose to dwell otherwise. A new attunement is necessary, one that will spring from preparatory work across the full range of human dwelling, and this attunement must ring the fourfold if it is to grip us sufficiently to awaken us. The valuation of nonhumans must stem from an ambient sensibility practiced in everyday comportment, not as an imposition on the world or an assignment of value, but as emergent through everyday disclosive practices. This is an ontological claim: affectability must itself be worldly; it must go beyond human doing. Latour’s representationalist parliament sneaks humanism back in precisely where it seemed to have been evacuated. The simple fact of inclusion is insufficient to grant things existential weight and import. There can be no simple revaluing without deeper transformations in our lived relations to the world in ways that in turn attune us differently to world, that is, that bring the world as world to us otherwise than it now is for us (239).

So, in a real sense, this section’s title is a serious question. The wavering valence of the word “matter” is taken as a profound political and rhetorical force of “things.” These things become things as *concerns*, *objects*, and *worries* at the same time that their corresponding material objects become central to the activities of the rhetorical and the political. They are not prostheses for human intention, nor mere enablers or barriers to

human agency and action, but are *things* in that they are at once material and concerning. They are things in that they disclose the world, and are the objects in the world. Things are important to emphasize and center focus on, because they are the site of emergence of different ways of appearing, different modes of disclosure.¹⁵

Insurgent Sensibilities: Chance, Contingency, and Politics

“Does thinking remain only a theoretical representation of Being and of man; or can we obtain from such knowledge directives that can be readily applied to our active lives?”

—Heidegger, “Letter on Humanism”

But, if we see in all of these new materialisms a diffusion and distribution of agency and the capacity for effecting and undergoing change, we also might see diminished hope in the usefulness of political *projects*. What good is it to aim at sociopolitical change, even of the material sort, even deploying such projects through and with nonhuman entities, such as media objects, if any possibility for change is to be understood as nonlocal, distributed, and emergent? If change is unpredictable, ongoing, ever-existent, what purpose is there in *trying* to change things? Isn't the aim of effecting change, in that case, misguided, since change is what is always happening? The task here is to try to describe such unpredictable events and activities *and* not treat the important task of politics as a game of chance. One productive way to attempt this, I argue, is to connect the posthumanist new materialisms described above with the political (and aesthetic) theory of Jacques Rancière, as his theory of change in the political realm offers potential for

filling in this gap. An obvious, but underexplored bridge between these two theoretical spaces is Louis Althusser, Rancière's teacher, mentor, and coauthor of his first major work (*Reading Capital*).¹⁶ Althusser's late work, during a period of great personal and mental turmoil and near total public silence, lends itself to renewed analysis. This analysis is already hinted at in Coole and Frost's introduction to their *New Materialisms*, even if the task, alas, is not taken up in that work. Althusser planned in the mid 1980s a full articulation of a "philosophy of the encounter," which he connected to his notion of "aleatory materialism." This necessary contingency, Althusser argues in the extant text of that work, is there in the history of philosophy, haunting and troubling the false distinction between the many materialisms and idealisms that populate its long timeline. Beginning with Epicurus and his raining atoms that only encounter due to a *clinamen*, a swerve, that happens by chance, Althusser develops a materiality of encounters that evacuates origin *and* destination, and preserves the primacy of chance. But, this aleatory philosophy is not apolitical. In his analysis of Machiavelli, who Althusser argues presents one of the early instances of aleatory materialism, he demonstrates that politics is in the necessity to "create the conditions for a swerve" (171), in which the encounter may happen. The encounter, though, may as well not happen, or even, and perhaps more troubling for political projects, may only last a moment. But this is not to empty out the *possibility* of encounters. In fact, it is to give concrete philosophical articulation to the way they *ever even happen*. Swerves, misdirections, evasions, and diversions along the path are paradoxically the only origin or destination there is.

Though Rancière's work does not circulate widely in the various new materialisms, Bennett, at least, sought to connect his theory of publics, which she argues

depends too much on human capacities and actions, to her vitalist materialism in political theory. In the last pages of *Vibrant Matter* Bennett links Rancière's theory of the public to John Dewey's to articulate the contours of a material public. Both Rancière's and Dewey's conceptions are lacking, Bennett argues, but connected together, and aligned with vitalist materialism, she argues their conceptions of publicness lend much to a democratic political theory rooted in vital materialism. But in emphasizing Rancière's thought as articulating a theory of the public, Bennett does not analyze in depth his theory of change. In distinction from Bennett, I turn to Rancière's distribution of sensibility for the moments of emergence of different agential capacities, even if I afford them to bodies and things that he surely would not. Such a closer look at Rancière's version of change is apt here for at least two reasons. First, his work has recently gained much traction in the Anglophone world, especially among activist arts practitioners who wish to inject their work with more political urgency, and among art historians debating the nature of the relationship between aesthetic objects and politics. What is more useful for me in looking at Rancière, however, is that, on his view, the political consequence of an particular aesthetic object is not to be found in what it does to the consciousness of its spectator, but in reorganizing the relationship between existing ways of seeing, doing, and acting that organize and constitute the social and political field of perception through which the possibility of action exists. This relationship is called the "distribution of the sensible," which Rancière first articulates in *Disagreement*. While Bennett takes this to be overly dependent on human capacities, I think it is worth pushing Rancière further into the materialist mode of thinking, and suggest that this distribution is always about the materialities, objects, things, and capacities and incapacities upon which human

capacities and intentions depend, even if Rancière is unwilling to go that far. In *Disagreement*, Rancière establishes his conceptual definitions of the terms “police” and “politics,” and argues that police, and *not* politics, is “the set of procedures whereby the aggregation and consent of collectivities is achieved, the organization of powers, the distribution of places and roles, and the systems for legitimizing this distribution” (28). Police is, thus, “first an order of bodies that defines the allocation of ways of doing, ways of being, and ways of saying, and sees that those bodies are assigned by name to a particular place and task” (29). Politics, however, is a break with the police order that Rancière claims is “manifest in a series of actions that reconfigure the space where parties, parts, or lack of parts have been defined.” In short, “Political activity is whatever shifts a body from the place assigned to it or changes a place’s destination” (30). The distribution of roles, and “parts,” that constitutes the “distribution of the sensible” always constitutes some sort of miscount, and there are those who “have no part” in the society, i.e., they are not politically or socially agents, as in the distribution of the sensible, what is actually *perceptible* within the society is determined. Those “who have no part” are not visible at all. A redistribution of roles and arrangements must take place for them to be seen and heard, for their speech to count as political speech and not merely noise. In this dissertation, I mobilize Rancière’s concepts of the political and the movement that redistributes “the sensible” along with the concepts drawn from the material and relational view of rhetoric, wherein the force of rhetoricity is distributed along connections within an heterogeneous network or “ecology,” wherein *qualitative* changes in perceptual techniques and technologies has activist potential. Where Rancière’s view is open for modification is attaching it to an articulation of a notion of *material* agency,

material politics, and *material* rhetoric. Different modes of disclosure, different ways that *things* appear, and, in their emergence, alter the world in which they appear. The sensibilities Rancière describes as changing in his political aesthetics, are themselves, if we are to connect his conception of change to new materialist thinking, *emergent* or, I will say, *insurgent* things.

Taken together, the concepts sketched here form the theoretical basis for the inquiry that follows, which will consider the possibilities of tactical encounters between things unlike human subjects having rhetorical and political effects that exceed, but relate to, the projects of human participants. Indeed, the “insurgent things” I will find encountering each other in the chapters that follow will exhibit the kind of rhetorical materiality through which they dis- and re-orient each other in their encounters. This is rhetoric on an ontological scale, like Rickert’s and Edbauer’s, but my analysis will consider the micropolitical possibilities in the encounters among such objects.

Each of the following chapters takes the media projects analyzed as opportunities to pose different questions about the relationships between media, rhetoric, materiality and politics. None of the chapters hopes or presumes to answer all of these questions. When I discuss in my analyses what these projects *do*, the important thing is that they *can* produce these effects, and by these means, not that they always or necessarily do. This is the gamble of understanding the movement of material politics in this way—that we have to accept that there are possible outcomes, and let go of the need to lock down or stabilize programmatically the means to political ends. Tactical media pioneers Critical Art Ensemble know this in their manifesto *Digital Resistance*, when they define “political action” as the “temporary or permanent redistribution or reconfiguration of power

relationships (material or semiotic),” rather than action resulting in a specifically intended, or desired outcome (note, 26). The analyses that follow here will not seat human actions as the only actions worth analyzing, nor situate them as the sole origins of the “political.”

NOTES

¹ See also *Digital Media and Democracy: Tactics in Hard Times*, Megan Boler, ed.

² Jussi Parikka, “New Materialism as Media Theory: Medianatures and Dirty Matter.” *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies*. 9.1 (2012): 95-100.

³ See Jonathan Crary’s recent book *24/7* for an excellent analysis of the boundlessness of labor enacted in and through new media devices and practices.

⁴ Jacques Rancière, *Disagreement*, Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2004.

⁵ “Line and Surface,” *Writings*, Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2002.

⁶ See Gilles Deleuze, *Bergsonism*; *Spinoza, Practical Philosophy*; and *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza*, for direct treatments of Bergson and Spinoza. For work that absorbs Bergsonist and Spinozist ideas, see also Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1* and *Cinema 2*, and the five books he co-authored with Félix Guattari. Of those, *Anti-Oedipus* and *Thousand Plateaus* will be discussed in the present work, throughout.

⁷ Though it is beyond the scope of the present argument, it is worth further consideration that Marx, in the sections of the *Grundrisse* that consider machinery, attributes a genuine vitality for the machine, suggesting that “it is the machine which possesses skill and strength in place of the worker, is itself the virtuoso, with a soul of its own in the mechanical laws acting through it,” and that it operates as “living (active) machinery,” that “confronts” the worker’s “individual, insignificant doings as a mighty organism” (279).

⁸ It’s worth noting that the term “object oriented” comes from computer programming languages.

⁹ Bogost, *Alien Phenomenology*; Harman, *Guerilla Metaphysics*.

¹⁰ See Alexander Galloway, “The Poverty of Philosophy” (*Critical Inquiry* 39.2, 2013) for an excellent critique of OOO’s claims at being apolitical, exposing an uninterrogated affinity in that work with contemporary digital capitalism.

¹¹ See Debra Hawhee’s excellent treatment of rhetoric and the human body, *Bodily Arts*, which itself argues that the cognitive, rational, thinking, and self-presently subjective definition of human is undermined by its constitutive relationship to the body. Her example is the *gymnasium* education of ancient Athens, in which rational arts, such as rhetoric, and bodily arts, such as wrestling and athletics, were taught together, and not conceptually separated as they are now. Thus, the mental, rational, or moral arts are not *embodied*, which presupposes their separateness from but insertion into the body. Instead, they are *bodily*, wholly of it and not separable. *Bodily Arts: Rhetoric and Athletics in Ancient Greece*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2004.

¹² Harman, *Tool-Being*; *Guerilla Metaphysics*.

¹³ Bogost makes this error when he separates being from way of being in his passing references to Heidegger. See page 4 and 24.

¹⁴ “Building, Dwelling, Thinking,” p. 356, *Basic Writings*.

¹⁵ Bruno Latour, “From *Realpolitik* to *Dingpolitik*.” *Making Things Public*. Eds. Bruno Latour and Peter Weibel. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2005.

¹⁶ *Reading Capital* was co-authored by Althusser and four of his students, Etienne Balibar, Roger Establet, Pierre Macherey, and Rancière, and published in France in 1965. The 1970 English translation, and later editions of it, contain only Althusser’s and Balibar’s contributions.

CHAPTER 2: ELECTRONIC DISTURBANCES

For those who enter the United States by foot, unauthorized, the journey has become a dangerous one. Since 1994's "Operation Gatekeeper," an INS program to stall immigrant foot traffic by increasing agent presence constructing a massive fence along the San Diego area border, the flow of immigrant foot traffic has shifted from the urban areas along the Pacific coast to the unpopulated and inhospitable deserts and mountains to the east. As Rita Raley reminds us in *Tactical Media*, since the construction of "the fourteen-mile San Diego–Tijuana border fence, highway deaths are no longer as common as they once were—the scene of death has shifted eastward to the deserts and mountain" (32). She relates that since the beginning of "Operation Gatekeeper" more than 3,500 people have died attempting to enter the United States (33). Anne Demo points toward a shift toward border enforcement and away from apprehension strategies starting with the Carter administration, and then accelerating under the Clinton administration, with programs like "Gatekeeper," at the San Diego area border, and "Operation Blockade," the initial program at El Paso that was the model for Gatekeeper (296). Border enforcement, a material manifestation of discourses of national sovereignty, was not equally applied to the southern and northern borders, however. In 1995, there were only 330 Border Patrol agents assigned full-time to the northern border, while there were 4,300 along the southwest border (Demo, 297).

This chapter examines the material rhetorical tactics of the Transborder Immigrant Tool, a tactical media art project designed to provide safe travel through the desert around the US/Mexico border. Recently developed by the Electronic Disturbance Theater/b.a.n.g¹Lab, in a project led by University of California at San Diego art professors Ricardo Dominguez and Brett Stalbaum, the tool is a standard Motorola i455 cell phone, modified to aid to those crossing the desert into the US. According to a promotional poster for the Transborder Tool, “the project’s main goal is to help reduce the number of deaths along the border by developing a common cell phone device into a navigation tool that will help migrants locate life saving resources in the desert such as water caches and safety beacons.” As a material, non-verbal form of rhetorical action, responding not to border policy or symbolism, but to the border apparatus itself, this project offers the chance to redeploy current developments in rhetorical theory that reimagine rhetorical situations in material ways.² I rethink the border apparatus as not *only* a resource for rhetorical symbolic invention, but as a material site with its own affordances that affect the inventions available.

I analyze the Transborder Tool project here for the tactical encounters that make up its possibilities, the ways in which contact between different matters and materialities subtly reorient what things are. What ways of being are available to a hacked cell phone aiding someone on a clandestine journey through the harsh desert along the US/Mexico border? In other words, in analyzing tactical media projects affecting the way media objects and place intersect or collide, I will situate the “tactical” and rhetorically material here in the encounter between the many *things* involved, and argue that, while these projects were very much deployed by human users, always involve human actors, and

are, at least at one level, aimed at solving *human* social and political problems, *what is interesting* happens in the tactical, rhetorical encounter between different things.

Moreover, as will become clear, even in the deployment by and involvement with human users, it is inaccurate to posit them at the origin of the movement of such encounters.³

In examining the Transborder Tool in this way, I also resituate the role of symbolicity within a chain of relations that links not just signs, subjects, and affects, but things, matters, places, and the like, arguing that its rhetorical and political effects are not to be found in explicit changes in policy, but in the innovations of new structures of relations, new subjectivities, and new ways of being in the world among the many elements—including nonhuman entities—that are part of its rhetorical ecology. Through rethinking the concept of the tactical in terms of materiality and ontology, I reorient that concept through my analysis of the Transborder Tool. I conclude by examining for this kind of rhetorical invention the utility of the concept “geopoetics,” coined by one of the Transborder Tool’s developers.

This chapter’s argument is threefold. It will argue that the ecological sense of “dwelling” deployed by Rickert into rhetorical theory can (and should) extend to the objects and things in such an ecology. We do not *only* dwell *with* or around these things, but they also have attunements, dwelling, and orientations of their own. Another aspect of the ecological argument will be analyzed with that, though. I will argue that viewing the rhetorical ecologies, the “ambience” in which rhetorical things are, as discrete, or at the other extreme, one global totality, obscures the porousness, the variation, the multiplicity of ecologies, of systems of relations in which such things can exist and encounter each other *at the same time*. The third part of my argument is in insisting on locating the

rhetoricity of things, of matter, in the hesitation, the confusion between process and thing, between object and event. In short, the media things analyzed here are rhetorical things that encounter each other in a political life that inheres not in a definable ambient environment, but crucially, at once in several; meanwhile, these encountering “things” are at once process and object, event of mediation, and object of interface. Their rhetorical power, their capacity to reattune each other, to reorient or disorient each other exists in that blurring.

As will become clear, these beings are not *simply present* in these encounters, and it is this complex, undecidable presence that at once entails the risk and rhetoricity of being. The task of the present chapter is to drill in on the level of the encounter between different things, to view the complex politics of rhetorical materiality in some of the most troubling, dangerous, risk-laden, or downright violent encounters between beings. *If* the matter at hand is one of the “dwelling” of beings, their attunements, their “compartments,” I want to suggest that we extend these terms to the nonhuman entities themselves, that is, that they have some orientation that comes with them into an encounter, a “trajectory,” in Certeau’s sense, through which there is no access to a zero degree of their being in mere facticity, in their mere *thereness*. *That* aspect of their being, their rhetorical being, is what is at risk in tactical encounters with other beings, and which is in play in micropolitical interventions with such beings. My aim here is to frame a sketch of *tactical encounters* between beings, as a movement of rhetorical materiality that is not captured by attention to “networks,” “assemblages” or “ambience.” In this tactical encounter, wherein beings can reorient or disorient each other, rhetorical being itself is *gambled*. In other words, being in the world differently entails untold risks, but, then

again, so does being in the ordinary way. *Affectability* in this way is a terrifying, horrible, perhaps even violent, thing. But it's all there is.

Encountering Thing and Process: "A New Kind of Togetherness"

One way to rethink the tactical affordances of encounters between cell phones and the border apparatus is to reimagine, in an affirmative sense, the encounters between entities like cell phones and satellites. Finn Brunton writes in a recent *Artforum* about the "accidental eroticism" of Shodan, a "search engine for devices" that "makes it possible to find and potentially access routers, webcams, traffic lights, VoIP phones, street lights" and more. While Google, Bing, and other search engines find websites through text-based searches for words and phrases, Shodan "trawls Internet Protocol addresses and then tries to connect with any responsive device on various ports," looking for *things* rather than texts. Through relating the unusual Shodan website to selected passages from JG Ballard, Brunton argues that "the technologies we fashion and adopt do not merely reinforce or disrupt economies or political systems: they make available new modes of experience, new ways of being and models of organization." Ballard suggested in a 1979 interview, Brunton relates, that the technologically mediated experience of being crowded into traffic jams or onto escalators is a "new kind of togetherness," itself the "togetherness of modern technology." Brunton argues that the eroticism of Shodan, its subtly pornographic machine gaze is—unlike the ersatz togetherness of Facebook, which "produces a shallow analogue of offline" relationships—such a new kind of togetherness. It is a togetherness, though, that does not primarily loop through *human* ways of being. "Many of the cameras," Brunton notes, "are recording other machines, other objects: parked cars in the rain, sensor panels, grids of LEDs in dark rooms, warehouse shelving,

closed doors of shatterproof glass.” Shodan, Brunton argues, “provides the most direct path into the diversity of ways of being around, with, and in devices,” and it is “the bluntest deployment of the new vocabulary of togetherness that we are assembling” with contemporary media technologies (137). This chapter will explore this new vocabulary, this *kind* of encounter, this “togetherness” that Brunton, through Ballard, suggests happens between these media devices—with or without us. But while Brunton says that our technologies do not *merely* “reinforce or disrupt” existing political situations, but alter ways of being, I want to argue that such alteration itself is politically charged.

Part of a vocabulary for rethinking the possibilities of a “new togetherness” affirming the actions of things unlike human subjects is the concept of “thing-power.” Political theorist Jane Bennett, briefly discussed in the previous chapter, argues for a “thing-power” of objects and “assemblages” that would alter the definition of and trajectory of what is called political action. On Bennett’s view, the move in politics to make now is no longer “demystification,” the strategy dominant from the Frankfurt School forward, but a recognition that human subjects are not the only beings endowed with political agency (xv). Meanwhile, the concept of assemblage, which she borrows from Deleuze and Guattari, cuts through the facticity of objects, and places their agency at once in their matter *and* in their relationality (5). An assemblage of many different things can be formed through the aleatory interactions among them. Bennett wants, however, to argue that the assemblage, while often involving human recognition, does not depend on it, nor does it originate there (5). Thus, matter is shot through with a constitutive *affectability*.

As discussed in the last chapter, rhetorical studies, long interested in affectability when it comes to the circulation of discourse has recently begun developing powerful conceptual tools for dealing with this constitutive affectability *as* a rhetorical phenomenon, as a mode of material *suasion*. Thus, the new kind of togetherness that Shodan demonstrates to Brunton is evidence of the deeply *rhetorical materiality* that exists within the things that are now coming together, with or without the active origination of human subjects. Rhetorical materiality, in this sense, is the way that things, assemblages, ecologies, and “ambient relations,” according to Thomas Rickert, constitutively *affect* each other, weaving what the world is. In Heidegger’s terms, that coming together is called worlding, and is at once process and object, materiality and event. Rickert, in *Ambient Rhetoric*, develops a phenomenological sense of rhetorical materiality, drawing on Heidegger, and describes rhetorical materiality as an ambient attunement, that is, a distributed, ecological, relational, and material phenomenon, populated with “things” (in Heidegger’s sense of the word) and places that “make claims on us,” expressing actual agency. Rickert’s phenomenological materialism, like Bennett’s theory, resists reducing materiality to simple presence, and locates “rhetorical being” in the complex web of relations, attunements (moods, orientations), and “withdrawal” that divide up and displace presence. In the Object Oriented Ontology of Graham Harman, itself a descendent of Heidegger, beings, things, never exhaust their being in any given relation, and “withdraw” some element from each relation, even as relations are the necessary process of worlding.⁴ A thing is *disclosed* in some way in a relation—this is the phenomenological sense of rhetorical being that Rickert is developing—but another way for that thing to *be* is withdrawn, held back, unavailable in this relation. The analysis

here, though, will push a different dynamic than withdrawal. Rhetorical being, the *way a thing is in the world*, I argue here, can be seen as at risk, and therefore potentially achieved, in local, material, and tactical encounters. Withdrawal, though an important concept for resisting simple empirical materiality, subtly obscures the dynamics of the encounter. It is from this modified perspective, taking seriously Rickert's phenomenological sense of rhetorical materiality, but setting aside an emphasis on withdrawal, that we can view the encounters between media things in all their tactical complexity.

It is worth recalling here at length a passage in Rickert's book, which was discussed in the previous chapter. In developing his notion of "rhetorical things," Rickert parts company with Latour's "Dingpolitik," arguing that Latour "smuggles humanism back in" right when it is meant to be displaced:

We cannot simply and directly choose to dwell otherwise. A new attunement is necessary, one that will spring from preparatory work across the full range of human dwelling, and this attunement must ring the fourfold if it is to grip us sufficiently to awaken us. The valuation of nonhumans must stem from an ambient sensibility practiced in everyday comportment, not as an imposition on the world or an assignment of value, but as emergent through everyday disclosive practices. This is an ontological claim: affectability must itself be worldly; it must go beyond human doing. Latour's representationalist parliament sneaks humanism back in precisely where it seemed to have been evacuated. The simple fact of inclusion is insufficient to grant things existential weight and import. There can be no simple revaluing without deeper transformations in our lived

relations to the world in ways that in turn attune us differently to world, that is, that bring the world as world to us otherwise than it now is for us (239).

It is that moment of altered disclosure, of changed dwelling—that Brunton wants to call new togetherness—that is worth analyzing a bit more closely. Many of Rickert’s key insights are embedded in this quote. First, the question of how *we* “dwell otherwise” unfolds throughout his lengthy study. It is, as he says, not simple or direct, but nevertheless quite urgently necessary, for we, in the calculative reasoning of western modernity, have done much to bring the entire planet to the brink of destruction, meanwhile, prosecuting untold horrors upon each other and other species. Rickert’s Heideggerian gamble is that with a different horizon of understanding, a different way of being *in the world*, which Rickert hangs on “valuation of nonhumans,” such disasters would, literally, be unthinkable, and therefore, would not happen (at least as *matters of course*). One challenge this view poses to the study and practice of micropolitical *tactical* intervention is that there does not seem to be much space for those. Despite its phenomenological rigor, there is not much *variety* in the ways things *are* in the world, given local circumstances, counter-movements, or chance encounters. The proposal Rickert suggests, meanwhile, in the “ambient sensibility” which is “emergent through everyday disclosive practices” resonates in once key sense with Michel de Certeau’s insights into the tactics of the “everyday,” which will be discussed below. The everyday, its places, spaces, practices, and events, is a terrain of multiple movements, the calculative reasoning, in Certeau’s terms “technocracy,” that both find troubling, as well as counter-movements that disclose beings differently. Rickert rightly points out that such changes as are needed cannot be chosen “simply or directly.”

What, then, are the tactics of the complex, indirect, insecure and risky path of different being? What risks of being are there in the path of “new attunement” that Rickert suggests? Or the heightened awareness to the “thing-power” of media that Jussi Parikka calls for, echoing Bennett’s political theory? I will articulate *tactical encounters* between beings as a movement of rhetorical materiality that is not yet theorized, to provide specific analyses of how attunements change and assemblages appear, alter, or disappear.

Mediating Thing and Process

Media theory is also beginning to see its questions in terms of things, and their relationship to processes. As Parikka puts it in a recent article titled “New Materialism as Media Theory,” the things theorized in new materialism can in one sense be viewed as already “mediatic phenomena,” and he identifies several related continua between matter and meaning, sign and object, what he calls “medianatures” to correspond with “mediacultures” (95-96). Doing media theory in light of the materiality of media means, Parikka, suggests, “we have to come up with elaborated ways to understand how perception, action, politics, meanings (and, well, non-meanings) are embedded not only in human and animal bodies, but also in much more ephemeral, but as real, things even non-solid things. Such real but weird materialities that do not necessarily bend to human eyes and ears are not only touchable objects, but also modulations of electrical, magnetic, and light energies, in which also power is nowadays embedded” (96). Likewise, in his book *What Is Media Archaeology*, Parikka develops a chapter-length study of the relationship between contemporary media theory and new materialism, through a close

analysis of Friedrich Kittler's work (63-89). In that chapter he details several ways that contemporary media theory has been invested in materiality and material processes, instead of hermeneutic analysis of media texts. More important for the purposes here, he argues in the "New Materialism" essay that "one of the biggest challenges for new materialism is to develop a media theory of things—and yet not only thing-powers, but process-power" (98).

For his part, Alexander Galloway, in *The Interface Effect*, also stresses a dynamic between thing and process in media. He claims that our relationship to the multiple screens in the world, what Vilém Flusser had called "significant surfaces," is an interaction with an "interface," a moment or process of transfer and contact, rather than, as Flusser's metaphor suggests, a reflective surface, bouncing this world back at us. Galloway argues that that in the tradition of media studies that includes McLuhan, Manovich, and Kittler, there is a "prioritization of the object over the middle," which leads to a "philosophy of media" that would "agglomerate difference into reified objects," instead of a "philosophy of mediation," which would "proliferate multiplicity" (17). Galloway claims that elevating "devices and apparatuses" over "practices of mediation" forfeits attention to "a middle—a compromise, a translation, a corruption, a revelation, a certainty, an infuriation, a touch, a flux," which itself is, according to Galloway, "not a medium, by virtue of not being a technical media device." So, while Parikka argues, from the perspective of new materialism, for an understanding of the continuity between thing and process in media, Galloway marks their tension, in his rethinking of "interface culture" (18). That phenomenological sense is more than mere theoretical flavor, but is where the contours of rhetorical materiality reside, that is the

way things affect and are affected by each other. I want to challenge, then, the possibility of making this conceptual choice between “object” and “process” and push Galloway’s interface into the material, relational, and “ambient” turn in the humanities and rhetorical studies now, and claim that the interface is itself environmentally embedded and distributed along several different surfaces and interfaces at once—that it is at once process and thing. But Galloway’s “translation,” “corruption,” and “infuriation,” are precisely the rhetorical and tactical risk of being in the encounter. This pivot is closer, as I read it, to Parikka’s call for a simultaneous thing-power and process-power in a new materialist media theory. On my view, though, that dual power is another term for rhetorical materiality, specific in this case to the materiality of media devices, objects, and the moments of interface with them, as rhetorical things.

To understand the specificity of this kind of change relative to the circumstances of digital materiality, I turn now to an analysis of Raley’s deployment of Critical Art Ensemble’s definition of tactical media as an ephemeral, insurgent practice, which takes place in the realm of cyberspace, leaving behind the “meatspace” of the streets, so important to the radical politics a generation before CAE’s emergence. When CAE declared the streets “dead capital” for the radical practice of tactical media, they mark a kind of ephemerality that is specific to the early stages of digital materiality. In the nearly two decades since their manifesto, things have not changed, only grown more intense. But the projects analyzed here will not be free of complicity with the political system as is. Instead, I want to ask which ways of being complicit are more or less interesting and promising.

Raley's book came at a moment when the practice of tactical media had stabilized, and better lent itself to the kind of analysis conducted in an academic monograph. For nearly two decades prior to that, tactical media was practiced with some contention over definitions, orientations, and which kinds of media were to be emphasized in tactical manipulation. Raley's book is a critical analysis of tactical media (and an excellent one at that), and the present work takes tactical media as especially pregnant examples of tactical encounters happening at the interface between different materialities, including human intentions, within the complex phenomena of digital culture. These tactical encounters relate, furthermore, to the activism that Raley's book studies, but are not mere functions of it.

The first of what turned out to be four Next 5 Minute conferences on Tactical Media took place in Amsterdam, in 1993, and the final one was held ten years later. Current websites dedicated to N5M and related tactical media web presences often refer to this first conference only as "the era before the web." Its conference theme, as related in Critical Art Ensemble's *Digital Resistance* was "Tactical Television," and it was only with the second N5M conference, in 1996, that the cluster of practices that came to be known as Tactical Media got that name, and its first working definition:

The term 'tactical media' refers to a critical usage and theorization of media practices that draw on all forms of old and new, both lucid and sophisticated media, for achieving a variety of specific noncommercial goals and pushing all kinds of potentially subversive political issues.

A year later, a Tactical Media manifesto, called "The ABC of Tactical Media" was published as the inaugural document, on the "Tactical Media Network" website. By

2009, the practice, now circulating under that name for more than a decade, got its first full academic treatise, Raley's *Tactical Media*. In that work, Raley articulates a performative "virtuosity" that tactical media projects enact, which she defines as political activity supplemental to other modes of political engagement in digital culture, "specifically refusal, destructivity, cyberactivism, and hacktivism" (25). Her terrain of analysis in *Tactical Media* is the orientation of these projects to political intentions and wider forms of social and political action, rather than the material orientations at the register of media materiality itself, and what tactical enactments might be found there.

I agree with Raley that tactical media engages in a "micropolitics of disruption, intervention, and education" (1), but it is the materiality of that micropolitics that I examine here. Likewise, I view CAE's phrase "dead capital" slightly more ironically than Raley's deployment of it at the beginning of her book, a deployment that helps frame its main argument. In accepting the sharp distinction made by CAE (in that particular moment) between "the network" (ephemeral circulation of digital information; "cyberspace") and "the streets" (the physical world, natural and built; "meatspace"), Raley's discussion obscures a complex range of interactions and contacts, and relations of power and domination, that not only inform current tactical appropriations of media technologies, but in some cases take this as their very terrain (1). In other words, the key difference between our approaches is this: I am a materialist, and Raley, if only subtly, is less so, and this difference underwrites the different keys of our respective analyses.

Take, for instance, her first chapter, "Border Hacks," which covers some of the same conceptual and actual territory, but not the same media projects as I do. Raley looks here at "border disturbance" projects, which "defamiliarize" the US/Mexico border and

its related objects and phenomena (31). One project in particular can stand as exemplary. DoEAT's (Department of Ecological Authoring Tactics) "hacking" of signs along California highways, which warn of crossing pedestrians who are usually understood as an undocumented family. In DoEAT's project, the "caution" at the top of the sign was replaced with "wanted," "now hiring," "no benefits," etc. Raley takes this intervention as one that would be "surprising" to highway drivers. According to Raley this act of Situationist detournement, of "resignifying art performance" as a performance "commented on the neoliberal economic policies that compel the forced movement of migrant labor" (32). I would not dispute the urgency for such a commentary, nor the likelihood that DoEAT's project intends it. Where my orientation differs from Raley's is in target and method of analysis. In short, I think that noting the social pedagogy of such a "comment" on neoliberalism is the place to begin analysis, not its destination. The activist work I wish to bring into view comes from how a qualitative rearrangement of perception, affect, and action might itself be, rather than engender, a form of change in the image's function. I claim the best way to analyze that is to scale in on the encounters, interactions and interfaces between the different materialities (including the human participants) involved in such a project. In other words, Raley takes the highway sign, though resignified, as the 'same' object, while the driver's, though "surprised," ways of perceiving it are also the same. Meanwhile, though she does gesture toward a larger set of material relations in which the driver and the sign are situated, Raley's analysis here, as in the rest of the book, oddly takes these things out of context to analyze them, as if the driver and the sign encounter each other in a textual vacuum.

Thus, there are limitations in Raley's approach for my uses. On the one hand, reading the relationship between media images/objects and political change only at the register she does obscures many of the very interweavings between media object and material situation that I address here. Meanwhile, in not interrogating the underlying claims the activist artists make about how their media relate to or effect public change, Raley's book risks merely claiming that in fact these media do what the artists want them to do, without analyzing the mechanisms by which changes in media images could relate to public change, nor the material possibilities that changes in media images are themselves public change. As helpful as it is, her analysis still depends on a modification of the avant-garde position familiar from much of the twentieth century. Aesthetic shock, disruption, and unfamiliarity effect some form of demystifying work. While I agree with the importance of these moves, of shock and disruption, I doubt that merely marking their presence effectively analyzes the way they effect political change, and what the form of that change might actually be. What I will argue is that in conceiving of political change in this way, we ignore the variety of ways that qualitative change in the aesthetic or perceptual regime at work in these media objects does activist work. This indeed may come along with the kind of activist work Raley discusses, but it is not theorized as such there.

Tactics and (Border) Matters

In *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Michel de Certeau famously distinguished strategies and tactics in the disciplinary societies contemporary with the book's composition. Strategies were the tools of the authorities, the ordering force that sought to rationalize,

discipline, and control. Tactics, on the other hand, were the tools of the individual—subtle subversions, perversions, or conversions of the spaces, places, and things of contemporary life.⁵ His book frames his analysis through a stunning synthesis of several theoretical trajectories, including psychoanalysis, speech act theory, and—most important for the present chapter—the history and concepts of rhetoric. Certeau’s analysis articulates a rhetorical *practice* in urban spaces that is explicitly *material*, that is, not looped through either speech or writing, in that it locates its objects in material practices, bodily comportments, the effects of space, place, and location on practices, and eschews ideological critique. The tactics he analyzes are a bodily, spatial, material form of enunciation, a simultaneous “use of” and “operation on” the spaces and places that had been strategically planned to make efficient sense by disciplinary society (33). Since his influential book was published in 1984, much work has been done to effect such tactics in “everyday life,” to effect changes in often deeply troubling sociopolitical situations. One extraordinarily vibrant area of such activity is tactical media, itself explicitly citing Certeau’s use of the term “tactical.” In their 2001 manifesto, *Digital Resistance*, last in an informal trilogy on tactical media practices, CAE remind us that the first Next 5 Minutes conference was on the theme of “tactical television,” and was called such because the “Dutch cultural theorists” who organized the event were inspired by Certeau’s book (4). But the term “television,” they found, was too limiting, and the next conference, in 1996, was on the broader topic of “tactical media,” which was meant inclusively, they write, but “the conversation was skewed toward electronic media,” meaning TV, radio, internet (5). The practices involved in tactical media—hacking, refashioning, resignifying—were all of a piece with the “everyday” resistances Certeau theorized in his book. One key

difference is clear though, the material encounters engendered by tactical media are more like the aleatory redrawing of a city's map, found in Certeau's famous chapter on "Walking in the City," than the worker, described in an earlier chapter, who consciously "steals time" from her employer by doing her own projects on the clock and on company equipment, even if, in *intended purpose*, tactical media is more like the worker's action (25). In other words, one challenge in analyzing tactical media in terms of its *thingly* character, and its "aleatory materialism," is disentangling the drift of its material movements from its *expressed* socio-political purpose. Raley, for instance, *reads* tactical media, thoroughly and thoughtfully, for the semiotics of its political efficacy.⁶ Another way of stating the challenge faced here is that it is now important to separate what tactical media *means* from what it *does*. Looking at such projects, we can learn much about the margins of *how* media objects and processes of mediation are active, material agents in the process of "worlding," that way of constituting the web of reality in which we live. Such limit tests suggest different trajectories of tactical avoidance, diversion, or perversion of the media systems so crucial for the maintenance of the status quo. The trick is to imagine, for the moment at least, that the intending artist, hacker, activist, or user, is not at the *origin* of the material rhetorical movement of what these media projects *do* or *how* they interact with other things.

The sense of the "tactical" found in Certeau offers a sense of embodied, enplaced, material rhetorical and political activity that is not obviated by Bennett's or Rickert's models, and in fact, complements them in key ways. But turning to the contemporary movements of new materialism, of which Rickert and Bennett are signal examples, corrects the *anthropocentrism* found both in Certeau and in the tactical media

practitioners and theorists inspired by him. Rather than dismiss this exciting, challenging terrain of material rhetorical practice, I suggest that it be taken as a privileged site for analyzing the materiality of the encounter, in all its tactical complexity. Meanwhile, it also opens up the *question* of mediation for material rhetorical theory. The moments of intervention that make up tactical media function as limit tests that help us see the conditions that make possible knowledge about and action within the political, and reveal to us the mutual implication of rhetoric and processes of mediation within them. If rhetorical theory, on one view, is a long helix of theorizing processes of mediation, then the contemporary twists, in and around the question of the material, embodiment, non-human agency, and emplacement, will profit from connection to similar twists in theories of media in the disciplines that study a field of activity and technology uneasily contained by that word.

What if the tactical—in Certeau’s sense of the word, that is of perverting, diverting, or converting the “uses” of spaces, places, and orders, opposed to “propriety” and calculative reasoning, the indeterminate trajectory that Certeau discusses (34)—is in play in such a way that it is not anterior *or* posterior to the actions of intending human bodies? What if, the relationships among the materialities in a rhetorical, tactical encounter, are themselves resistant to being localized, that resistance being Certeau’s key criterion for the tactical?⁷ To begin to answer these questions, I turn now to the Transborder Immigrant Tool, and its tactical response to the US/Mexico border.

While it seems clear that international borders generally are rhetorical in that they organize through related discourses and material phenomena how we think, feel, and act about and around them, the specific characteristics of the US/Mexico border invite

unique forms of rhetorical invention. Cutting through an inhospitable desert, the border is also heavily policed and one of the most scrutinized regions in American political discourse. On the south side of the border, drug cartel violence mars already precarious rural and urban communities. On the north side, politicians seek to gain rhetorical capital by exploiting the trope of invasion in describing the border as a bulwark against economic, social, and criminal ills. Considerable material resources are dedicated to transforming the desert around the abstract line separating the two countries into a visibly controlled terrain, while “Neoliberal market ideologies of liquid, free-flowing capital and open borders for commodities come up against new policing tactics to regulate the movements of people” (Raley, 32). Rhetorical studies on the border, such as Demo’s extensive engagement with questions around sovereignty, have often attempted to make sense of the rhetorical situations that produce the border. Demo’s work, for instance, on the relationship between conceptions of national sovereignty and the imagery of border produce a set of practices that normalize “a particular form of boundary-making as instrumental to contemporary statecraft” (293). The border apparatus, itself, in its current form, is not often theorized as a rhetorical situation inviting inventive responses. Thus, D. Robert DeChaine, in his editor’s introduction to the volume *Border Rhetorics*, argues that the rhetorical power of borders “does not issue from borders per se, but rather from specific persons who call upon the figure of the border in specific ways in order to do specific things.” The rhetorical power and symbolism of borders, DeChaine argues, is a potent “public *doxa*” that “informs cultural values, shapes public attitudes, and prescribes individual and collective actions” (2). The work that volumes like *Border Rhetorics* does is important since, as DeChaine himself points out, much of current work on borders

“assumes the existence of borders as static entities, as given objects to be examined for their effects on individuals and populations” (3). So, while the work DeChaine and his collaborators do is clearly important, it is worthwhile to reframe the border in yet another way, and ask after the possibility of it not being reduced *either* to pure symbolicity, dematerialized and entirely figural, *or* to mere facticity, a given material structure that *just is*, always effecting its force in the same way. Instead, I argue, any rhetorical response that seeks to alter or define the apparatus of the border, its general function in public discourse, or its effects on the communities who have to interact with it, will have to account for the complex interrelationships of its land, the material fact of the structures built and technologies deployed to police it, as well as the circulation of abstract concepts that coalesce to make the border *exist*.

This means that for whatever individuals or groups see the border *itself* as a situation into which they need to intervene, that situation cannot only be understood in the rationalistic sense of deliberative forms of social change or problem solving, nor can it be viewed as a situation obtaining solely between autonomous *human* subjects. Rather, the most pressing situations of the day press not only on human subjects and populations, but non-human agents and actors as well, and any human intervention into social and political problems will have to account for non-human components and agencies in the assemblage(s) making up those problems, including the human-made informational networks, material structures, natural environments, energies, flows, and so forth, that all trouble the expressly humanistic model of democratic change through deliberation. The border, taken as such a rhetorical situation, invites a complex, material form of non-verbal rhetorical response, which displaces human agency as the sole source of its

movement. It presents itself as a rhetorical *ecology* as Jenny Edbauer has theorized it, and one in which the rhetorical effects emerge in *ambient* relations among many entities, as Rickert has theorized such rhetorical relations.

A rhetorically inventive response to this exigency would need to respond not only to the national discourse of sovereignty, of identity, and legality, but to the very material realities of the border apparatus as it functions now. A rhetorical response to the *border*, then, is different from a response to border *policy* and would produce different rhetorical effects. One such response is the Transborder Immigrant Tool. The tool is equipped with a GPS compass, to guide its user through the desert to her destination, accomplishing this while providing the user with “tactile feedback,” which “frees” her “from [the] phone display interface,” permitting her to “concentrate on the surrounding environment.” Since many of the immigrants who might use the tool do not read Spanish or English and may be unfamiliar with mobile devices, the tool’s developers also simplified the cell phone’s menu. Dominguez notes, in an interview posted on the b.a.n.g. lab website, that “GPS itself does not require service and has free global coverage, courtesy of the United States government” (Bird), meaning the devices need not be activated as phones. This project, as would be expected, was not uncontroversial when it first became public knowledge, inviting scrutiny from newspapers, legislators, the president of the University of California system, and even Glenn Beck.⁸ While the controversy surrounding the Tool, and whether it subverts the law will not be a central theme of the investigation here, it will work in the background as this chapter unfolds, detailing the Tool as a different sort of response to a different sort of rhetorical situation. It is that difference, I would maintain, and not whether distributing the Tool breaks the law, which drove the short-

lived controversy that the Tool inspired. What makes the Tool and its rhetorical situation baffling to Beck and others who responded to it with confusion and frustration is that its rhetorical and political effects are not to be found in explicit changes in policy, but in the innovations of new structures of relations, new subjectivities, and new ways of being in the world among the many elements that are part of its rhetorical ecology. In this way, it is an innovative strategy of rhetorical activity. Critiques of the Tool, for the most part, missed the Tool's target, and saw it as a subversion of (naturalized) border policy and national sovereignty, rather than an intervention into a material rhetorical situation.

The rhetorical situation the Transborder Tool intervenes in is larger than the immediate need of providing safe travel through the desert, and evident here is a complex interrelationship between inventive strategies and tactics and political needs and effects, with, according to Dominguez, the inventive replacing the political. As Dominguez describes it, the Tool does more than merely guide people safely to water, and through the desert. Citing Donna Haraway's notion of the cyborg, he suggests that the intervention into the border staged by the Transborder Tool is considerably more complex. Part of the project, he states in the same interview noted above "is to call into question the northern cone's imaginary about who has priority and control of who can become a cyborg or 'trans' human – and immigrants are always presented as less-than-human and certainly not part of a community which is establishing and inventing new forms of life." Claiming that the Tool queers communication technology, he states:

This gesture dislocates the techno-political effect with aesthetic affects that become something other than code: a performative matrix that fractalizes and reverses the disorder of things with excessive transbodies acting from the inside-

out of those enforced borderless borders. These affects assemble new empirico-tran(s)cendental forms of multi-presence(s) incommensurable with the capitalist socius of the so called “immaterial” Empire. As the Zapatistas say, “we do not move at the speed of technology, but at the speed of dreams” – the heart of the trans-border-borg (Bird).

Though he claims aesthetic “affects” take the place of political “effects,” we will see throughout this analysis that the political is *effected* through those very affects, through the qualitative changes in the user’s experience with the Tool, the tool’s relationship to the apparatus of the border, the role GPS and communication technologies play in the transnational capitalism that, with NAFTA, has necessitated the border in its current form. The Tool, then, does not rhetorically intervene by appealing for a different course of policy, but intervenes in the relationships between elements in the rhetorical situation itself. These elements, and that situation, including the material border apparatus, the communication technologies embodied by the Tool (the Motorola i455), GPS, the modifications made to the device by EBT/b.a.n.g lab, the immigrant’s own body, nativist racist rhetorics, such as Glenn Beck’s, all come together to form a rhetorical situation, as will be discussed below, that looks more like an ecology than the rhetorical situation familiar from Lloyd Bitzer.

To accomplish its “aesthetic affects,” the tool is loaded with prerecorded poetry that the user may listen to on her journey. “Immigrants should not only be able to move safely, find water, and hear poetry,” Dominguez is quoted saying in a *Chronicle of Higher Education* article, “but they should also be able encounter the landscape in a way that American painters have approached the landscape: as a sublime object.” In the same

article, Amy Sara Carroll, the project's poet, claims the aim of her poems is "interrupting the aesthetic of hate and fear that dominates the debate about immigration" (Goldstein). What is interesting here is not necessarily the utility (or even the wisdom) of listening to recorded poetry during a clandestine, illegal journey through hostile desert, but the slippage in Dominguez and Carroll's statements between artistic creation and rhetorical invention. For many the project of changing a general mood and climate of "hate and fear" is a rhetorical project, and furthermore, many might call that climate a "rhetoric" of hate and fear. It is this overlapping relationship between artistic and rhetorical invention that we will return to at the very end of this chapter.

Dominguez, a former member of Critical Art Ensemble, calls his practice "artivism," and thus, the motives for rhetorical invention and artistic invention are, in practice, mixed together in his work. On a video posted on the b.a.n.g. Lab website, demonstrating the Transborder tool in use (going *into* Mexico), an off-camera voice which sounds like Dominguez's calls their practice (the tool?) a "geopoetic system" ("Transborder Tool Crosses into Mexico"). In this way, the Transborder Tool employs an unusual mode of rhetorical engagement, the provocative and suggestive "geopoetics," using inventional strategies from art practices toward rhetorical ends. But if the tool is not appealing for changes in policy on a large scale, and replaces political effects with aesthetic affects, we might ask this question: does the Transborder Tool *do* anything? Entailed in that question, though, is an understanding of what consequences and changes count as effective rhetorical activity, given the nature of the situation intervened into here, and what results may remain imperceptible if we hold to traditional understandings of what activities and situations are rhetorical.

Thus, it appears that the rhetorical situation the border presents is considerably more complex than would be accounted for in Lloyd Bitzer's well-known model. In rhetorical studies, the concept of the "situation" has undergone many productive transformations, beginning with Bitzer's articulation in the inaugural issue of *Philosophy & Rhetoric*, in which he mapped the many elements necessary for the emergence of rhetorical action. Bitzer argued that rhetoric is always "situational," that is, as suasive discourse, it is brought into being "in order to effect change" in situations (4). The rhetorical situation, according to Bitzer, is a "complex of persons, events, objects, and relations presenting an actual or potential exigence" (6). Prior to the invention of the rhetorical discourse, Bitzer writes, there are three characteristics of the situation: *exigence*, the need; the *audience* who need to be persuaded to change the situation; and *constraints* on their ability to be persuaded or make change (6). Bitzer's concept enabled rhetorical theory and criticism to analyze a wider range of elements in the moment of rhetorical action, while also opening the conceptual door for expanding theories of rhetoric beyond the action of intending human subjects, which in turn widens the possibilities of thinking *political* tactics that do not originate in intending human subjects.

Edbauer, in her "Unframing" article, discussed at length in the previous chapter, articulates a different version of the rhetorical situation, to augment Bitzer's, that imagines its elements not as discrete, autonomous entities, but as interconnected in "rhetorical ecologies," arguing that rhetorical activities "operate within a viral economy." The sense of the viral and the contagion, as Deleuze and Guattari describe it, is a "transversal communication between different lines," which "scramble[s] the genealogical trees" (11; qtd. in Edbauer 14). The virus transfers DNA material between

different species, creating a heterogeneous assemblage. In other words, there are relationships among elements in an ecology, or an assemblage to use the Deleuzian term, as noted in the preceding chapter, that cannot be accounted for in the genealogical model. According to Edbauer, rhetoric, from this perspective, “is not *contained* by the elements that comprise its rhetorical situation (exigence, rhetor, audience constraints). Rather, a rhetoric emerges already infected by the viral intensities that are swirling in the social field.” In such a rhetoric “what is shared among” its elements “is *not* the situation, but certain contagions and energies” (14, emphases in original). This conception of a contagious rhetoric of affective intensity emerging within an ecology, an assemblage, is clearly not reducible to instrumental, suasive speech alone, but admits of the agency and activities of nonhuman actors, which help spread the intensity.

Viewing the Transborder Tool as part of such an emergent contagious rhetoric, we see its user, traversing the desert in a clandestine movement, and holding this device that may be her only lifeline to safe arrival, being *infected* by its rhetoric, becoming more intensely attuned to the border and contemporary technology, relating to them differently. Provocatively, one of the claims made in EDT’s promotional poster for the Tool, was that it “provides user with greater situational awareness,” which can have both a simple, instrumental meaning and the meaning I am developing here. The tool *gives* its user a new relationship to her situation and greater awareness of that fact. Meanwhile, in this interaction, the Motorola phone is changed completely into the tool, and as its old functions are pushed away by its use in its new set of relations with its user, it too is infected by the project’s intensive rhetoric. The transversal communication that Deleuze and Guattari describe above can be seen here not as happening only between natural

species, but between technological device, the border apparatus, and the human user, all of whom have their relations to each other rhetorically reshuffled, as the relations that kept them discretely separate are transversed by the tool's rhetorical lines of flight.

Intensifying the Border, or Surfing the Desert

One thing the Transborder Tool does not do, however, is openly *oppose* the border. That is, it is not an attempt at destruction or a literal attack on the border. The tool does not, say, try to interfere with or jam Border Patrol activities or communications. Ricardo Dominguez and the Electronic Disturbance Theater developed the tactic of “denial-of-service” attacks on government and corporate websites as a mode of activism, and Dominguez himself has recently used the same tactic to protest the privatization of public higher education in California.⁹ Thus, it is well within the technical and creative power of the Tool's developers to use direct confrontation as one of their rhetorical strategies. In her book *Ourspace*, Christine Harold discusses several different rhetorical strategies available to those opposed to corporate dominance in late capitalism, and while her subjects—anti-copyright pirates and anti-brand Situationists—are slightly different from the subject here, her conclusions are relevant. Those in the anti-corporate movement, she notes, oppose the public sphere to the all-consuming forces of the market, and she identifies three broad strategies employed in their resistance: sabotage, appropriation, and intensification (xxviii). Both sabotage, favored by the Situationists and their stylistic heirs, such as *Adbusters*, and appropriation, preferred by hackers, are caught by their own logic, which attributes to capitalism monolithic unity it does not have, while preserving discrete borders between it and the public sphere, which is idealized as a utopian space

uninfected by the market. Attempting to escape the logic of capitalism by supposing a monolithic capitalism “out there” to oppose inscribes a dialectic that maintains capitalism’s existence (160). Intensification, however, works *inside* the operations of the market, turning its forces and energies into useful tactics for resistance (161). She draws on Deleuze, usefully developing his claim that in control societies “*surfing* has taken over from all the other *sports*” into a full-fledged metaphor for the kind of rhetorical movement happening with the Transborder Tool. The surfer, Harold tells us:

does not *conquer* a wave the way a football player conquers territory. For the surfer, the ground beneath her feet is no ground at all. It is unstable, it is fluctuating, it is permeable. The surfer succeeds neither by *overcoming* the ocean as if it were an obstacle, nor by appropriating it from another surfer. She succeeds by cultivating a way of being in the world that affords her the capacity to *respond* kairotically to what comes next. A good surfer must know something about the wind, tides, ebbs and flows and how they work together to create waves (161).

Thus, we have another metaphor for the viral rhetoric Edbauer described, and it reminds us that the user of the Transborder Tool does not simply find herself in a “situation,” but rather in a material world, and her activities are *intensive*—she comports herself to a different way of being in the world, one in which her responses do not oppose the border but intensively engages it differently. In this process, she, the Transborder Tool (and all the complex flows of capital that concentrate in it), and the border apparatus (and all the complex flows of capital that insist on its reality), all change in their relations to each other. In other words, the Transborder Tool hooks its user into the border assemblage and makes it do something else. Recall that, as Dominguez noted above, GPS, the crucial

technological element in the tool, is a development of the US government, and in its current general use, from smartphone applications, to Google-powered maps, it participates in the global flow of capital that also necessitates the border apparatus in its current form. The Transborder Tool and its user do not protest the border assemblage by trying to conquer it or destroy it, but resist it by “deterritorializing” its systems, such as GPS, and *intensifying* it by putting it to different use.

Not everyone, though, finds such movements sufficient or even laudable strategies for resistance. Political theorist Jodi Dean, for instance, is quite critical of the politically disempowering effects of what she terms “communicative capitalism” and the fetishization of technology standing in for real political action (38). With the expansion of networked communication technologies, like those used by the Transborder Tool, “ideals of access, inclusion, discussion, and participation come to be realized in and through expansions, intensifications, and interconnections of global telecommunications,” but instead of making the world more democratic and equitable, Dean argues, these “rhetorics of access, participation, and democracy work ideologically to secure the technological infrastructure of neoliberalism, an invidious and predatory politico-economic project that concentrates assets and power in the hands of the very, very rich, devastating the planet and destroying the lives of billions of people” (23). Allowing our desires for real, tangible political and economic change to be reduced to expressions in corporate owned communication technologies, to Dean, is counter-productive, since the false participation involved obscures its own implications in unjust capitalist power relations. “The promise of participation,” she argues, “was not simply propaganda. It was and remains a deeper, underlying fantasy wherein technology covers

over our impotence and supports a vision of ourselves as active political participants” (36).

While Dean’s concern is with a general tendency to mistake for political action expressing opinions on social media sites, blogs, and so forth, we might return to the question: *does* the Transborder Tool *do* anything? Certainly, we can imagine that its particular users—who undoubtedly come from the “billions of people” whose lives are being destroyed by neoliberal capitalism—benefit from its use. Dean’s criticism comes from a different perspective than Harold’s, or Deleuze’s, for that matter, in that she finds objectionable efforts that do *not* unravel or oppose the logic of late capitalism, and are content with “intensification.” Harold, in returning to Deleuze, refutes views of this nature, and claims that Deleuze “describes the political subject who is best able to respond to the new economy” because, as Harold argues, “political strategies that rely on a dialectical *repudiation* of capitalism hinder from the start their own ability to *respond* to the speed and elasticity of the marketplace” (161). As both these perspectives suggest, the problem of responding rhetorically to the marketplace and that of responding to national politics are mutually imbricated, and the border presents itself as a rhetorical ecology, to use Edbauer’s term, of which capital flows and national boundaries are inseparable elements. In this way, we can imagine, if we are to agree with Harold and Deleuze, that the Transborder Tool’s rhetorical response to the political/economic problem of the border is to “surf” both the border itself and the capitalist communications technologies that enable at once border policing and the Transborder Tool.

One wrinkle we should add to the perspectives represented by Harold and Dean is to open up the question of agency and materiality. While both are concerned with the

effects of technology in late capitalism, subtly, however, in both perspectives, the role of technological devices is merely either to aid or impede the formation of an effective social and political sphere for human actors to resolve pressing political and economic matters. That is, contemporary technology in Harold's and Dean's respective books is a tool for human use, and importantly is not activated with agency in the rhetorical situations described in either. But it is clear with the Transborder Tool that the rhetorical activity taking place is not easily reducible to a human agent, and it appears, as has been sketched out above, that the border itself expresses some agency. Bruno Latour, over the course of a three-decade career, has theorized a social and political philosophy that accounts for the active agency of objects, especially in his essay "From *Realpolitik* to *Dingpolitik*," which serves as the introduction to *Making Things Public*, a volume and large art exhibition that Latour prepared with Peter Weibel, and his book *Reassembling the Social*. In "Realpolitik," he argues that we should become political "realists" and attend to the things and objects in our world, since "each object—each issue—generates a different pattern of emotions and disruptions, of agreements and disagreements" and, thus, "each object gathers around itself a different assembly of relevant parties" (5). We must develop an "object-oriented democracy" to include in the "definition of politics a whole new ecology loaded with things" (6-7). In *Reassembling the Social* he argues that the term "[s]ocial does not designate a thing among other things ... but a type of connection between things that are not themselves social" (5), and that to replace the familiar sense of the word, "another notion of social has to be devised. It has to be *much wider* than what is usually called by that name, yet *strictly limited* to the tracing of new associations and to the designing of their assemblages ... the social [is] only ... a very

peculiar movement of re-association and reassembling” (7). The movement that “traces” new social connections between things that are themselves “not social,” i.e., the objects theorized in an “object-oriented” politics is the same movement of the infectious rhetoric Edbauer describes and the movement of the surfer in Harold’s elaboration of Deleuze’s metaphor. This movement is also, of course, the nocturnal and secret path that the Transborder tool and its user potentially cut across the southern California desert. Thus, the two conceptual trajectories in Latour’s work hinted at here fit together to flesh out our rhetorical understanding of the material agency exerted by the border and, as response, the Transborder Tool. On the one hand, the border expresses agency by presenting itself as a *real* object of concern for those who come up against its corrugated metal walls, razor-wire fences, and heavily policed desert trails. On the other hand, the emergence of the Transborder Tool, from within the technologies, infrastructures, and sets of relations that enable and make real the border, expresses a different rhetorical agency, in its very movement.

To find some of these counter-movements, it is worthwhile to return to the Deleuzian notion of “assemblage,” visited above in Edbauer’s essay. Byron Hawk connects the assemblage to materialist, posthuman public rhetoric in his essay “Reassembling Postprocess.” On Hawk’s reading, Deleuze and Guattari’s assemblage is a “connected collection of animate and inanimate bodies, actions and passions, and enunciations and statements in constant motion” (78). In *A Thousand Plateaus*, meanwhile, Deleuze and Guattari write that “to the relations composing, decomposing, or modifying an individual there correspond intensities that affect it, augmenting or

diminishing its power to act; these intensities come from external parts of from the individual's own parts. Affects are becomings" (256).

This illustrates a point Hawk made: the rhetorical inventions we make come together through a variety of matters. As Hawk sees it, thinking the assemblage means that "writing, rhetoric, and communication function at a variety of levels and through multiple species and objects that a traditional model of the writing process and a dialogic model of the rhetorical situation don't account for." Rhetoric "within the assemblage," Hawk says, "would entail processes of engaging with situations to perform functions that contribute to the production and evolution of those situations" (81). In some real way, then, we form rhetorical, material, ontological assemblages with entities of all sorts. To understand the public rhetorical implications of this, Hawk turns to Latour to rethink the materiality of publicness, and argues that the "public rhetoric" that emerges there, in which things become public, "opens the assemblage back onto the outside world in order to make new connections with it possible, continually enacting the process through the invention of new rhetorics" (91). In Latour's material sense of public, which reorients agency and displaces speaking human subjects from the position of sole agents, *things* are active, agential forces, and through the assembly that forms in debating matters, their public itself emerges. Hawk argues that Latour does not provide a new theory for public rhetoric, only the tools needed for its emergence; each public rhetoric would emerge from its particular material circumstances (91). In this way, by recentering the *process* of assembling, Hawk helps make the counter-movements of nonhuman rhetorical agency within rhetorical ecologies more visible.

Brian Massumi's theory of movement in *Parables for the Virtual*, also informed by Deleuze, proves useful here. In prioritizing movement (the intensive), over space (the extensive), he suggests that "a thing is concretely where and what it is ... when it is in a state of arrest," and posits that intensive movement effects a qualitative change in things. The shot arrow, for instance, "when it comes to a stop in the target, it will have undergone a qualitative change ... it is still the same thing by definition, but in a different way" (7). This can productively be aligned with the process of "reassembling" Latour describes above. The social, that "peculiar movement," is "no longer a safe and unproblematic property, it is a movement that may fail to trace any new connection and may fail to redesign any *well-formed assemblage*" (8). Taking these insights together we can see a rhetoric that functions through objects and movement (in the case of the Transborder Tool, both literal and conceptual) to effect a change not in *what* things are, but in *how* they are what they are, and how they relate to each other. Echoes of Edbauer's, Hawk's, and Harold's Deleuzian rhetorics should be heard here; from Edbauer and Hawk, we hear the emergence of a new ecological assemblage, new relationships, new ways for things to be can create—though, as Latour cautions, there is risk of failure—new rhetorical ecologies, the assemblage that Latour is calling the "social;" from Harold, we hear the intensifying movement of the surfer hooked into the wave assemblage, not opposing or conquering it, but changing how it is (it is now a surfed wave, perhaps).

Redistributing the Border

In at least one theoretical articulation, such a rearrangement is in fact the very process of the political itself. As discussed in the previous chapter, Jacques Rancière, in articulating his conceptual definitions of the terms “police” and “politics,” argues that it is police, and *not* politics, that is “the set of procedures whereby the aggregation and consent of collectivities is achieved, the organization of powers, the distribution of places and roles, and the systems for legitimizing this distribution” (28). Police is, thus, “first an order of bodies that defines the allocation of ways of doing, ways of being, and ways of saying, and sees that those bodies are assigned by name to a particular place and task” (29). Politics, however, is a break with the police order that is “manifest in a series of actions that reconfigure the space where parties, parts, or lack of parts have been defined.” In short, “Political activity is whatever shifts a body from the place assigned to it or changes a place’s destination” (30). The political is a rend in an existing police order, a particular “distribution of the sensible” which shakes up what is visible, sayable, and possible. The distribution of roles, and “parts,” that constitutes the “distribution of the sensible” always constitutes some sort of miscount, and there are those who “have no part” in the society, i.e., they are not politically or socially agents, as in the distribution of the sensible, what is actually *perceptible* within the society is determined. Rancière argues:

Politics exists because those who have no right to be counted as speaking beings make themselves of some account, setting up a community by the fact of placing in common a wrong that is nothing more than this very confrontation, the contradiction of two worlds in a single world; the world where they are and the world where they are not, the world where there is something “between” them and

those who do not acknowledge them as speaking beings and the world where there is nothing (27).

Thus, those “who have no part” are not visible at all. A redistribution of roles and arrangements must take place for them to be seen and heard, for their speech to count as political speech and not merely noise.

This redistribution, the actual *movement* of the change in and reassembly of what is sensible, is conceptually akin to what Latour and Massumi describe above, and Hawk explicitly brings into rhetoric. Democracy, or the political, is the “part of those who have no part” in the existing police order. In Rancière’s usage, police does not have the same valence it generally does, but resonates with the Deleuzian suspicion of “territorializing” movements, the “state order” or “molar formations” (*Thousand Plateaus* 303). Taken together with Harold’s Deleuzian reading of political subjectivity, this answers more cogently Dean’s concern that such actions are not genuinely political. From Rancière’s perspective, existing subjectivities massing together to protest particular arrangements within a given distribution of the sensible is not in itself the political, and wholly within the existing police order. Mobilizing Rancière’s concepts of the political and the movement that redistributes “the sensible” along with the concepts in circulation above suggests the movement of the Transborder Tool is itself democratic action.

But if we connect its movement with Hawk’s insights, then this movement is not *just* political action, but is expressly *rhetorical* action, and a material, affective form of rhetorical invention. In Hawk’s words, the value of Latour’s Dingpolitik for retheorizing rhetoric is that it is “grounded in the gathering and movements of assemblages and enacted through the manifold assignments of the objects gathered and the human,

interpretive involvement in this disclosing of a world” (89). Rhetorical invention in this key is not wholly *directed* by nor does it wholly *originate* within the human subject involved. Despite DeChaine’s insights that the border is a symbolic *resource* for human social invention, for “sense-making” and constituting a “public *doxa*” (3), what we see here, in analyzing the Transborder Tool, is the emergence of different “worlds,” different assignments, destinations, and directions for the things involved, and as these re-assemble in the presence of the Transborder Tool, what constitutes political action for Rancière emerges itself as the very form of rhetorical invention: *re-assembly*. This version of public rhetoric does not reduce the many things, places, technologies, codes, affects, and the like to *resources* for intentional symbolic manipulation. Neither does it, though, take these things, as DeChaine worried, as *merely* “given, pre-symbolic entities” which are outside their status as “rhetorical *enactments*” (3). Where this conceptualization departs with DeChaine is in imagining that the *action* of rhetoric that *enacts* the border is not wholly human. In this sense, the border apparatus itself, *and* the Transborder Tool emerge as important rhetorical agents in a productive *reassembly* of the border, which rhetorically invents new “worlds,” new possibilities for *all* its elements, not the least of which is the Transborder Tool’s user in her furtive travels.

Meanwhile, though it is not clear that Rancière would argue for the active agency of the Transborder Tool or the border itself, it is safe to argue that the redistribution of associations, relationships, the reassembly involved with the tool adds its users and the participants in the project to the rolls of those who *actively* have a part in the use of what Dean calls “communicative capitalism.” A fair response to this is that while we can concede the qualitative change in relations between the elements within what I claim are

the Transborder Tool's rhetorical ecology, it does not necessarily follow that its movement effects the new "distribution of the sensible" Rancière describes above, wherein the speech of undocumented immigrants is taken as *political speech*. But what is described there is not the wholesale acceptance of the new subjectivity as legitimate, but as in Rancière's example of the plebian revolt in ancient Rome, the recognition of the *existence* of this subjectivity. The Tool's existence, as a project, at least, can be seen as activating, in some small part such a difference. These actions constitute the "rearrangement" that is Rancière's political, wherein, in Latour's terms, "we have to reshuffle our conceptions of what was associated together because the previous definition has been made somewhat irrelevant. We are no longer sure about what 'we' means; we seem to be bound by 'ties' that don't look like regular social ties" (*Rearranging* 6). What remains to be done then, is to develop a robust sense of political and rhetorical activity that draws on Rancière as well as Latour and Deleuze and accounts for the rhetorical and political force of qualitative changes in attunement and "rearrangements" in the relations between elements in whatever assemblage is under discussion.

That is, if the Transborder Tool's only political and rhetorical effect were on its user, altering her relationship to the border assemblage and the networked communication technologies of late capitalism, these effects would be limited, to say the least. Likewise, there is no concrete evidence that the tool has ever even been *used* in this way.¹⁰ The tool does, however, have the capacity to generate other effects, which are more wide reaching than individualistic changes in each user (should they even exist). The tool, like many recent projects called, variously, tactical media, "interventionist" art, "critical art," experimentally opens up new rhetorical tactics and strategies for resistance

within late capitalism that are not founded on the oppositional structures that Harold (through Deleuze) pointed out above were flawed.

We can now look closer at the notion of a geopoetic system, hinted at several times here, and ask: what might a geopoetics¹¹ look like, to replace a geopolitics? A crucial feature of a geopoetics, to my mind, is the *inventiveness* available to all to address matters of deep concern. A geopoetics, then, might be a set of inventive tactics, instead of the application, like geopolitics, of pre-existing schemata to emergent situations and subjectivities. *Poesis* standing in for the familiar use of *politics*. On Rancière's view, the standard form of politics, discussion, consensus and opinion—that is, the deliberative model of democratic change—is a form of the police. What is needed instead of “choosing from among responses proposed” within the existing distribution of the sensible is “the invention of a question that no one was asking” (33). Political invention “decomposes and recomposes the relationships between the ways of *doing*, of *being*, and of *saying* that define ... the relationships between the places where one does one thing and where one does something else” (40). From this perspective, geopoetical tactics, then, are modes of rhetorical invention that experimentally explore different modes of political and rhetorical activity. Deleuze and Guattari provide another articulation of such an experimental/inventional political tactic:

This is how it should be done: Lodge yourself on a stratum, experiment with the opportunities it offers, find an advantageous place on it, find potential movements of deterritorialization, possible lines of flight, experience them, produce flow conjunctions here and there, try out continuums of intensities segment by segment, have a small plot of new land at all times (161).

These modes may not immediately be recognizable as rhetoric, they may collapse audience, rhetor, and situation into an ecological assemblage that makes common forms of rhetorical analysis incomplete; they may use electronic media and objects not as prostheses for speech, but as active participating agents in their rhetorical activity; they may produce content that is not expressly political but nevertheless effects alterations in the ways one can be in the world; but these modes of activity still increase the supply of tactics available to those who feel the need to respond and do not see existing frameworks of political activity as adequate. Geopoetical strategies, in short, inherently seek experimentation in the place of revolution, deterritorialization instead of deliberation.



Figure 2.1. Transborder Immigrant Tool, with Screenshot. Image ©Brett Stalbaum.

NOTES

¹ “Bits, Atoms, Neurons, Genes.” The lab, housed at UCSD, is directed by Dominguez. < <http://bang.calit2.net/>>

² For additional studies of the Transborder Tool, see Fernanda Duarte, “Rerouting Borders: Politics of Mobility and the Transborder Immigrant Tool,” and Marcela A. Fuentes, “Zooming In and Out: Tactical Media Performance in Transnational Contexts.”

³ See Manuel DeLanda, *War in the Age of Intelligent Machines*, for the argument that while human subjects are *involved in* such material and machinic processes, it is inaccurate to posit them at the origin.

⁴ See Harman *Tool-Being* and *Guerilla Metaphysics*. For another articulation of Harman’s Ontology and an excellent example of withdrawal, see Ian Bogost, *Alien Phenomenology* and my discussion of it in Chapter 1 here.

⁵ The category of the “everyday,” meanwhile, remains itself a fecund area of research. Though Certeau’s intervention is indeed into the kinds of acts make up resistance in the realm of the everyday, I have focused my analysis on those activities that, while inspired by his work, are more explicitly involved in the kinds of resistance that exceed the everyday. Were the present argument to follow a path of thinking that interrogated the relationship between materiality and the tactical resistances within the realm of the everyday, it would include close attention to the work of Henri Lefebvre, especially his monumental *Critique of Everyday Life*; Erving Goffman’s *Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*; and return to the sections in Heidegger’s *Being and Time* that dealt with “Das Mann” and everydayness.

⁶ Rita Raley, *Tactical Media*, University of Minnesota Press, 2010.

⁷ Saul Alinsky, in his influential *Rules for Radicals*, defines tactics as “doing what you can with what you have,” and claims they are the “consciously deliberate acts by which human beings live with each other and deal with the world around them” (126). Alinsky’s dozen rules for “tactics” squarely orient the process of radical politics in a Manichean war between good and evil forces, even when he admits that “in a complex, interrelated, urban society, it becomes increasingly difficult to single out who is to blame for any particular evil,” (130) for, he argues that “obviously, there is no point to tactics if one has no target upon which to center the attacks” (131). In my transformation of the radical potential of the concept of tactics, I thus find

the messiness and contingency of Certeau's conception more productive for the present argument than Alinsky's, even though Alinsky's work is clearly more oriented to the kind of political participation that is being mapped here, that is of interventionist, activist practices of resistance. A different argument might find interesting consonances between these and show that Alinsky's own, rather procedural, tactics can be transformed and repurposed for posthuman, materialist conceptions of radical politics, and the role of material rhetoric within them.

⁸ See Goldstein and Marosi for an overview of the public controversy.

⁹ See Dominguez's faculty bio on the UCSD website, for information on EDT and "virtual sit-ins" <<http://visarts.ucsd.edu/~gd2/faculty/ricardo-dominguez>>, and, for the recent "sit-in" staged on the UC President's website, see Marosi. For a lengthy study of "denial-of-service" attacks as a form of tactical resistance, including a brief history of their development, see Molly Sauter, *The Coming Swarm: DDoS Actions, Hacktivism, and Civil Disobedience on the Internet*.

¹⁰ The *San Diego Union-Tribune's* editors, arguing in favor of Dominguez's academic freedom during public (and university) scrutiny of the project, doubt the tool was ever intended for use. *San Diego Union-Tribune* April 10, 2010. Likewise, the video putatively showing the tool going *into* Mexico, in reality *shows* no such thing. Whether it did happen, such movement is not visible in the footage as assembled ("Transborder Tool Crosses...").

¹¹ Evidently, the Scottish poet Kenneth White has been using the term geopoetics since 1989 for a poetic interest in the Earth. See <<http://www.geopoetics.org.uk/>>. This usage, however, is clearly not what Dominguez has in mind.

CHAPTER 3: SURFACE TO AIR

In their 2012 report called “Living under Drones,” the Stanford Law School International Clinic on Human Rights and the NYU School of Law Global Justice Clinic reported, among many other things, the following:

Those living under drones have to face the constant worry that a deadly strike may be fired at any moment, and the knowledge that they are powerless to protect themselves. These fears have affected behavior. The US practice of striking one area multiple times, and evidence that it has killed rescuers, makes both community members and humanitarian workers afraid or unwilling to assist injured victims. Some community members shy away from gathering in groups, including important tribal dispute-resolution bodies, out of fear that they may attract the attention of drone operators. Some parents choose to keep their children home, and children injured or traumatized by strikes have dropped out of school. Waziris told our researchers that the strikes have undermined cultural and religious practices related to burial, and made family members afraid to attend funerals. In addition, families who lost loved ones or their homes in drone strikes now struggle to support themselves.¹

This constant, diffuse, repeated encounter with drones—their fire, their sounds—takes a profound toll on those communities and geographies. In his brief “phenomenology” of

drone strikes, Nasser Hussain rightly points out that “emphasizing instead the diffuse but chronic deterioration of life offers a thicker definition of civilian harm” than a mere tally of deaths would (Hussain). Hussain’s and the Stanford/NYU study articulate a range of terrifying risks entailed by the drone program, and take as their domain of political intervention the public debate and ultimate policy regarding drones, primarily in the US. But there are limitations to this way of framing both the problem and the change sought. On the one hand, the public involved exceeds the human actors who gather to debate, and on the other, the rhetoric that would be the engine of change is too narrowly understood if it (though implicitly) is limited to the speech of human actors.² It is an important *strategy*, the one engaged in by the NYU/Stanford piece and Hussain’s piece, of public rhetorical work aimed at changing the identifications and rhetorical structures holding a program like drones in existence. *Tactical* rhetorical maneuvers, however, are also available, and needed. An alternate view articulates a different range of possible political and rhetorical interventions.

This chapter, building on the previous two, examines one of those tactical maneuvers, for its material rhetoricity: a recent media art project by New York-based artist Adam Harvey called “Anti-Drone Wear,” meant to help people avoid lethal drone strikes. This simple intervention is a line of clothing treated with a (safe) metalized coating that disorients a drone’s thermal vision, its most dangerous mode of perception. This project tells us something important about the materiality and “thingliness” of rhetorical tactics. While intervening into the drone program at the level of policy and public opinion remains an important broad-based political and rhetorical *strategy*, an emerging set of *tactics* needs to be understood, which intervene into the problem of

drones as a problem of *things* interacting in the world. This sense of “the world” furthermore is one of *networked* culture, since each drone operates on a combination of computational algorithms, long-distance *thermal* vision, and networked computing technologies all alongside—and often overwhelming—human agency.

The material rhetorical tactics this chapter articulates are discrete encounters between different entities that reorient these beings in key ways, forming new associations and breaking others. This admittedly posthumanist view of tactics, though, is not aimed at disarming or evacuating human action within dire political situations, but rather is aimed at understanding the possibility of tactics in such a sociopolitical situation when we take seriously that the movements of rhetoric or politics do not always or necessarily originate or conclude solely with a human agent. The distinction drawn here between *tactics* and *strategies* is influenced by, but not identical to, Michel de Certeau’s. On Certeau’s view, strategies are the tools of the authorities, the ordering mechanism by which the world is made regular, quantified, and efficient. Tactics are ephemeral, unauthorized *uses* of the things in the world, that pervert their functioning in some fleeting way, opening space of action and agency for the individual in a culture seemingly determined by the forces of production (34-36). Certeau’s version of the tactic proves to be a flexible concept, one that lends itself to transformative encounter with more material notions of rhetorical agency and action.

Through an examination of the problem of drones as a problem of material things in network culture, and “Anti-Drone Wear” as a tactical response to that problem, what follows here is an expanded transformation of a Certeauian idea of tactics, to move it into the rhetorical domain opened up by the work of theorists like Ronald Greene, Thomas

Rickert, Jenny Edbauer, Nathaniel Rivers, Byron Hawk and others. This move toward rearticulating rhetoric's situations as "ecologies," as Edbauer does, rhetoric's very movement as "ambient," as Rickert does, and taking sight of rhetoric's "missing masses," as Rivers does (following Latour), along with the "affirmative" materialism of Greene, suggests a broader role in rhetoric for nonhuman things. What this chapter will do, in combining these trajectories with a rearticulation of "tactics," is to open the rhetorical space for considering the possibility that *things* use each other in rhetorical ways, just as Certeau argued that human bodies did. By making this case by analyzing a tactical intervention into the problem of drones, I am arguing that these materialist rhetorical tactics are *by nature and always* political, regardless whether their effects are lasting or durable. For Certeau, the tactic was political *because* it was ephemeral. Likewise, for Critical Art Ensemble, media tacticians influenced by Certeau, the actions of "tactical media," are necessarily ephemeral and political (*Digital Resistance* 9). I add here an examination of their *rhetorical* character through emerging theories of nonhuman rhetoric.

Encountering Rhetoric's Materiality

As I discussed in the previous chapters, scholars in rhetoric and composition recently have been articulating various ways of bringing closer theoretical attention to the rhetoricity of nonhuman things. Scot Barnett, in a review essay of Graham Harman's works, argues for an "object-oriented" rhetoric, in which we face "the implications our missing masses suggest about rhetoric as both a human art and an ontological condition potentially operable alongside human beings in the world's vast and inexhaustible

carpentry of things” (Barnett, n.p.). In Edbauer’s rearticulation of the rhetorical situation as a rhetorical “ecology,” the many things and nonhuman forces that once served as background for human rhetorical activity move into more active position, in her adaptation of Deleuze’s theory of “assemblages.” Hawk’s “Reassembling Postprocess” also draws on Deleuze’s assemblage—as well as Heidegger’s “worlding,” and Latour’s posthuman sense of “public,” both of which will be discussed below—to articulate the public force of rhetoric as explicitly involving action and activity that is irreducible to that of self-present human subjects alone. Thomas Rickert, in *Ambient Rhetoric*, argues for a concept of rhetoric that is ontological—it alters the very way entities *are* in the world—and emergent—it cannot *simply* be situated in any entity or set of relations, but is always emergent “ambiently” from relations that it alters on its emergence. Richard Marback’s “Unclenching the Fist” argues that in “giving objects their due,” rhetoric becomes alert to “the persuasiveness and coerciveness of our bodily activities” (64). Meanwhile, Nathaniel Rivers, in his “Tracing the Missing Masses: Vibrancy, Symmetry, Public Rhetoric Pedagogy” draws on many of these resources, as well as a sustained engagement with Latour and Bennett to argue that “our communities—our publics—are actively shaped by not only humans but also by a plethora of nonhumans—animal, vegetable, mineral—each with their own vibrancy and efficacy” (Rivers, n.p.). Taken together, these works open the door for a sustained articulation of rhetorical tactics that emerge from what Latour calls the “entanglements” of humans and nonhumans (Rivers, n.p.; Latour, *Reassembling the Social* 84).

Meanwhile, Bennett herself argues in *Vibrant Matter* that we recognize a “thing-power” of objects as well as the assemblages they form, which alters the definition of and

trajectory of what is called political action. This renewed movement of the political operates within a “vital materialism,” which undergirds a reimagined political theory that does not depend on the agency, intentions, or actions of humans alone, but accounts for the “agency of assemblages,” while placing change in a similar terrain to that which the material rhetoric scholars noted above place it: as an emergent property of complex assemblages. Bennett defines the assemblage as the “contingent tableau” things form with each other, and through which “*objects* appear as *things*, that is, as vivid entities” exceeding human categories and concepts and “never entirely exhausted by their semiotics” (5). Materiality, for Bennett, is not merely the backdrop on which human political action takes place, either enabling or constraining the possible intentional choices humans can make in their political lives (xii). Instead, Bennett sees in her concepts of thing-power and vital materialism a wide distribution of agency, in which human intentions participate, but are far from the primary agents of political life.

On Bennett’s view, the move to make now in politics is no longer “demystification,” the strategy dominant from the Frankfurt School forward, but a recognition that human subjects are not the only beings endowed with political agency (xv). The concept of assemblage cuts through the facticity of objects, and places their agency at once in their matter and in their relationality (5). An assemblage of many different things can be formed through the aleatory interactions among them. Bennett wants, however, to argue that the assemblage, while often involving human recognition, does not depend on it, nor does it originate there (5). Thus, matter is shot through with a constitutive *affectability*. This affectability is the possibility of thing-power’s rhetorical and tactical dimension. It is through such *affectability* that an emerging assemblage has a

tactical dimension. This affectability, rooted in Deleuze's "virtual," is where we can begin to find the tactics available through exploiting rhetorical materiality.

Like in Bennett, in Matthew Bost and Ronald Walter Greene's "Affirming Rhetorical Materialism," Deleuze's "virtual" affords a shift away from a politics of ideological critique, which "has the tendency to read all rhetorical actions (linguistic and otherwise) as modes of mediation suspended between different sides of a structure of dominance" (443). Their "enfolding" of virtual and actual opens "an immanent politics" that "asks which systemic components are most strategically susceptible to intervention and attempts to ask how those systems might be other than they are." This enfolding, meanwhile, that Bost and Greene theorize, forms the materiality of rhetoric in the "ways the virtual and actual affect and are affected through the assembly of a body" (443). According to Bost and Greene, then, the materiality of an "actual" thing is always constitutively related to its "virtual" dimension of possibility, while both domains are rhetorical and material. Extending out from Bost and Greene, we can say that these folds are the moment of encounter, and the intervention they articulate is the tactical possibility in that encounter. Since the materiality of rhetoric is folded into virtual and actual, the predictable "negation" of ideological critique, with all its assurances (and frankly predictable failures in actual politics), is set aside for the "affirmative" movement of the material force of interventions that plug into, so to speak, these folds that Bost and Greene call the "revolutionary composition" of bodies in an "immanent materialism" through which "affect precedes consciousness" (443). Where Bost and Greene stop short, though, is not attending to the nonhuman dimension to this, in not articulating the "revolutionary composition" of bodies unlike human bodies, or the encounter of human

bodies in a nonhuman way. It is attention to that dimension, though, that will add folds and wrinkles to our understanding of the material, tactical, and rhetorical stakes of encounters between different bodies.

Thus, a deeply rhetorical materiality exists within the things that come together, with or without the active origination of human subjects. Rhetorical materiality, in this sense, is the way things, assemblages, ecologies, and “ambient relations,” according to Rickert, constitutively *affect* each other, weaving what the world is. As claimed in the first chapter, it is at once process and object, materiality and event. Rickert, in *Ambient Rhetoric*, develops a phenomenological sense of rhetorical materiality, drawing on Heidegger, and describes rhetorical materiality as an ambient attunement, that is, a distributed, ecological, relational, and material phenomenon, populated with “things” (in Heidegger’s sense of the word) and places that “make claims on us,” expressing actual agency. Rickert’s phenomenological materialism, like Bennett’s theory, resists reducing materiality to simple presence. As discussed in Chapter 1, in the Object Oriented Ontology of Graham Harman and Ian Bogost, itself a descendent of Heidegger, things never exhaust their being in any given relation, and “withdraw” some element from each relation, even as relations are the necessary process of worlding. A thing is *disclosed* in some way in a relation—this is the phenomenological sense of rhetorical being that Rickert is developing—but another way for that thing to *be* is withdrawn, held back, unavailable in this relation. Withdrawal shares important characteristics with the plane of the virtual that Bost and Greene deploy, in that in both models of materiality, there is a *significant* risk that the outcome of rhetorical encounters is *radically* unknown.

Latour adds the dimension of the nonhuman to this movement. Across many texts over three decades of work, Latour has done more than anyone to underline the active, productive role of nonhuman bodies and “things” in our political and rhetorical worlds.³ The folds that Bost and Greene describe above, under a Latourian articulation, would fold together dimensions of affect that are not limited to human bodies alone, or limited to a common sense understanding of even those bodies. In his essay “The Berlin Key,” the key that Latour discusses is something he calls a mediator. He asks a seemingly simple question about the key. Are these keys “social relations” or not? His answer, characteristically, challenges the assumptions of what “social” means, as long as it preserves itself within, and only within, the domain of human meaning, behavior, values, and interaction. In the normal understanding, the key is viewed as an “intermediary” of social relations. But Latour’s analysis reveals something else, the “mediator,” which is a social actor itself (19). The keys to apartment buildings in Berlin have particular grooves in them, allowing building superintendents to set the locks in such a way that a resident cannot leave the building’s outer door locked during the day, or unlocked during the night. To Latour’s thinking, this demonstrates that the key effects the situations in which it is found, and is not a mere vessel of relations of power or social meaning. Mediators, according to Latour, are not simply “intermediaries,” those things in which semiotic and symbolic meaning is “invested” or “reified” and then transferred between human agents (19). The mediator, instead, *constitutes* its meaning, it makes it, it “forms” it. Paraphrasing Clausewitz’s notorious quip about war being diplomacy continued by other means, Latour suggests it would not be “bad” to claim that these mediators are “social relations continued by other means,” *if* “we were capable, indeed, of recognizing in

means, media, mediators, the eminent alterity, the eminent dignity that modern philosophy has for so long refused them” (19). In Latour’s conception of the key, it moves from being a “simple tool” to assume, in his words, “all the dignity of a mediator, a social actor, an agent, an active being.” Not only does it mediate social or cultural subjectivity, constituting the subjectivity of Berliners who use these keys. It also has, in whatever form it is found, in whatever things it takes place through, particular affordances and limitations that are part of the “mediators” themselves. The key is perhaps “social relations,” “morality,” and “law,” but as Latour reminds us, “*made of steel*” (19, emphasis added).

Such a thing, however, is not *simply* there, effecting agency. Like the folds of virtual and actual, and the withdrawal of a thing’s being, a mediator like the Berlin key is emergent from its material network, its “chain of associations.” Latour argues that the “artifact” is only one element in the chain of associations through which it emerges, and that it would be wrong to call the “slightly more resistant elements,” that is, material *things*, of such a chain, “objects,” since they are never “visible” in themselves. Latour’s call, instead, is for us to admit that there are “chains of associations” and that “they alone exist” (11). In other words, it is inadequate to point *simply* to the material thing of an apartment key, or of a drone’s thermal vision, and say that it, in its presence *affords* certain kinds of human action, or *inhibits* others. Instead, it is important to attend to the complex relations, in Latour’s words “associations,” that connect the “natural” and the “social,” the modes of “mediation,” by which links in these chains, mediators, do not *simply* serve human purposes, but *actively* produce those purposes themselves. Again,

though, Latour cautions at the same time from *overdetermining* materiality. Affordances exist, but in an emergent way.

There are tactical dimensions to these affordances as well, though. Once we accept that there are chains of associations, then we have to accept, Latour says, that the only thing that matters, is “the transformation of these chains of associations” (12). One of the Berliners Latour meets has altered the key, filed it down to make it work differently, affording himself the same ability to lock and unlock the door that the superintendant has. This I take to be *one kind* of the “transformation” of chains of associations that Latour urges, if we accept the next lesson, that on Latour’s view, “to speak of ‘humans’ and ‘non-humans’ allows only a rough approximation that still borrows from modern philosophy the stupefying idea that there exist humans and non-humans, whereas there are only trajectories and dispatches, paths and trails” (12). One transformation that will be discussed below, in the analysis of “Anti-Drone Wear” is that very interference between human and non-human that the drone and the tactics for avoiding it perform.

The Drones: Surveillance, Disclosure, Encounter

The first surveillance drones, like their peers now, were cyborgs, part living organism, part mechanical apparatus. Unlike current drones, however, where the living body is often many hundreds of miles away, the original drones combined their mechanical surveillance apparatus and their living body in one flying cyborg, automatically gathering (visual) information of the terrains and bodies they surveilled. Also unlike their contemporary kin, the living bodies in the first drones were not soldiers, video-gamers, or

haphazardly trained pilots.⁴ In fact, they were not even human. They were pigeons. In the First World War, carrier pigeons equipped with cameras flew reconnaissance and surveillance missions throughout Europe, a small (and perhaps unsuccessful) network of pigeon-drones extending above the continent. First patented in 1907 by German chemist Julius Neubronner, pigeon photography afforded advantages over balloons and, later, human-piloted aircraft. Balloons were subject to the winds, and pilots were susceptible to being shot down. Perhaps the most important difference is perception. These birds carried cameras that perceived the visible spectrum of light. They encountered human bodies and environments as visible shapes.

The contemporary drone is also adept at that, able to transmit an HD image *live* to its pilot hundreds of miles away.⁵ The drone, though, has another mode of encounter: robust infrared—or thermal—vision capacities. What the drone “sees” that the pigeon or its camera do not is heat. Its attunement to a body’s warm messages is one of the things that make the drone interface so well with human bodies in a variety of different environments around the world. On the other hand, drones do make for a hostile rhetorical audience, always attentive, never listening, and predictably *final* in their judgment.

Avoiding the gaze of aerial surveillance photography demands different tactics from those in use against the thermal gaze of the modern drone. That form of surveillance itself, Paul Virilio argues in *War and Cinema*, organizes the world in a certain way. Through this “logistics of perception,” a “supply of images would become the equivalent of a supply of ammunition” (1). This logistics of perception does not end in aerial surveillance, but leads to a “global vision” of “spy-satellites, drones, and other video-

missiles” an “active optics” of a “‘sight-machine’ aboard an intelligent satellite” that will “automate perception” in an “eyeless vision” (2-3). Much of this technology, which Virilio, writing in 1983, predicted for the end of the 20th century, is in active use. But we can align this not only with the cinema cameras aboard the fighter planes in the First World War but also with the drones in use already by then, the “camera-kites,” the “camera-balloons,” and the “camera-pigeons” Virilio mentions only off-handedly (15). If this eyeless vision was to replace human “direct vision” (16), it began to do so in earnest, according to Virilio with “pilotless aircraft” over Laos in the Vietnam war that would “send their data back to IBM centers in Thailand or South Vietnam” (15). The sight machine vision that Virilio describes, though, “appears thoroughly objective” to many now, which “involves a new obliviousness to the element of interpretive subjectivity that is always at play in the act of looking” (3).

Likewise, Heidegger, in “Age of the World Picture,” makes a case for a similar articulation of the relationship between perception and the organization of reality. His argument travels not through the development of the machinery of war, but the development of modern science, and he argues that the present age, modernity, is an “age of the world picture” in the sense that it is an age when, through objectification and quantification, the “world” is taken *as* a picture, framed over against a subject’s view. This visual perceptual organization of knowledge relates to Virilio’s argument, and, combined, they provide an image of the world as something that needs to be *visualized*, that is, quantified and spatialized, to be known or even to be understood to exist. In other words, it is a certain way of being in the world for European modernity, that is at once connected to scientific, technological, and bellicose forms of innovation, that allows

Neubronner to even attach cameras to pigeons in the first place. The sense that is made of what they see comes not from within the image, but from its relationship to a material encounter, which is itself shot through with this particular way of being.

There is, then, definite concordance with Virilio, Heidegger, and the materialist rhetoric of Rickert, in that in all three cases, the emphasis is on the disclosure of beings, the ways in which their relations form a *real* part of what they are. Virilio offers, though, technical detail that Heidegger or Rickert do not. In Virilio's narrative, *specific* encounters between *specific* kinds of materiality alter the course of disclosure, alter the way things are in the world. This attention to the micropolitical rhythms of material politics is necessary if we are to imagine the domain of change elsewhere than at the horizon of Western ways of thought. Specific technologies and techniques of perception in wartime, in Virilio's book, connected to techniques and technologies of perception in everyday life, to alter the landscape of war and society, to channel movements of bodies, objects, machines, and (though he doesn't mention them much) animals in different ways from before. Different techniques and technologies would have made different channels for disclosure. None of this, it appears, runs counter to Heidegger or Rickert, but points to a domain of analysis and intervention absent in both.

Thus, the axis of rhetorical encounter involving drones is not wholly "human" in the typical sense, even while politics and rhetoric are still present. In other words, with such drones in the sky, one's ability to perform rhetorically in the space of publicness depends on whether the transfer of body heat, of the movement of radiation communicates to the drone's gaze information about rebellion, discontent, or other proscribed behaviors (such as Al Qaeda training). As Marback has it, in his call to "give

objects their due,” the matter is one of *human* embodiment: “giving objects their due does not so much ground rhetoric in materiality as much as it forces us to let go the privileging of our accounts and drives us to recognize the integrity of embodiment and rhetoric” (64). The *thing-power* of human body heat, though, complicates such an understanding of embodiment, as human subjectivity rooted in emplaced, worldly bodies moving through space. Body heat is also radiating out in rhetorical communication and communion with digital sensors attached to buzzing drones. While the drone problem obviously brings to the fore the real facticity of human embodiment, reading the *thing-power* of body heat urges us to rethink these categories, toward what Marback wanted to resist, “grounding” rhetoric, in some sense, in materiality. Or, more precisely, finding the conceptual distinction between grounding in “embodiment” and grounding in “materiality” too difficult to maintain. Thus, materiality is of the utmost importance even to traditional manifestations of rhetorical performance. A rhetor and her audience also are encountering and interfacing with another audience, the drone, which is, of course, not precisely open to their *intended* messages, and is only interested in the messages it does receive: the relationship between body heat, location, and the algorithmic positioning of proscribed behaviors and actions. Tactical opportunity exists in the material affordances of body heat, as *thing-power*. It is different both from Certeau’s and Marback’s forms of embodiment, but crucially connected to them nevertheless.

Take, as a parallel example of the thing-power of human bodies in interaction with technology, the subway turnstile. By the 1990s, the terrain of war had changed dramatically, and the modes of encounter, as well as forms of resistance, rebellion or disobedience. In discussing the encounter between transit fare evaders and a subway

turnstile, the French radical philosophy collective Tiqqun provocatively argued that the turnstile “removes illicit bodies from the indistinct mass of ‘users’ by forcing them to move in an easily identifiable way.” The turnstile “gives existence to a body defined *as a fare evader*” (184). The encounter with the turnstile apparatus individuates the fare evader’s body—her being is achieved in this sense. The turnstile cleverly encounters bodies along a line of fare paying visibility. But that also means that the fare evader encounters the turnstile along that same path. Vision, then, is not only a force of *making visible* in the encounter, but has an aspect of *becoming visible*. In other words, the *object* of fee-paying visibility, as Tiqqun shows, achieves her being as *the* subject of fare evaderness. Avoiding fares in that perceptual regime, in its normal functioning, requires one to engage visibility in a certain way, and a variety of ways of being flow from that. One could trip and fall. One could be caught right away, or not *be seen*. But what Tiqqun does not discuss, and what must always be happening, are the myriad other tactics of avoidance that produce different visibilities, and specific encounters. Tiqqun’s analysis of the turnstile helps here, to a point, in that it clarifies the way that rhetorical being is *achieved*, accomplished through a material encounter, which is itself shot through with the tactical. The limit of this view, though, is in Tiqqun’s hanging onto the ontological *habit* of viewing the turnstile in the singular and as fixed. The being of the fare evader is, thus, at risk and achieved in her encounter with the turnstile, but the turnstile always is what it is meant to be. Tactically, in its encounter with someone or something *else*, it itself might, if ever so subtly, form a new togetherness with its companion, and *become* another turnstile.

The use of the current form of drone technology began during the Vietnam war,⁶ and now, about a century hence from the emergence of pigeon-drone technology, we have the regular use of “Unmanned Aerial Vehicles,” or drones, both for surveillance, and for something called “signature strikes,” the extraordinarily controversial practice of missile strikes fired from drones on human targets in several countries around the globe. These targets are selected through “pattern of life” analyses of “signature” behaviors, gatherings and movements, which are taken to indicate a likelihood of terrorist activity. Such strikes attack unknown targets (*Living under Drones*). The selection process, based on algorithms that associate these “patterns of life” with proscribed activities, is obscure, and may have limited intervention from human judgment (*Living under Drones* 14-15). In one particular case, in Yemen in December of 2013, a wedding party was mistaken for an Al Quada convoy. The subsequent drone strike killed twelve people, most, if not all, of whom were civilians (Tayler). Though the Pentagon reports a low number of civilian deaths resulting from drone strikes, the Stanford/NYU study, cited above, and one conducted by the Columbia University Law School’s Human Rights Clinic found a much higher rate. Meanwhile, the United Nations, as well as many civil rights and advocacy groups question the legitimacy of the program altogether.⁷

Anti-Drone Wear and Tactics

Anti-Drone Wear, a part of the “Stealth Wear” series, Adam Harvey’s tactical clothing project, is a line of clothes designed to help their wearer’s body avoid producing the *kind* of thermal visibility that drone infrared vision expects in encountering human bodies in certain places. There are four items in the line: a t-shirt; a burqa; a “hoodie;” and a scarf.

They are for sale currently, but only through Harvey's "Privacy Gift Shop" online, and for a prohibitive cost: the burqa is \$2500.⁸ Here is Harvey's description of the project:

'Anti-Drone' garments are designed with a metalized fabric that protects against thermal imaging surveillance, a technology used widely by UAVs/drones. The enhanced garments are lightweight, breathable, and safe to wear. They work by using highly metalized fibers to reflect heat, thereby masking the wearer's thermal signature.

Thus, the wearer of his clothes does not look like a human body to the drone, which then, evidently, looks elsewhere for its target, or simply quits. Or, of course, learns, through exposure, that this form of heat signature *is* a camouflaged human body. But calling it *simply* camouflage leaves aside the particular rhythms of rhetorical materiality at play in the encounter between drone and this clothing, and sets aside the way that encounter might give the drone different ways of being, ways of acting. In other words, imagining this as *just* camouflage obscures the material folds of virtual and actual out of which it and the drone it encounters emerge. While Harvey claims, too, that "these garments align themselves with the rationale behind the traditional hijab and burqa: to act as 'the veil which separates man or the world from God,'" but "replacing God with drone," I want to draw our attention to the continued encounter, though indeed masked, between the body and the drone. The bodies engaged in proscribed behavior or which for whatever other reason wish to silence their thermal communication with the drone system can easily do so.

Harvey's anti-drone clothes respond to the tactical encounters between human bodies and drones in a biopolitics organized around not only cultivating and managing

the life of populations, and letting die, as Foucault had it, but now invested in the tracking of the singular message of living mammals: their body heat. This biopolitics tracks and not only *lets die* those who have been placed beyond the margin of acceptable life, but *lets fly* that death from mechanical birds who have replaced trained pigeons. Harvey's clothes *disorient* the drone's thermal gaze, presenting a shadow, or a hint, where a figure was, involving the drone, its pilot, the clothes, their wearer, her body heat, satellite communication, and so forth in a tactical encounter unlike the one planned. In concealing body heat from its conversion into information, they *reveal* themselves, indeed, as shields, as Harvey suggests, but also something more, as co-conspirators *with the drones* in a disorienting encounter between beings. So the tactical usefulness of anti-drone clothing for those who wear it relates to a material rhetoric at a different register: the encounter between the drone's thermal gaze and the clothing, in which the clothing discloses the body differently, disorients the drone, *persuades* it to look on, to seek its targets elsewhere.

This means that the "anti-drone" clothes are not really *anti* drone. Instead, they operate by establishing a different kind of encounter with the drone. Already individuated from environment by radiating her body heat, the wearer of Harvey's Anti-Drone clothes now encounters the drone along a path of deindividuation, blending in, always imperfectly producing a shadow visibility. These encounters follow a reversible line of thermal visibility. Harvey's clothes, thus, are not mere avoidance. The wearer of these clothes performs a different encounter with the drone apparatus, and brings itself and the drone into being *differently*. The drones may disclose themselves to anti-drone clothing as the most immediately lethal arm of a global, media powered state of permanent war,

but that disclosure is at risk of being reoriented or disoriented. Likewise, the clothing *might* disclose itself only as a shield or veil, as Harvey himself suggests, but even that may be cancelled and altered, and a myriad of contradictory effects may follow.

To bring this into greater relief, compare a similar project called the “Drone Survival Guide.” This project, a single page *tactical tool*, printed in English and Pashto, is a two-sided sheet of “Chromolux ALU-E mirrored paper,” with the profile images of all contemporary drones on one side, and short tactical instructions for avoiding them on the other. This sheet is available for €10 from the makers, or can be downloaded (presumably to be printed on ordinary paper) free. Ruben Pater, the project’s designer, situates drones as intermediaries between two humans, the one surveilled, and the one, at the other end of the communication, interpreting the drone’s signal. The “mirror” effect of the “Drone Survival Guide” is meant to remind all “that drone surveillance is ultimately people watching people. In a way we are looking at ourselves through sophisticated mirrors.” Their mirrored sheet is meant to *reflect* sunlight into the drone’s sensor, which would be effective under two key conditions. First, that the sun’s light is available, either through a clear sky or midday encounter, for redirection into the drone’s sensor. And, second, that the drone is *close enough* for that reflection to hit the sensor directly. Lacking either of those conditions, the person surveilled is still visible in a way useful to the drone’s surveillance mission.⁹

So, to the makers of the “Drone Survival Guide,” its tactical utility functions on an order in which visibility and the things that make visible, operate in a manner similar to what Latour calls the intermediary, where the sharp distinctions between subject and object and nature and culture are conceptually maintained. To Pater, the drone reflects

subjectivity and is itself *only* something through which human vision and visibility passes. Remembering, instead, the very narrow and quite tricky conditions under which the Drone Survival Guide could work, reflecting the sun's rays into the drone's thermal sensors, reminds us that the drone, like the keys in Berlin, is not just symbolic, and a "sophisticated mirror," but is such a sophisticated mirror *made out of* thermal sensors, radiating heat, wireless communication systems, the sun's rays, the science of aeronautics, and so forth.

One tactic deployed by Anti-Drone Wear that helps tease out the distinction between intermediary and mediator here is humor, if we understand humor in a specific sense. Deleuze, in *Coldness and Cruelty* and in the first few pages of *Difference and Repetition*, identified two important tactics available in the face of power: humor and irony. The ironic approach to the law ascends it to its highest principles, and overturns it through inversion. The Marquis de Sade, for Deleuze, represents this tactic. Humor, though, burrows down into the law, following it out through its consequences and intensifying it until the pleasures it is meant to forbid are experienced, multiplied. Masoch and his sexual contracts were, for Deleuze, such a humorous intensification. The humorous approach, then, seeks not to break with, by inversion of grotesque parody, encounter with power, but instead plugs into its machine in a way that make it run, so to speak, against its purpose. Humor is subversion through "finding a new way of descending through the law to its consequences" (*Coldness* 89). Rather than evade or destroy the machine of power, the humorous tactic, in Deleuze's sense of it, is to encounter it in a different way. Consider the t-shirt in figure 3.1. The only bit of the t-shirt that is treated with the "anti-drone" coating is the graphic shaped like a Predator

drone. As it interfaces with the drone's gaze, the shirt performs a sort of petulant protest, mirroring back to it, in void, the drone's own profile. While understanding of this joke is available mainly to human awareness, especially the drone pilot's, it can only happen between the t-shirt and the drone. The drone is reoriented, and enrolled into service as collaborator of this joke. Tactically, the shirt intensifies a relationship with the drone, rather than refusing or inverting it. Harvey's Anti-Drone clothes not only act as a shield against power, but perform tactical, and material encounters with it—embodied here by the drone—that intensify it until it becomes something else. There is a risk, of course. Imagine the consequences of failure, or the wrong kind of success. The wrong kind of success would be achieved by someone who actually is a drone target, who then reveals herself by wearing the shirt. Even that, though, seems to be a different encounter.

Our material encounter with these drones is a vital risk in two senses of the word. In the colloquial sense of the word, it is sold to us as part of our vital national interests to maintain the drone program. It is of vital importance that these warm, radiating encounters between human bodies and drone bodies continue; existential threats to our way of life surround us. Or, of course, that is what we are told. These encounters are vital in a narrower sense as well, though, one that is related to but complicates the former. This is a material, tactical and rhetorical encounter between two vital bodies, the radiating body on the ground, and, ultimately, the body of the drone “pilot,” sequestered away in a trailer far from the drone or her target. This interface, though, is vital and digital; it reveals the uneasy conflation that has happened between vitality as the domain of life and digitality as the domain of computation. These were never wholly separate, conceptually, to begin with (DNA is understood from the moment of its discovery as a code), but in

contemporary practice, any tactical material encounter involves, to one degree or another, both terms. Moreover, it does not just involve both; it risks them. The livelihood of the radiating body is obviously at risk of destruction from Hellfire missiles. But these are “signature” strikes when they happen; they are aimed at and meant to encounter bodies that are perceived as threatening to the vitality of our digitally mediated social and political world. An intervention into that encounter would be, itself, a vital project, but is surrounded by risk. The encounter, then, is tactical and vital. It is vital since as noted above, the living being is implicated in the material encounter with the drone; it is employed in the function of what is ultimately a media and communication system. The encounter is tactical in the obvious sense as part of the conditions of war. It is also tactical, though, at the level of materiality. Harvey’s clothes perform a hack in the media system of drone surveillance and strikes; they exploit that network.

While it is accurate to say Harvey’s work “hacks” or, in Galloway and Thacker’s terms, is an “exploit,” it is insufficient.¹⁰ In the drone surveillance and slaughter system, Harvey has indeed discovered an exploit and redirected body heat in its encounter with the drones, freeing the wearer of his clothes to return to whatever she was doing, wherever she was doing it, and with whom she was doing it. Likewise, viewing the project as a hack is right since it reminds us, by hacking body heat, that our bodies are part of our digital systems, and hacking is not always about software or hardware—wetware, also, to use the 90s word, is implicated as well.

But leaving it there still misses the material encounters, the moments of interface, which Galloway elsewhere called the “necessary trauma” of thresholds. In his analysis of a Norman Rockwell painting and a Mad Magazine parody of it, in *the Interface Effect*,

Galloway views both as saying much about the problem, for the self, of the interface. The Rockwell painting, Galloway argues, resolves this trauma, by “propping up the wild notion that the necessary trauma of all thresholds might be sublimated into mere ‘content,’” (44), meaning that the constitutive separation in processes of mediation, necessary for the formation of subjects, in the Rockwell painting, is transformed into *mere* information, content within the painting. The comic Mad Magazine parody, though, takes an opposite tack, and “objectifies the trauma itself into a ‘process-object’ in which the upheaval of social forms are maintained in their feral state, but only within the safe confines of comic disbelief” (44). In both cases, though, the loop Galloway builds is through human subjectivity, and I doubt he would include the trauma of mediating encounters between beings unlike human subjects. It is worth asking in what ways the trauma of interfaces, surfaces, and thresholds is experienced differently by different kinds of beings. This trauma, however, this constitutive separation and screening, in its mediating interface, very well does fit these human-nonhuman encounters. That is, while Galloway’s point in *Interface Effect* is about the “inoperative” interface in social relations, many of his concepts are portable to other kinds of relations, including the traumatic ontology of the interface between body heat and drone vision. Putting these in rhetorical terms, I suggest that this process of encounter *always* effects a kind of rhetorical change, one that is not just the change done to the object by the artist or hacker. That is, I am arguing that the “traumatic” encounters of interfaces, which Galloway identifies with a process of mediation is of a piece with the ontological, material rhetoric theorized here. It is an encounter and interface not (just) between subject and screen, but a relay between materialities all of which interface, mediate, and act upon each other.

In *We Have Never Been Modern*, Latour expands on his distinctions between mediators and intermediaries in his concept of the process of mediation. This process, he claims, has been badly understood in the modern paradigm (which, per his argument, has never been successful), in that, in the modern paradigm, “mediators” have been taken for *mere* “intermediaries,” which, according to him, transport between existing and known entities. The moderns, Latour argues, have to allow the possibility of hybridity, but misunderstand mediation when they conceive “*every hybrid as a mixture of two pure forms*” (*Modern* 78). Mediation, on Latour’s understanding, is more like Galloway’s traumatic interface, the folds of virtual and actual Bost and Greene theorize and the “worlding” Rickert articulates, in which the dynamic of being, the “potential for novelty” that Bost and Greene see, *emerges* through the process of mediation. Latour’s mediation, in this sense, connects to the virtual, to the withdrawal of being, and to what I am calling here the tactical dimension of the encounter. Latour suggests that mediation is the process in which the elements being mediated *emerge*, that they, as “quasi-objects” and “quasi-subjects,” do not exist prior to this moment of mediation. I would call this moment of mediation the encounter (78). In any case, the question of mediation, in these terms, is worth further articulation in a theory of rhetorical materiality. Affirming Latour’s sense of mediation follows in the same path as charted by Rickert, Bost, and Greene, in attending to the emergent and radically unknown character of what emerges in the encounter. Latour’s mediation and mediators allow us to connect Galloway’s “process-object” of mediation, the traumatic interface, to an encounter between entities unlike human subjects and in which they rhetorically modify each other in their being.

In his discussion of Latour in *Ambient Rhetoric*, Rickert argues that a material object—in the case under discussion in that text, a speed bump—can exemplify “material persuasion” but “equally connects to vibrant networks of relations that are rhetorical in the sense that an originary affect is already built in, awaiting catalysis” (208). For Rickert, the point is “that the dynamic relationality that emerges in the encounters reveals the world differently, brings to presence vectored forms of affectivity galvanized by these interactions” (208). These galvanizing encounters, involving nonhuman and human alike, are what I have been arguing are the tactical dimensions to rhetorical materiality.

Importantly, then, Anti-Drone Wear does not hack drones by “hacking” drones. Its intervention, if at all successful, has to be understood as *affirming* an encounter with drones according to their typical function, but which hacks them at all by exploiting their thermal gaze and allowing it to patrol, unaware of the winks and shadows it encounters. The drone is, perhaps unknowingly, something else, subtly, in this encounter, enrolled into service, performing its own avoidance.

The Risky Hope in Affirming the Encounter

In these moments of encounter, *between nonhuman entities*, in the interface between body heat and airborne heat sensor, there is a perversion, diversion, or some conversion of body heat communication that obviously discloses the body differently. And, to turn to human experience, there is a material sense of security afforded, a sense of safety that the wearer might have that discloses drones in general to her in a different way. In this way, we can see a possible form of *affirming* the drone encounter.¹¹ This entails untold risks, especially the horrific outcomes carefully cataloged in the Stanford/NYU research, the

Columbia School of Law research, and the UN's own reports. The other, subtler, slipperier risks charted here offer, however, a different range of subtle tactical interventions, meanwhile expanding the domain of bodies that themselves intervene. The task, then, is to imagine all this without imagining the drone, the clothes, the body heat, the user, or Adam Harvey, precisely existing (as they are) outside the encounter; the tactical and rhetorical aspect of the encounter is constitutive.

One thing all of this means, importantly, is that we cannot *appeal* to a distinction between "human" and "nonhuman" to build our materialist theories. Rather, that distinction, in true Derridean fashion, is local, unstable, mobile, and itself disseminating in many directions (not all of which we are aware of). Attending to where that distinction becomes unstable, or can only be described in the sketchiest, most provisional terms, demonstrates limit-cases of the current state of "worlding," while also demonstrating the tactical, resistant movements already underway within it. These movements are at once the tactical in Certeau's sense, the rhythms of "rhetorical being" in Rickert's sense, and Bost and Greene's folding of virtual and actual.

There is, in this rhetoric, an uneasy vital, material, and as I argue, tactical encounter among the myriad forms of matter enmeshed in the world. There are, meanwhile, particular affordances for tactical invention with respect to material encounters of certain kinds. The anti-drone hoodies Harvey designs might protect you from pigeon droppings, but so would a cheap umbrella. They encounter the contemporary drone's thermal cameras in a specific way. They, as I am arguing, persuade the drone's heat vision; they reattune the wearer's body heat in this particular (and particularly fraught) rhetorical environment. My gamble, though, is that if we follow this all the way

through, we can argue that all the elements are different through the encounter. Orienting our conceptual, critical, and theoretical attention toward these tactical and rhetorical moments of encounter between different materialities will allow us not only to study further the myriad ways rhetoric appears materially. It will also help us begin to conceptualize ways of *inventing* these encounters, to begin to develop the “new weapons” that Deleuze called for in his “Postscript on Control Societies,” which I will discuss more fully in the concluding chapter. For now, it is sufficient to note that these weapons are not only wielded by human actors.

Now, it is possible, perhaps likely, that this particular kind of encounter is not happening and will not. The clothing that Harvey has made available under this project, so far, is expensive, situated publicly as art, and was, until recently, available only through the New Museum in New York.¹² I am suggesting that we look at this otherwise, as a test or limit case that teaches us significant lessons on the complexities of political, rhetorical, and even aesthetic invention and action once we fully accept the role of nonhuman agency in such encounters, such invention. The encounter between human body heat and the drone’s thermal gaze (even as it is forwarded on to the distant ‘pilot’) is not, *precisely*, a human encounter. Heat radiating from a human body is encountered here as a *thing* with the attendant thing-power Bennett described. Likewise, the clothing in Harvey’s project would itself bring certain thing-power *tactically* to its encounter with the drone.

Anti-Drone Wear tells us a different story, as well. This project teaches us that the tactics, if we read them through recent materialist theories, do not only or just *affect* the human subjects involved, and that in a real sense do not *originate* with those subjects,

even the artist who created it as tactical responses to a dire public situation. The lesson here is that there are *thingly* modes of resistant invention necessary and available in the current phase of networked culture. Likewise, as has become clear to many over the past few years, the contours of digital culture with its “clouds” and its algorithms and its apparent ephemerality has an emerging *thingly* character itself;¹³ networked objects are everywhere, in the West: we have them in our pockets; they line our grocery store shelves; they monitor our behaviors and movements in the streets, in our cars, and in all other public places. In places like Yemen and the rural regions of Pakistan, there is a different, but related problem—drones buzz overhead nearly constantly. To imagine that there is *no* continuity between these phenomena is naïve. Likewise, to over determine it, and claim a Luddite response. In any case, there are tactical maneuvers emerging as possibilities *within* this nexus of thingly materiality, networked culture, and computational agency, all suggesting the possibility for rhetorical action that does not *just* involve or implicate human subjects. We cannot ignore or discount such tactics in building a future politics.

Meanwhile, the tactical encounters examined here pull against ecological and relational models of materiality as well as emphases on the “withdrawal” of being from all relations. Materiality, as theorized here, and like the materiality in ecological and “withdrawal” versions, is not *simply* present to itself. But as noted above, both of those models obscure the rhetorical, what I am calling *tactical*, risk of being in the material encounter, through which *process* and *thing* become entangled. A sense of *rhetorical* materiality, then, is what I argue answers Parikka’s call for a simultaneous thing and process power of media. This conclusion folds back into rhetorical studies, as well,

demonstrating that *materiality* is not *simply* universalizable, and rhetorical materiality in media systems, media things and processes, and mediated material encounters is not the same *matter* as it is with, say, the embodied encounters between human bodies and memorial sites, museums, or cities.

The agency of drones, or any other media system, for that matter, either in their normal functioning, or its *perversion* by something like Anti-Drone Wear, does not originate in a human subject, even if one is involved—at risk—in its movement. Such are the stakes faced in the current moment. Recognizing the risks, and possibilities, moves us farther toward better encounters. In other words, the risk of being here, the “aleatory” character of being otherwise, points to an intensification of tactical efforts, not their exhaustion. The critical trap of measuring such projects by existing political paradigms is that it misses the possibility that different ways of being, different “attunements” might be achieved in these. Another trap, though, is assuming all of these ways are welcome, comforting, or safe. The “new togetherness” experienced in all of this need not be either terrorizing or banal but something else entirely.¹⁴



Figure 3.1. Anti-Drone T-Shirt by Adam Harvey. © Adam Harvey, 2013.

NOTES

¹ International Human Rights and Conflict Resolution Clinic at Stanford Law School and Global Justice Clinic at NYU School of Law, *Living Under Drones: Death, Injury, and Trauma to Civilians from US Drone Practices in Pakistan* (2012): vii.

² For an articulation of human/nonhuman publics, see Bruno Latour, “From *Realpolitik* to *Dingpolitik*,” in *Making Things Public*, eds. Bruno Latour and Peter Weibel (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2001). For correspondingly expanded notions of public *rhetoric*, often influenced by Latour, see Byron Hawk, “Reassembling Postprocess: Toward a Posthuman Theory of Public Rhetoric,” in *Beyond Postprocess*, eds. Sidney J. Dobrin, J. A. Rice, and Michael Vastola (Logan: Utah State University, 2011); Jenny Edbauer, “Unframing Models of Public Distribution: From Rhetorical Situation to Rhetorical Ecologies,” *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 35, no. 4 (2005): 5-24; and Nathaniel Rivers “Tracing the Missing Masses: Vibrancy, Symmetry, and Public Rhetoric Pedagogy,” *Enculturation* 17 (2014): n.p.

³ See, for example, Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor Network Theory* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2005).

⁴ See *Wired for War*, P. W. Singer, for a keen analysis of the relationship between robotics, gamer culture and contemporary warfare.

⁵ Singer: “The exact capabilities of the system are classified, but soldiers say they can read a license plate from two miles up” (p. 33).

⁶ Virilio, 15; Adam Rothstein, *Drone*, 30.

⁷ “Counting Drone Strike Deaths,” Chantal Grut for the Columbia Law School Human Rights Clinic, 2012; United Nations, General Assembly, *Report of the Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial, Summary, or Arbitrary Executions A/68/382* (September 13, 2013), available from undocs.org/A/68/382; “Will I Be Next? US Drone Strikes in Pakistan,” Amnesty International, 2013. In the Amnesty International Report, they express this concern: “based on its review of incidents over the last two years, Amnesty International is seriously concerned that these and other strikes have resulted in unlawful killings that may constitute extrajudicial executions or war crimes.”

⁸ Harvey’s “Anti-Drone Garments” were, at the time of original drafting, available for sale only in the New Museum’s online gift shop (and presumably onsite), but recently, Harvey has launched the “Privacy Gift

Shop,” an online market of his own, for all of his different projects. The prices remain the same as they were when sold through the New Museum, with the “Anti-Drone Burqa” priced at \$2,500, and the cheapest item in the line, the T-Shirt, priced at \$40. See: <http://privacygiftshop.com/collections/stealth-wear>

⁹ See: <http://dronesurvivalguide.org/>. It is also worth mentioning, in connection to the genealogy of drones I draw here, back to Neubronner’s pigeons, that one section of the “Drone Survival Guide” is titled “Twenty-First Century Birdwatching.”

¹⁰ See Alexander Galloway and Eugene Thacker, *The Exploit* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007).

¹¹ In “The Affirmative Masquerade,” Dana Cloud expresses her longstanding suspicion of “poststructuralist,” “relativist” or “postmodernist” versions of rhetorical materialism that, she argues, mistake an “affirmation of the status quo” for “neutrality,” or, worse, disarm and defang real political struggles in turning away from ideological critique, class-based analyses of the structures of dominance in late capitalism, and demystification as a tool for emancipatory politics. The poststructuralist theories she rejects, including Greene’s (and by extension, that advanced here), she argues, themselves are a form of “ideological mystification, borrowing the label ‘materialism’ for a project that, in reality, encourages pessimism, ineffectual micropolitics, and retreat from explanation and struggle.” I hope that I have made clear that I am in agreement with the need for effectual political tactics, and the advancement *toward* explanation and struggle. Where I am aligned with those Cloud may be suspicious of, is in affirming a struggle *at* that micropolitical level, in advancing explanation *toward* an understanding of politics, power, and oppression that does not *only* circuit through human intentions, and includes encounters among other entities. In affirming all of this, I believe the domain for political struggle *opens up*, rather than closes, and thus does not become “pessimistic,” but more hopeful. The hope involved, however, hangs on struggle that cannot determine in advance the terms of its outcome. This contingency, though, does not *end* or *exhaust* struggle. Instead, it multiplies it in all directions. Dana L. Cloud, “The Affirmative Masquerade,” *American Communication Journal* 4, no. 3 (2001): n.p.

¹² See note 8 above.

¹³ Work is being done on this point, especially in the burgeoning practice of media archaeology. See Nicole Starosielski, *The Undersea Network* (Durham: Duke UP, 2015), and Jussi Parikka’s forthcoming *A Geology of Media*, an excerpt of which was published as “The Geology of Media,” in *the Atlantic* (“The Geology of Media.” *Atlantic*, October 11, 2013), as well as Parikka’s *What is Media Archaeology* and *Insect Media*. (www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2013/10/the-geology-of-media/280523/).

¹⁴ See Susan Sontag’s “The Imagination of Disaster,” for—in a not too different context—the observation that “we live under constant threat of two equally fearful, but seemingly opposed destinies: unremitting banality and inconceivable terror” (224). *Against Interpretation*. Picador, New York, 1990.

CHAPTER 4:
OF OTHER ARCHIVES

To put it more trivially: what is no longer archived in the same way is no longer lived in the same way.

[. . .]

There is no political power without control of the archive, if not of memory.

Effective democratization can always be measured by this essential criterion: the participation in and the access to the archive, its constitution, and its interpretation.

—Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever*

The chief purpose of this chapter is to dispel any remaining impressions left from the previous chapters that the event of the encounter itself was *simply* there, or that challenging the presence of the things in the encounter only relocated their presence into the encounter itself, displacing presence from individual to context, from actor to scene. In turning to the ways that the encounter itself, the event, is not entirely self-present, that it too is emergent, multiple, and laden with ontological risks of many types, I mean to point out its virtuality and futurity, the way in which the event of the encounter is always due. Thus, in this chapter, I turn to tactical archival media practices to analyze the futurity of the encounter and its event, in light of its materiality and the participation of its nonhuman elements. After all, what better place to look for the future than the archive?

In what follows, I will develop my argument about the archive through exploring the conceptual issues raised by asking about the archive's viruality and futurity in combination with the questions of materiality raised in the preceding chapters. Derrida, whose *Archive Fever* I turn to in the next section, will supply the concepts that help understand the stakes of archives and archiving when they are oriented to the future, always deferred in their closure, and *productive* rather than *documentary*. That last view, that the archive is productive, is held as well by several rhetorical theorists and Walid Raad, the media artist whose work I examine in this chapter. In other words, this chapter explores the question raised by Derrida, when he argues that computer archival technologies pose an upheaval in the apparatus of the archive, which will *then come to mean* (in the future) that whatever is archived in a different way is "lived" in a different way. The question here is: "lived" by what, by whom, and *how*? When we extend, as is done here, the economy of the archive to a community that no longer *only* includes entities like human subjects, we need to renew and enrich Derrida's insights on the archive. That is, in finding Derrida's insights important, but his articulation of the "technical apparatus" of the archive or its "substrate" inadequate and opaque, I turn to other theories to unpack these, to get a richer understanding of the various entities and forms of mediation at play.

Archive Virtual

It may seem odd to begin a chapter on the material rhetorical tactics of creative manipulations of *archives* with a section on *futurity*, but both of the elements important to this chapter (and the project of this dissertation in general) come, in a sense, from the

future. Political tactics are futural in an ordinary sense. The multiple tactics seen in the previous chapters all pointed toward a changed future or aimed at imagining a different one, while deferring (further into the future) its enactment. My analysis there, as here, hinged on locating the force of those tactics not entirely in the intentions of the acting subjects (artists, activists, etc), nor their stated goals, but in the materiality of the encounters engendered by the projects under analysis, and the nonhuman agents, actors, and entities implicated therein. Rhetorically material tactics, I have been arguing, *reside*, in a sense, in the encounter, and like Latour's mediation, the elements in encounter are emergent from it. Whether the political and rhetorical possibility in tactical manipulations of media are indeed located in the aims of their manipulators or can be located, as I argue, in the matters involved, futurity is implicated, and implicating. *The encounter* is prevented from closure by its futural and virtual dimensions. This, conceptually, is familiar from Heidegger's temporal analysis of Dasein, as well as Derrida's deconstructive analyses of many texts and phenomena, but especially in *Archive Fever*, where he argues that the archive is founded on its own conditions of deferral, on the one hand as an apparatus of memory that serves as threatening supplement to the native function of memory, preventing the closure of a difference between memory and its external prostheses. And on the other, as a public, outwardly faced *constituting* site of inscription, pointed toward the not-yet assembled public, and the not-yet arrived future. So, as we learn from Derrida, the archive itself is not *about the past, but the future*.¹ In the work of collecting and organizing the archive, the "archivist," Derrida argues, "produces more archive, and that is why the archive is never closed. It opens out of the future" (68). The archive's recipient is "inscribed" into the archive's scene and economy

in advance (67). The future, for Derrida is not *just* the not yet, the present of tomorrow, but the “vertigo” in which it is always “to come.” The “condition,” Derrida explains, “through which the future remains to come is not that it not be known, but that it not be *knowable* as such” (72). This “to come” meanwhile, for Derrida, is a performative, it is enacting and enacted future, and virtual.

In his discussion of Yerulshalmi’s reading of Freud’s Moses, Derrida argues that Yerulshalmi has it wrong when he claims that a virtual event (the murder of Moses in the wilderness, in this case) cannot leave an archive. Derrida argues that we have to “remove the concept of virtuality from the couple that opposes it to actuality, to effectivity, to reality” (66), and that it will become necessary to keep a “rigorous account of this other virtuality” by accepting that it, the virtual, is “no longer limited by the traditional philosophical distinction between act and power” (67). The virtual in the capacity to *do* has in some sense already *done*. The future to come—and its concomitant virtuality—is, in that sense, the rhetoricity of the archive. This will come to be a crucial background claim operating throughout this chapter, as we imagine the material assemblages linking the archive’s many heterogeneous parts in active, but virtual (not easily archivable in traditional sense of positive knowledge) movements. This movement, which is rhetorical—and affective—I will argue, is the *tactical* material rhetorical movement of nonhuman, or not-quite human agency. For Derrida the “otherwise” archive, that of accepting the virtual as not opposed to the actual, and that of accepting the “to come” of the archive’s future, the future archivist, the future of the archive, this otherwise is not readable by ordinary historians (64). This insight I wish to expand to that nonhuman productive movement of the archive that *has effect* but is itself not readable by humans. It

remains, while in actuality *effective* and *productive*, virtual, from the dominant perspective of modern thought, even while Derrida himself did not make the pivot to materiality I do here.

A posthumanist rhetorical analysis of tactical manipulations of media archives points toward twinned futures: the future of tactical political invention; and to another future, the archive's own future, its implicating outside that never permits it to close itself into the past, but with an important torsion from Derrida's own thoughts on that closure. Derrida is clear on the impossible task that Freud sets for himself when he folds into his notion of the archive its own technical apparatus (the internal exteriority of the *Wunderblock* in the psychic apparatus), while at the same time holding that apparatus out, as supplement, as substrate that can, eventually, be effaced completely, in the quest for pure, positive knowledge. One task of this chapter is to push Derrida's question further and ask after the real complications that the archive's "missing masses," to use Latour's terms, pose even for the deferred conceptualization that Derrida offers.² If we take from the posthumanists the rather obvious point that the archive, by itself, is not human, but is implicated in producing whatever *is* defined as human (take the *Wunderblock*), we also need to take from Derrida the important insight that it isn't simply *there*: that there is not an originary, wholly self-present event archived by a self-present archival apparatus and technology.

But if the archive is an important productive apparatus, or cluster of apparatuses, producing, as will be seen below, the subjectivity of the people who turn to the archive for memory as well as the subjects of those who archive in the first instance, we also must ask how we understand the productive force of the archive if we view it, instead of a

single substrate (even one in perpetual deferral), as a chain of heterogeneous entities, affects, and elements. We have to ask, viewing the archive (now pluralized) this way, what is there of rhetorical *tactics* in it? My argument here is that these tactics are found in *intensifications* of one element of the archive in encounter with others, while understanding the moment of the encounter as never closed, not wholly self-present. Intensity and intensification, Deleuzian concepts, are be mobilized here in conjunction with “mediators” and “chains of associations,” both Latourian concepts, to help articulate the emergence of rhetorical tactics in the media archive.

One such intensifying and virtual archive is the “Atlas Group Archive.” In 1989, Lebanese-American media artist Walid Raad established the nonprofit Atlas Group, “to research and document the contemporary history of Lebanon,” with an understandable emphasis on the Civil War that was raging from 1975, and would end in 1990.³ The Atlas Group’s specific method, he claimed, was to “locate, preserve, study, and produce audio, visual, literary and other artifacts that shed light on the contemporary history of Lebanon” (O’Brien and Prochaska, 54). Those materials were organized into an archive, called the Atlas Group Archive, which still exists as an online portal.⁴ For much of the next decade, Raad’s inventive activity was dedicated to producing that archive. The chief conceit of the Atlas Group’s archive is that the materials collected there were discovered by, acquired by, or sent to its agents and researchers, who remain unnamed, with Raad appearing in the art world as their public proxy. In reality, though, the many documents, videos, photos, artifacts, traces, and so forth collected and archived by the Atlas Group were wholly of Raad’s invention, and the Atlas Group was staffed by no one but Raad.

When it comes to the media technologies of archiving in general, and the event of the Lebanese Civil War in particular, the border between fiction and nonfiction is not so simple to Raad. “The truth of the documents we archive does not depend on their factual accuracy,” Raad argues, claiming that instead “we are not concerned with facts if facts are considered to be self-evident objects always already present in the world” (Merewether, 179). And most telling for my purposes: “facts must be treated as processes.” Now, Raad is not arguing that the Atlas Group’s work is troubling the ability of its media to *capture* the reality of the Civil War, since, in Raad’s words, “we do not consider the Lebanese Civil War to be a settled chronology of events, dates, personalities, massacres, invasions, but rather we also want to consider it as an abstraction constituted by various discourses,” and it is “constituted by and through various actions, situations, people and accounts.” He continues: “we proceed, then, from the hypothesis that the Lebanese Civil War is not a self-evident episode, an inert fact of nature” (Merewether, 179). Instead, he argues, “this war is not constituted by a unified and coherent object situated in the world.” And, ultimately his most troubling question: “how do we represent traumatic events of collective historical dimensions when the very notion of experience is in question?” (O’Brien and Prochaska, 54). And, “how are the objects, thoughts and emotions of the wars apprehended?” (Merewether, 179). This dynamic relationship between “fiction” and “document” that Raad circulates, is already of a piece with the dynamic noted above between virtual and actual, and indeed, Raad argues that the Atlas Group Archive does not “document ‘what happened,’ but what can be imagined, what can be said, taken for granted, what can appear as rational or not, as thinkable, as sayable” (O’Brien and Prochaska, 54).⁵

I interrogate Raad's project from a new materialist perspective, to suggest a deeper analysis of the population of this history that is not so immediately included in the realm of subjectivity, the people who "think," "say" or "imagine" this sequence of wars. Raad's work effectively demonstrates the process of mediation, in Latour's sense of that word, that forms the recent history of Lebanon. In this form of mediation, the spaces, places, land, air, objects, things, bombs, and so forth are neither *simply* the background on which human disagreements take place, nor *just* the instruments through which those disagreements are fought, but active agents through which these people and history emerge. In Raad's documents, photos, and videos, the tidy separation of the human domain of history and the material domain of nature is not preserved, alongside, and for much the same reason that the tidy separation between virtual and actual, power and action, and true and false are mixed up. There are chains of associations binding the materials of documents, photography, and video to mediators beyond these realms themselves, forming not only the Atlas Group Archive's architecture, but extending the archive into multiple technologies, each of which bears on the inventional possibilities in approaching the archive.

The Productive Force of the Media Archive and Its Counter-Archive

In this section, I examine two additional conceptual movements regarding the archive. First, work in rhetorical studies that relates the archive and its capacities to the productive work of rhetoric. And second, the Deleuzian film theory of Paula Amad, who separates out from the archival force a counter-archival force, whose own analysis I compare to Deleuze's work in *Difference and Repetition*. These concepts—that the archive is

rhetorically productive, and that there is something like a counter-archival impulse—help form my argument about Raad’s Atlas Group Archive, and the possibilities of material rhetorical tactics operating through it.

Like Derrida and Raad, rhetoricians who have theorized the archive have noted its *productive* rather than *documentary* forces. Barbara Biesecker, in a 2006 *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* (RPA) forum on rhetoric and the archive, argues that the archive, “whatever else it may be” is “a provisionally settled scene of our collective invention,” which itself unsettles the stability of the “we” involved as well as the “evidentiary status of” archives (124). Biesecker rightly is suspicious of the positivistic ambitions of those who turn to archival materials as unambiguous bearers of the past’s truth. Like Raad, Biesecker disputes the givenness of the archival artifact, challenges its “presumed stability,” and the unproblematic, simple material presence of the past within that artifact (125). Her suggestion is that the archive’s mediating function be centered in our engagements with it, drawing our attention to the radical undecidability, and thus rhetoricity, at the heart of the archive and its objects. But there are others who approach the archive besides cultural scholars and historians. Cultural producers, like Raad, who engage with and encounter the archive, have much to teach us about ways of rethinking the archive’s status as a site or “scene of invention.”⁶ Raad, it is clear from his words quoted earlier, is keenly aware of the radical rhetoricity of the archive as site, cultural logic and depository, and he tactically intervenes in existing tropes of positivity and memory to center the archive’s rhetoricity and productive (rather than documentary) forces. In short, the archive composes and is composed. According to Biesecker, the rhetorical invention inherent to the archive is doubled, not just the singular discovery of

the truth found in its documents, but its inventive force as well, constituting the “we” of history that archives. I hope, through the analysis here of Raad’s invented archive, to triple Biesecker’s doubling, to point to the compositional possibilities in transforming the, in Latour’s words, “chains of associations” holding not only archive to history and subjects, but the many elements of the archive together in the way that they come to be known *as* archive.

In the same RPA forum, Charles Morris argues that the archive’s inventional possibility is “linked to *queer movement*: traversal of time and space, mobilization and circulation of meanings that trouble sexual normalcy and its discriminations” (147-48). If we extend that queer and *queering* movement to meanings that mobilize and circulate against all normalization, we see Raad’s archive performing such a parallel movement. It is this movement, the against the grain, that I attend to in Raad’s archive, which resists the possibility of media technologies *as* archiving events that are self-present and can be closed into their representational media. Meanwhile, like Latour’s claim that the task is to “transform” chains of associations in which things, processes, people, events and so on are inserted, Raad’s tactical troubling of the archive points to a material dimension to the rhetorical queering of archives.

Meanwhile, in film and media studies, the nature of media technologies has been interrogated as a technical threat to the positivistic ambitions of the archive, as conceived as repository of traces of history.⁷ Paula Amad, in her book *Counter-Archive*, investigates Albert Kahn’s *Archive de la Planete*, a unique site and film practice, as exemplary of an early-twentieth century revision in the definition of the concept and practice of the archive, catalyzed by the emergence of film technologies. Much of the material in Kahn’s

peculiar archive was photography and film footage captured through his ambitious attempt to archive “the diversity of global daily life” (6). This footage, and the archive itself was unavailable for public or academic access, but was presented in private screenings at Kahn’s Boulogne estate over the course of two decades. Amad aims to show a challenge to the existing logic of the archive, present in Kahn’s archive, but pervasive as well in the rise of the cinema and contemporary French thought in the early decades of the twentieth century.

Amad opposes the archival and counter-archival impulses, drawing on Henri Bergson and Gilles Deleuze’s reading of Bergson. Amad reminds us that Bergson’s concept of “duration” conceives of temporality in a qualitative key, which Bergson distinguishes from a mechanized, quantitative time typified by a mechanized impulse to archive as visible in the machinery of photography and the cinema. The cluster of tendencies that Amad places under the sign “positivism,” includes a “belief in rational progress, empirical realism, causal determinism, objective truth” and scientism (16). Her recovery of Bergson for cinema is to identify a counter-archival and post-positivistic impulse within cinema that respects the “ambiguity of reality,” which would be consistent with Bergson’s *duration*, and show a way to a different form of archive and history than the positivistic (104). To this end, she looks to Kahn’s *Archives de la Planete*, and attempts to show that, rather than being part of the logic of the archive, film instead represents a counter-archival impulse that presents “a profound challenge to—without entirely overthrowing—traditional archival logic” (305). Nevertheless, her logic of dialectical opposition between the forces of the counter-archive and the positivist forces of the archive, or traditional history, catch her somewhat in an empiricist trap.

Though Amad seems to favor the “post-positivist” and the “counter-archive” her descriptions of the dynamics between them are wholly positivist, and reliant on an empiricist notion of what the archival document *records*. Opposing the *qualitative* to the *quantitative* as something else, which challenges, even if it does not completely overturn, the logic of the quantitative, suggests that whatever this qualitative is, it can be captured in the logic of representation, which is the logic of the quantitative. Thus, even on Amad’s own terms, she is implicitly endorsing a logic of intensification through repetition and difference. For Deleuze, in *Difference and Repetition*—which is framed as a critique of representation—

it is not a question of opposing, dialectically, another movement against traditional representation, a qualitative, affective, against a quantitative, mechanistic, but to find different intensities *within* the work of representation itself. It is not enough, therefore, for them to propose a new representation of movement; representation is already mediation. Rather, it is a question of producing within the work a movement capable of affecting the mind outside of all representation; it is a question of making movement itself a work, without interposition; of substituting direct signs for mediate representations; of inventing vibrations, rotations, whirlings, gravitations, dances or leaps which directly touch the mind (8).

Here we see the contours of a different dynamic between the archive and the counter-archive, which would permit the archive to persist in the realm of the counter-archive and not, for that, purify, as Amad seems to do, empirical document-as-evidence of an *affective*, singular encounter.

Amad defines the counter-archival tendency with film to be a disordering, excessive, supplemental threat to the ordering logic of positivist historicism. According to Amad, the archive has mutated (after the advent of the film archive) into the counter-archive, in which disorder and fragmentation rule (21). Later, as these two conceptions themselves mutate in her book, it becomes clear that another sign of the counter-archival is affective, “emotive” arousal, in opposition to dispassionate, positivistic interest in film as “evidence” (231). Consistent in her opposition throughout the book is the historicist “positivist” aspect of the archive and film as archival aligned with “quantitative” characteristics and the threatening supplement of the counter-archival aligned with affective and “qualitative” characteristics. Even as we hang onto many of the conclusions here (that the archive has mutated into the counter-archive), we can question, however, the dynamic between an ordering function, the film as *indexical trace*, and some threatening excess that needs to be regulated and contained, lest it fragment the archive into affective energies, flowing in all directions.

In her conclusion, she claims, provocatively, that now that the definition of the archive is “once again in flux,” there are found in the archives “no more historians, only artists” (306). The example below, in its hybrid character will show that the artists who now make the archive home are not, as Amad suggests, “recycling the past” by “raiding” film archives for their “aesthetic and historical secrets” (22), but instead doing the work of history under a different sign. In other words, Amad is right that history has changed since the early twentieth century, but the dynamics of that change are different from what she permits. This is why, on her logic, the archival turn in the arts is not a turn *within* an historically inflected practice, but something else.⁸ The counter-archive and traditional

archive seemingly cannot coexist in Amad's system. What follows here will show, however, that they are both alive and well, a post-positivist history/archive that does not adhere to the logic of the "total archive" or objective, affect-less encounters with its traces and documents, but, likewise, does not police the boundaries between affectively engaged, "aroused" encounters and desiccated, mechanical, encounters with the archival trace as evidence.

It is important, while challenging some of Amad's logic, to hold onto the counter-archive as one possible form that material rhetorical tactics take and a measure through which to understand the rhetorical encounters that take place there. The counter-archival, then, is what is most rhetorical, most tactical about the archive itself, not an external or opposing force. In suggesting below that the archival and the counter-archival are not opposed forces, but the same force encountered *differently* and through different intensities, I am arguing that the archive is always a rhetorical phenomenon, and as it is constructed of many apparatuses, documents, recordings, materials, buildings, sites, and multiple logics, it is worthwhile to connect this counter-archive to the archive's "Berlin Keys," to recall Latour's concept.

Intensifying the Keys to the Archive

As discussed at length in Chapter 3, in his "Berlin Key" essay, and in *We Have Never Been Modern*, Latour articulates his concept of the mediator. Attending to the particular rhetorical power and agency of these mediators, we can see the rhetorical "agency" of the archive a bit differently than it was seen above. As with Latour's altered conception of the key, the archive moves from being a "simple tool" to assume, in his words, "all the

dignity of a mediator, a social actor, an agent, an active being.” As I argued in Chapter 3 (in the context of discussing Anti-Drone Wear), Latour’s mediator not only mediates social or cultural subjectivity, it also has, in whatever form it is found, in whatever things it takes place through, particular affordances and limitations that are part of the “mediator” itself.

The archive as mediator does more, that is, than constituting the archive’s “we,” as Biesecker points out. If archives (and archival materials) are like “Berlin keys,” in that they are mediators *made* out of material matters, then they are and do more than (only) mediate social relationships, constituting more than the “scene” for social subjectivity. This multiplies the archive, turning it into a chain of many links, instead of a single “site” with internal architecture and logic. Unlike Latour’s key, though, I see the archive not as a single mediator inserted into a chain of human and nonhuman associations, but itself such a chain and process, linking many different kinds of actors, agencies, and “active beings.” The question then, is by what manner do the many things that link together to form the archive affect and encounter each other? What is the means of their tactics in encountering each other?

That dynamic, I argue, is best developed through returning to Deleuze’s concept of intensification, discussed in Chapter 2. Intensification allows the opportunity to see a different dynamic in the archive than one involving a force (the archival) and its exterior opposite (the counter-archive), which will in turn allow the opportunity to see the means of rhetorical tactics in the links holding many heterogeneous elements together in the archive.

The possibilities of intensification with respect to audiovisual archival materials can easily be seen in a brief example. I consider here quickly Martin Arnold's *Life Wastes Andy Hardy*. I do not dwell with it at length because as a project, it lacks the political content and context that the tactical projects I have been considering have, and that Walid Raad's Atlas Group project exemplifies. I turn to Arnold's film for the moment, because one of the elements crucial to the videos in the Atlas Group Archive—intensification through temporal manipulation—Arnold's film brings into even greater relief, allowing easier isolated examination. Arnold's film manipulates one of the popular and sentimental Andy Hardy films from the late 1930s, starring Mickey Rooney and Judy Garland. By obsessively looping very short sequences of the film, and then allowing the clip to move forward only another moment, what would have gone by in the original film in normal time is sustained, repeated, *intensified*, for scrutiny. Hands clasped and rubbed together, loop and continue in what resembles a neurotic fit. Rooney's boyish face gyrates, stuck in its singular expression, and Garland sings, forward and backward the same words of a song, her voice and body oddly distorted in the endless loop. Arnold treats the Andy Hardy film like an archive, and finds each moment, each frame a different document stored there, but he does not look for positivist, empirical *information*, or even visible evidence. What Arnold discovers within the Andy Hardy films is a different counter-archival charge than Amad argues for, since it is *from within* the image as objectified record of mechanized time, which Bergson laments, and from which Amad tries to recover it. Arnold finds a different affective quality than likely intended with the film, through using it as an archive of qualitative time and movement, rather than positivistic knowledge. While it is most surely that as well, I wish to point to

another possibility. The Andy Hardy film, for Arnold, perhaps as historian now, archives and stores a different register of knowledge than is typically expected, but this is not through a different force or potential than the archival. It is through that same force seen differently, at a different intensity. Meanwhile, that intensity is not *stored* so much in a single trace, the frame of film, but links together through many different elements, Latour's chain of associations, and is itself encountering Martin Arnold as much as encountered by him. In other words, rather than opposing the counter-archival impulse to the archival, or adding it on as a supplement, we see here that it is the archival impulse itself, deployed at a different 'intensity,' toward another goal, but meanwhile, it's not quite or not just Arnold's goal that is enacted here.

My claim is that this film has become a new "composition" and a new "body" through the exposure of different intensities within the materials, rather than through combining them with other entities to form something new. I am calling it a new "body" to get at a point about the materiality of composing. According to Deleuze in *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, Spinoza defines a 'body' in two ways. First is the "relations of motion and rest, of speeds and slownesses between particles, that define a body, the individuality of a body" (123). This "kinetic" definition of a body, the relations between speeds and slownesses *is not* definition by forms or functions. "The important thing," Deleuze argues here, "is to understand life, each living individuality not as a form, or a development of form, but as a complex relation between differential velocities, between deceleration and acceleration of particles. A *composition* of speeds and slownesses on a plane of immanence" (123). Arnold's film may, in one sense, literalize that insight, but Spinoza's second definition of a body is as important here. "A body affects other bodies,

or is affected by other bodies,” Deleuze says. “It is this capacity for affecting and being affected that also defines a body in its individuality” (123). This anticipates the ‘assemblage’ Deleuze articulates in his later books with Guattari, which Hawk connected to composition in his “Reassembling Postprocess” essay, which I revisit here. According to Hawk’s reading, Deleuze and Guattari’s assemblage is a “connected collection of animate and inanimate bodies, actions and passions, and enunciations and statements in constant motion” (78). In *Thousand Plateaus*, meanwhile, Deleuze and Guattari write that “to the relations composing, decomposing, or modifying an individual there correspond *intensities* that affect it, augmenting or diminishing its power to act; these intensities come from external parts or from the *individual’s own parts*. Affects are becomings” (256).

As I discussed previously, this illustrates a point Hawk makes in “Reassembling Postprocess”: the *rhetorical compositions we make* come together through a variety of matters. Thus, according to Hawk, thinking the assemblage means that “writing, rhetoric, and communication function at a variety of levels and through multiple species and objects that a traditional model of the writing process and a dialogic model of the rhetorical situation don’t account for.” Writing this way, “within the assemblage,” Hawk says, “would entail processes of engaging with situations to perform functions that contribute to the production and evolution of those situations” (81). I would argue that the same criteria extend to understanding the rhetorical encounter and material rhetorical tactics. On Hawk’s view, then, in some *real* way, we form rhetorical, material, *ontological* assemblages with entities of all sorts, and in our “compositions” composition itself and its situation are emergent, and co-constitutive. But I think there is an additional

lesson to be learned here: that is that the *intensities* altering Arnold's video, are already *in* it in some way. That the new compositions, new assemblages, come into being not through forging connections with bodies external to the Andy Hardy film that just *affect* the respective bodies of these films. Instead they *encounter* other bodies in a different way, and that encounter occasions the "individual film's own parts" to produce the intensities that "affect" them, so much so that, I am claiming, they *become* new compositions, new rhetorical beings.

In other words, the scene of the archival encounter, the situation, assemblage, or ecology, through which rhetorical tactics take place with the archive, is not simply there, a "live event," as was clear from Raad's concerns about the Lebanese Civil War and Derrida's radical deconstruction of the archived event. Likewise, the temporal changes in Arnold's video are simultaneously there *and* invented. The connection we need to draw here is between these two broad threads: On the one hand, the radical virtuality within the event, the archive, the trace, *and* on the other, the radical mediation of the things *of which* these are made, of the *stuff*, or keys to and of the archive, if we keep in mind that the *key* to the archive here is much like Latour's Berlin key, a mediator. The changes effected here, changes in intensity, are changes that do not operate simply in a realm of logical relations, but affect and are *effected* by material beings, in relations.

The change from being merely informative beings with its function as archival material (index) to being *enchanted, delighting, or even perplexing* is not the domination of an excess over order, but order itself turned to different, singular sense, as Deleuze means in *Difference and Repetition*, when he argues that "beneath the general operation of laws, however, there always remains the play of singularities" (*DR* 25). In other words,

the singular, intensive, affective or in Amad's terms, "qualitative" is not opposed to the general, quantitative, or the positivistic as an outside force in dialectical opposition to it, or in excess of it, but resides *within* it. As will become clear below, there is a way to relate the archive and the counter-archive, which does use the latter to supplant and replace the former, but admits of them running alongside each other, as different modalities, or intensities of the same movement. Not only is the archive, then, a site of invention, as Biesecker argues, or of affective disorder, as Amad argues, but reveals itself as one of Latour's mediators, which are "actors endowed with the capacity to translate what they transport, to redefine it, to redeploy it, and also to betray it" (*We Have Never Been Modern* 81). These mediators, distinguished by Latour from "intermediaries" are those material things through which events (and thus the event of "history," ever subject of the archive) are emergent. The work of "mediation," as Latour has it undermines the modern conception of a gulf between nature and culture, between *thing* and *subject*, is, in one sense, of a piece with what has preceded here, the emphasis on the *qualitative* properties of media technologies as archival voiced by Amad, and the inventive, productive (that is rhetorical) force of the archive in general as voiced by Biesecker and Morris. Latour's move is helpfully further, though, in that in the presence of these mediators, and the concomitant quasi-objects, the event of mediation is not a transfer between two existing entities, one being nature, for instance, and the other being culture, but the specific emergence from the event of mediation of the resultant entities. Martin Arnold, in this sense, through the mediating act of intensifying the Andy Hardy film emerges as much from this encounter as the new media work does, and all of this is through the materials and technologies, the *quasi-objects* of the contemporary media

archive as it exists with the digital tools available to Arnold. But these are not *merely* tools that he picks up and deploys to alter Judy Garland's image. Rather, in a real way, they gather him into their own intensive folds. In this way, the tactical possibilities in encounters among such mediators and with such mediators appear to be in the concept of *intensity*.

A clear key to Deleuze's understanding of intensity, which is closely related to repetition and difference, is at the beginning of *Difference and Repetition*, where he relates the Borges story "Pierre Menard, Author of the Don Quixote," which tells of that man's verbatim rewrite of the Cervantes novel. Deleuze has it this way "In this case, the most exact, the most strict repetition has as its correlate the maximum of difference ('The text of Cervantes and that of Menard are verbally identical, but the second is almost infinitely richer ...')" (xxii) which suggests intensity is not a quantifiable difference (the two texts were "verbally identical") even while it is a "maximum of difference." A difference in intensity, Deleuze argues, is pure difference itself, undetectable by quantitative measures rooted in the logic of identity:

Between the intensive and thought, it is always by means of an intensity that thought comes to us. The privilege of sensibility as origin appears in the fact that, in an encounter, what forces sensation and that which can only be sensed are one and the same thing, whereas in other cases the two instances are distinct. In effect, the intensive or difference in intensity is at once both the object of the encounter and the object to which the encounter raises sensibility (*DR* 144).

This intensity, though, need not be understood as a *challenge* to the logic of the archive, but as the redeployment of it, in a more affective *encounter*. Intensification, then, changes

the internal dynamics of the logic of the archive, and encounters it *differently*. Nor, as will become clear below, will it always intensify in the same way. Different, *singular* encounters with the media archive will produce different modes of intensity.

Secrets in the Open Archive

A return to Raad's work will help flesh this out, especially the several videos that are the centerpieces to the Atlas Group project. Raad's work under the auspices of the Atlas Group, attends to the 1975-1990 Lebanese Civil War, which lacks a definitive audiovisual archive. This, however, according to Raad, is not only due to a lack of complete and comprehensive recording, as if the "total archive" Foucault mentions in "Of Other Spaces" were in mind (25). Rather, it is because, according to Raad, the nature of the Lebanese Civil War does not have the character of an objective, *quantifiable* event that could be captured in such a way (Raad, 180). His procedure, then, is not to expose gaps in the archive through the circulation of documentary films, using existing, entirely truthful images as traces of the war. Instead, the work produced and circulated under the Atlas Group name (during a fifteen year period from 1989-2004) is a web of false documents, attributed to an array of (sometimes) invented characters. These videos and documents do not fictionalize the war in the method of commercial film or literary narrative, creating a fictional and dramatic story within historic events, but interrogate the possibility of an historical record of the war at all. Raad's intensification of audiovisual images (video and photography, not film) as history, evidence, *and* as affective singularities shows *as* history the abstraction that is called the Lebanese Civil War. Raad shows the counter-archival power of moving images does not *necessarily* challenge,

threaten, or attempt to overturn the archive, but alters its conception without reducing or removing its logic. The positivist historical impulse, valuing accuracy, and objective truth is opposed to the valuation of fiction. But in the Atlas Group videos Raad made, the distinction drawn between truth and fiction, in the terrain of history, is a false distinction. In an interview with Bomb Magazine, Raad said, “It is also important for us to note that the truth of the documents we research does not depend solely on their factual accuracy. We are concerned with facts, but we do not view facts as self-evident objects that are already present in the world” (Gilbert). This fictional approach does not oppose itself to the object and activity of history. Raad’s project depends on another version of historical work, which is not reducible to a positivist view of events. Raad deploys what Amad calls the “post-positivist” counter-archive. This however, is not “raiding” archives for their hidden secrets and buried stories, nor is it pushing out, as Amad suggests at the end of her book, the historians to make room for the artists. Raad’s work, in a real sense, operates as both, in its intensification of the historical impulse.

Intensification is, in short, *qualitative*, rather than quantitative difference. His videotape, *Dead Weight of a Quarrel Hangs* (1999) which compiles three earlier tapes—*Missing Lebanese Wars* (1996), *Secrets in the Open Sea* (1997), and *Miraculous Beginnings* (1998)—follows three different threads of the virtual history of the Lebanese Civil War. In the compilation’s first tape, *Missing Lebanese Wars*, the country’s most eminent historians spend their Sunday afternoons betting at the horse track. Instead of betting on which horses win, they are betting on the official photo finish, as it will appear in the next day’s newspaper, whether it will portray the horse before crossing the finish line, during its crossing, or after it has crossed. This scene, like its subject, is portrayed in

elliptical fashion, in tight close ups, of the sides and backs of the men's heads, and quick dissolves between the images, to frustrate any attempt to get a secure picture of who these men are, to, as Laura Marks points out in her discussion of the tape, "deny the camera's ability to capture visible evidence" (108). But it is the very tension within the image of whether what is being evidenced is *in fact visible at all* that forms the thrust of Raad's video, and locks it into a different archival/counter-archival dynamic than a struggle between evidence (as objective, and visible) and affect (as qualitative and excessive of and threatening to film-as-evidence).

This is most obvious in the next two tapes compiled in *Dead Weight*. The second of the three, *Secrets in the Open Sea*, has an elegant conceit: according to this tape's (fictional) account, the Lebanese army, during the war, found several large blue photo prints—photographic prints portraying nothing but the color blue, each a slightly different shade than the other, and each quite large, 43 x 68 inches. According to the tape's voice over, ten of these were sent to laboratories in the US and black-and-white photographs of militia fighters were (somehow) revealed to be hidden in the blue photos. Once identified, it turned out that all of the people portrayed in the images had drowned in the Mediterranean during the war. This information is revealed through a voice over in a man's even-toned voice, reminiscent of those in documentary films, while footage of Lebanon in everyday activities is visible, such as a flower vendor selling his wares, and several people strolling along Beirut's seaside walk. After almost two minutes of this other footage, when black and white images are shown, presumably those recovered from within the blue photos, they are displayed in quick dissolves, like the horse track scene at the beginning of *Missing Lebanese Wars*. There is a clear mismatch between the voice

over discussing blue photos that we have not seen (after a short clip of the Mediterranean) and the ostensibly innocuous everyday footage of Lebanon. The tape ends with the ten blue images displayed in quick succession. This tall tale reveals a different truth from its ostensible and impossible subject matter: the truth of the photographic record of such a thing as the Lebanese War both recording and *not making visible* the truth of the event. Raad's mock research project does not ridicule or show the lie to the desire to find history in archival traces such as photographs and films, but instead suggests that a different sort of truth from "visible evidence" is recorded *in addition to* the visible, by the same operation and apparatus as the visual. The dynamic in operation in *Secrets in the Open Sea*, though, works within an impulse to history making, even as it is an affective form of history, one that records relations and truths that are not reducible to the visible, *as well as those that are visible*.

Miraculous Beginnings, the third tape compiled in *Dead Weight*, also reflects this relationship between the visible and invisible characteristics of an archive of the war. This tape opens on an empty apartment balcony, overlooking a village and some mountains, and a caption in the lower left of the screen identifies the location as Chbanieh, Lebanon, the "village of President Sarkis," and the date as June 1994. A speech of Sarkis's is audible, at first, but untranslated into English. This is quickly replaced by another voice over, a man's even-toned, documentary-like voice, in Arabic, but translated in subtitles. This voice over informs us that president Elias Sarkis carried a camera with him and snapped the shutter every time he thought that the war had ended. Next is played a 30 second "roll of film" that was found among the president's effects on his death, proving the story that he had been snapping these photos. What we see is a

rapid succession of snap shots of different styles and compositions (and presumably from wildly different sources) of Lebanon throughout the course of the war, each on the screen for a single frame. In these, we see, among many other things: a courtyard outside a public building, the traffic in Lebanon, cranes surrounding buildings halfway between construction and destruction, several sunsets, rural villages and their hillsides, television screens, a woman laying on a couch, and so on. Meanwhile on the sound track is heard a layered chirping of birds, mixed with the sound of a cuckoo clock.

What is visible here? Is what Raad portrays here, both in its archival force and in its relationship to history, a dialectical challenge in any way to the possibility of each of these images to serve as evidence? Instead, it seems, these are offered *as* evidence, as evidence of a different order than what Amad criticizes, but also different in kind from what she sees as the counter-archival power of the media, in its hungry, excessive recording of the everyday. What is visible here, is not only visible in the *index* these images mark, but in the habits and practices of image making that account for a history of something like the Lebanese Civil War, factional, multiple, and ultimately irreducible to *just* what is in front of the lens. But, the act of pointing the lens is deeply implicated in the truths found in what it records, Raad's videos suggest.

For instance, the second part of *Miraculous Beginnings* portrays the footage ostensibly shot by "Camera Operator #17," a Lebanese government agent parked in a van along the Corniche, a seaside walkway in Beirut, which according to the on-screen text relating this part of the tape's narrative, is a popular meeting place for "double agents" government officials, political pundits, and the like. All of the text plays over a black frame, while street traffic noise (likely meant to represent the Corniche) fills the audio

track. We learn next that vans were parked at 18-meter intervals, installed with manned cameras, to monitor all the Corniche's activities. We learn, as well, that "Camera Operator #17" diverted his camera from his object to record the sunset every night from 1995 until he was fired in June of 1996, and that he was allowed to keep some of the sunset footage. All of the footage but for a "few minutes" was confiscated by the Lebanese government. The last five minutes of the video is the remaining footage "unedited." The sunset footage shows the walkway, and is played in high speed. People walk, jog, bicycle, and run through the frame, while others hang around the seaside railings and talk or watch the sunset. This scene does more than just present what was in front of the camera, and it is not the overwhelming detail that perverts it for use in positivist history, but that what is presented here is the invisible side of history, the (imaginary) way footage like this comes into being and then becomes an archival trace. We are looking not only at these sunsets, just like in the snapshots the Lebanese president was supposed to have taken, but at all the ways that such image-making practices (official and unofficial, public and private) record, shape, and define the history and reality they portray. But let us think just for a moment of the setting sun's rays as mediators in an archive made up of a complex, and pervertible, chain of different entities each with their own attractions and repulsions.

Like "Camera Operator #17," the character Souheil Bachar, from the tape *Hostage: The Bachar Tapes (English Version)* (2001), centers the relations between the visible and invisible in an intensifying move. Raad attributed these tapes to Bachar, who is played by a Lebanese actor, who, according to Raad is known well enough in Lebanon

that there is no mistaking the inauthenticity of the tapes. In the US, though, where the actor is not well known, the possibility remains that Bachar can be taken for genuine.⁹

“Tape #17,” the first of the two Bachar tapes in *Hostage* begins with a prologue, consisting of a gray screen with black subtitles in the lower portion. A man’s voice speaks in Arabic, identifying himself as Bachar, and asking that his voice in the rest of the tape be dubbed in the local language of whatever country the video is presented. He also requests that the dubbing be done in “a neutral-toned female voice.” When the video proper begins, Bachar is seated on a stool, looking disheveled and facing the camera in a small white room, with a white sheet duct taped to the wall behind him. As he talks, his voice is low in the sound track, audible, but attenuated, and, as predicted in the video’s prologue, a “neutral-toned” female voice translates what Bachar narrates. He narrates, directly into the camera, in this first scene, his experience being the only Lebanese hostage during the late 1980s with five Americans held. He expresses his dismay that, after the five Americans were released, each published a memoir about their time in captivity. Bachar claims disbelief that there needed to be *five* different books telling of the same event. This claim is tongue-in-cheek, as Bachar’s tape will, like *Dead Weight* before it, complicate the finality of history that motivates the need for only a single telling or record of the event. For much of the tape, Bachar addresses the camera directly, expressing his frustration with the American understanding of the hostage situation, with the five books published on it, with the sexual anxieties in the cell that the Americans concentrated on his Lebanese body, which the Americans found disgusting, but could not stop touching. Meanwhile, the footage of Bachar degrades, is overlapped with, or vertically spliced with archival news footage of the hostage crisis and its aftermath. What

is most interesting, for my purposes here, though, is one scene, in “tape #31,” which is a two minute and twelve second long shot of the Mediterranean, without sound. In an “appendix” that follows this shot, which shows Bachar standing on the shores of the Mediterranean, we learn, through a subtitle (when it appears, all sound cuts out, and returns when the title is gone), the length of the shot of the Mediterranean, two minutes and twelve seconds, and its significance: that is the average length of the “video statements” Bachar had to record during his “captivity.”

Thus, Raad’s cameras, both still and motion, both film and video, are aimed not at recording *as much as possible*, but at structuring a different relationship to the notion and logic of recording evidence of events such as the war, and training us to look for evidence that does not only exist on the poles of visible/invisible or quantitative/qualitative, but puts all of these elements into use in an intensifying engagement with the lens-based image as possible archival document. The object and subject of *Dead Weight of a Quarrel Hangs*, and the *Bachar Tapes*, are *qualities*, in the sense Deleuze means in *Difference and Repetition* when he says

Empiricism truly becomes transcendental, and aesthetics an apodictic discipline, only when we apprehend directly in the sensible that which can only be sensed, the very being *of* the sensible: difference, potential difference and difference in intensity as the reason behind qualitative diversity. It is in difference that movement is produced as an ‘effect,’ that phenomena flash their meaning like signs. The intense world of differences, in which we find the reason behind qualities and the being of the sensible, is precisely the object of a superior empiricism (56-57).

The being of the sensible here is that which is not accounted for in the polarity between the positivist archive and the excessive, “anarchic” counter-archive. The dynamic in Deleuze’s conception and in Raad’s videos is not dialectical relationship, but the possibility of re-deploying or re-encountering the quantitative logic of the archive. This does not show *its* limitations, as if they were within the logic, institution, or apparatus of the archive, but shows the limitations of opposing Raad’s qualitative history to a quantitative one of accumulation. This difference is not one inherent *only* in the material or technology used—it is not a special characteristic of the cinematic apparatus. It is, instead, a difference in the encounter with the archival, with the “event” (in Raad’s case, the event of the war) and with whatever particular form of mediation one is encountering the event through, which produces new “bodies” through intensifying their characteristics. Thus, the logic of the archive, quantitative, accumulative, and *disaffected*, is not resisted, challenged, or upended by the inherently counter-archival capacities of the media apparatus, but through different practices and habits in the encounter with history.

These videos challenge, like Biesecker and Derrida, both the positivistic notion of the film or photo as *simple* archival trace, *and* Amad’s assumption that the counter-archival, the “post-positivist” affective engagement undermines or is in excess of the document as history. Raad’s films function *as* documents, histories of an event so multiple, so affective in its nature that simple, quantitative, objective traces could not account for it. In other words, the method of history that Raad needs to employ is to use the counter-archive in the service of the archive, to deploy the accumulative force of the archive toward the affective and singular *intensity* needed to encounter the Lebanese

Civil War. It is worth remembering here that the Atlas Group's activities were framed in public not as arts activities, but as the activities of historical *research*.

In any case, one way to read this is to point to the ironic rhetoricity of the camera as archival technology. It *does indeed* record the event of which horse has won the race, but as Biesecker and Raad both hasten to point out, the archive's materials are not *simply* reliable traces of the real. These historians, the professionals most invested in the archive, know that there are other meanings, functions, and uses for the materials of the archive. But I want us to see something else, something that is motivated by my turn toward Latour's mediator. In Raad's narrative, the camera is a *mere* tool of the historians and the bribed photographer. Viewing it as a mediator, however, suggests a different lever of rhetorical inventiveness with respect to archives, archival media, and archive technologies. The horse race is organized by the existence of the camera, and the seats in which the historians gamble are behind the photographer's station. The finish line is designed in such a way to make it best suitable for the camera. The historians here, in a sense, alter the chains of association linking the camera, its photochemical paper, the horses, and *of course* all of these as inserted into a terrible and confusing civil war. Meanwhile, though, by inventing these historians, and not *so readily* letting on to that fact, and then inserting them and their stories into the art world, Raad's intervention also transforms the chains of association linking museums and exhibition spaces to the materials and practice of archives. *My* gamble here is to get us to think about these cameras, their photopaper, and so on as mediators in Latour's sense. Not inert vessels of social meaning manipulated by Raad or his imaginary historians, nor the overwhelming material determinants that govern society that we hear from orthodox Marxism, but

dizzily between these. What this does to the archive is to multiply it, transform it from one “scene” of invention to a complex network of inventive mediators, each of which offers particular and peculiar affective, compositional, and tactical possibilities.

As this turn toward the notion of mediator from Latour is meant to effect, the traces found in the archive are linked in *transformable* chains with the event we are typically meant to discover there. But I have pushed further and suggested that the archive itself is such a chain. Raad claims that one of his chief concerns is the question of “experience” itself. In pushing his archive in different directions, we can see these cameras, their images, and the museum walls “experiencing” this war differently. In other words, what we gain by imagining the rhetoricity of the archive in these terms is imagining the archive not as *one* thing that has inventive capacities or effects inventive rhetorical force, as a “scene” of invention. In one sense, it is indeed that. It is also, though, a network of related mediators—cameras, papers, graphite, museums, academic and political institutions, the slippery and queasy concept of experience—each of which can be intervened into to form different compositions, while each itself intervenes in the production of the meaning of “event” and “experience.” I think we can conceive the rhetoricity of archives in terms of this sense of the term mediator, imagining whatever archive we are encountering as a cluster of mediators of this sort, and conceptualize the rhetorical inventiveness occurring there through this mediating process. Which means to take Biesecker’s important insight that the archive is a “scene” of invention and add to it the dizzying possibility that the archive itself is an intensifying process, and event of invention. Invention does not only happen in, at, or through archives, but importantly, the archive is also an ongoing process of inventing, in which there are many connections,

associations, levers, that can be bent, distorted, parodied, inverted, intensified and so forth. In this way, I also hope to multiply the possible forms of Morris's queer movement and argue that these varied connections and links in chains joining different kinds of entities provide different speeds and directions, so to speak, of that movement. And, it is in inserting our work into these spaces and processes that we *compose* whatever it is we make with and within archives.

In Hawk's "Reassembling" essay, he turns to Latour to rethink the materiality of publicness, and argues that the public rhetoric that emerges there, in which "things" become public, "opens the assemblage back onto the outside world in order to make new connections with it possible, continually enacting the process through the invention of new rhetorics." In Latour's material sense of public, which reorients agency and displaces speaking human subjects from the position of sole agents, *things* are active, agential forces, and through the assembly that forms in debating matters, their public itself emerges. Hawk argues that Latour does not provide a new theory for public rhetoric, only the tools needed for its emergence. Each public rhetoric would emerge from its particular material circumstances (91-92).

The affective power of archival media here, through these examples, can be imagined not simply as a *single* power to be found in them, but as a field of intensities, a range of possible powers, approached in encounter, wherein they are not given in advance. Such an observation would provide more fuel for the expanding theory of rhetorical materiality. Once we have effectively included objects, things, ecologies, networks, and ambient environs in our rhetorical ontologies, we can look to these all for

different intensities, different tempos and temporalities, different ways they are encountered, and the different ‘rhetorical things’ forged in such encounters.

The Live Weight of an Archive

We can draw out two vectors of rhetorical possibility from the things I have assembled here. On the one hand, we should take seriously the *com-positionist* form of public rhetoric, and stage our interventions not through demystifying or unmasking, but through new combinations, new accelerations and decelerations. The new combinations we *can* make, though, are not necessarily new combinations of different things in the ordinary sense, but of the intensity of affects within them of their “own parts.” Encounters within the archive, then, as rhetorical compositions, need not *only* assemble different elements from the archive to produce their compositions. The second vector follows this one. By choosing to stage my intervention on the terrain of the question of media *as archive* and *archiving*, I selected materials that best illustrate a weakness in limiting our notion of com-posing to combining clearly different elements: the presumed self-presence and unity of the event. The Deleuzian and Latourian version of rhetoric, and the political intensity I wish to cultivate with it, would have us *let go* of that unity. Raad’s and Arnold’s videos demonstrate not only that there are different intensities in the practice of archiving with media, but that the event recorded is not *just* there. We compose it, in a sense, while simultaneously being composed by its many mediators. And, thus, by encountering its intensities, by putting it into contact with different bodies and other combinations, something else is made. That something else, whether it wants to be or not,

is already faced outward, toward the world, as Hawk put it, and already engaged in the process of composing new publics, quickly *and* slowly, all at once.

Allowing a *tactical* elision between “political” and “ethical” kinds of actions, I would like to return here to Deleuze in *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, as it is clear to me that what he says there has much to do with the possibilities of a future politics in which we place the risky bets on bodies not yet existent. “Spinoza’s ethics,” Deleuze writes, “has nothing to do with a morality; he conceives it as an ethology, that is, as a composition of fast and slow speeds, of capacities for affecting and being affected on this plane of immanence. ... you do not know beforehand what good or bad you are capable of; you do not know beforehand what a body or mind can do in a given encounter, a given arrangement, a given combination” (125).

This all means that the archived event is both virtual *and* material, and shot through with nonhuman agencies. It is virtual in the dual sense that it is too multiple to be completely captured within the logics or technologies of positivistic quantification, as Amad pointed out, and Raad operationalized in his Atlas Group project. It is virtual in the other sense that it is emergent from the material work of mediation that Latour describes. In both cases, it is the work of intensification, which flows through nonhuman *and* human mediators, through quasi-objects and subjects that *tactically* orients the many elements in the archive, which I have argued operates not as one of these Latourian mediators, but more like his chain of associations, a ramifying network or web linking not only material things like documents, cameras, rifles, file cabinets, hard drives, and, as noted above, sunsets, but also the ambitions of historians and their logics, the work of artists and their

logics, the complexities of civil wars, and so on and so forth. Thus, it is also the case that we cannot *simply* separate these nonhuman agencies from “human” agencies and actions.

It also means that despite Derrida’s other keen insights, we have to conclude that the archival apparatus is not *only* the technological substrate of human memory or promise of future, but that it is an agency bound up with and within human elements, heterogeneous to them, which divide what human means, and complicate both “media” and “rhetoric.” This means that the inventive capacities of the archive cannot depend on, as Biesecker’s and Derrida’s and Amad’s logics do, a clear distinction between their human, social consequences and their material elements, which are supposed to subtend this cultural work. Rather, the analysis here of Raad’s archival videos should suggest that the archive, nonhuman entity that it is, is itself part of rhetoric’s public, not so tidily defined as a human community any more, and its operations are not *just* recording but productive.

NOTES

¹ Futurity, though, is itself a slippery concept. A closer examination of it than is possible here would have to include Jacques Rancière’s *Future of the Image*, John Muckelbauer’s *Future of Invention*, which will be discussed in chapter 5, and, of course, a return to Heidegger’s *Being and Time*, which was discussed at greater length in the first chapter.

² Latour, “Where Are the Missing Masses.”

³ See Fawwaz Traboulsi’s *A History of Modern Lebanon* for a lengthy treatment of the complexities of Lebanon’s Civil War (which Traboulsi pluralizes to underline that complexity), in the context of Lebanon’s longer history, dating back to the Ottomans.

⁴ <http://www.theatlasgroup.org/>

⁵ For an analysis of Raad’s work in the context of the politics of documentary aesthetics in the current historical moment, see T. J. Demos, *The Migrant Image: The Art and Politics of Documentary during Global Crisis*. There, Demos argues that Raad’s Atlas Group archive (along with the work of other artists) demonstrates “a clear commitment to joining poetic presentations to commemorative and documentary commitments,” an observation I wholly agree with (172). Likewise, Demos notes that Foucault’s writings on “the politics of truth” help him think through the problems he addresses in his book, since, in Foucault’s thinking, he finds “a politics that exceeds the definition of truth as a matter of verifiable content and proposes in its place an expanded field of contestation and problematization, of critical thinking and creative experimentation” (174), which I would also agree with and identify as rhetoric.

⁶ In art theory and in performance studies there is a growing body of scholarship around the question of the archive’s productive possibilities. See Merewether; Sven Spieker, *The Big Archive: Art from Bureaucracy*; Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire*; and Simone Osthoff, *Performing the Archive: the Transformation of the Archive in Contemporary Art from Repository of Documents to Art Medium*.

⁷ See also Domietta Torlasco, *The Heretical Archive: Digital Memory at the End of Film*.

⁸ For more on the archival turn in contemporary art, see note 6 above.

⁹ In a 2002 interview, Raad is ambivalent about the possibility that the Bachar tapes can be taken for genuine: “the main character is played by a well-known Lebanese actor, so he’s less likely to be confused in Lebanon. But outside, he is usually confused as a real hostage. Sometimes it doesn’t really bother me that it is thought to be real. And then at other times, I’m a bit troubled by the confusion.” John Menick “Imagined Testimonies: An Interview with Walid Raad” *The Thing* 2002.

CHAPTER 5:
MAKING (RHETORIC) DO

In the preceding analyses of the Transborder Immigrant Tool, Anti-Drone Wear, and the Atlas Group Archive I have shown that the public and rhetorical work of tactical media and similar practices inheres in its material character and elements and agencies that are irreducible to mere tools manipulated *like* linguistic signs. The attention paid to materiality in “new materialist” and “posthumanist” discourses complicates the very notion of public, social, and political when imagining the rhetorical *work* such activities do. If, say, the Transborder Immigrant Tool is a work of non-linguistic public rhetoric, with an explicit, if ambient and interconnected, political valence, then its rhetoricity and tactical usefulness originates and concludes in the entangled interactions among many materialities—the actions of the cell phone, the desert, GPS satellites, and so on—rather than exclusively in the human subjects involved in the project.

To approach the “tactical” in this posthumanist and new materialist key requires a re-tooling of Certeau’s definition of the tactical. The Certeauian conception of the tactical, which has immeasurably influenced the emergence of tactical media, assumes the inventive *mis*-use of the things of consumer culture, of the products of everyday life limning a great deal of *active*, appropriative use. Under my retooling of the tactical, it appears that while we are misusing the things of everyday life, they are misusing each other as well. And it is that range of misuse, redirection, and tactical re-orientation that

my analysis has studied, arguing for a tactical appropriation of Certeau's tactic for the material turn in rhetorical studies.

This posthumanist transformation of the tactical reveals a dimension of rhetorical activity not yet fully analyzed, even by scholars participating in the material turn. It reveals rhetoric *as* a "making do," both in the sense that *we* make do with our signs and in the sense that our signs make others and other things do. This much is consonant with traditional theories of rhetoric, replacing "persuasion" with "making do," to draw attention to another, more material, more affective and elusive dimension of rhetoric. But the transformed concept of the tactical developed here also reveals a rhetorical "making do" that is irreducible at once to human control *and* the self-presence of matter. In this understanding of rhetoric as a material and tactical "making do," entities of all kinds are constantly involved in rhetorical encounters with each other, in which there is a twofold tactical dimension, in that they can "make" each other "do" what they weren't doing, and that in doing so, they "make do" with the entities that they are encountering. Scaling this admittedly ephemeral sense of materiality to the domain of human politics, my analysis of Adam Harvey's Anti-Drone Wear project reveals the way that it enacted a tactically productive encounter between the drone's thermal gaze and the project's clothing, implicating the drone in its own avoidance. This sort of material making do, which I am calling rhetorical, does not *quite* simply originate with Harvey's desire to make a change in the world, nor with the wearer's desire to not be exploded by a Hellfire missile. Rather, those human desires, and the rhetorical possibilities that symbolicity affords them as a means of expression intersect with other materialities at all times.

Extending the insights of new materialist and posthumanist conceptions of rhetoric, these tactical possibilities are not *wholly* human, even when deployed in domains that are obviously the realm of human politics, like surveillance, immigration, and war. Drawing on the work of Latour and like-minded scholars, I have argued for an entangled sense of the tactical, in which the agencies of nonhuman and human actions are inseparably knotted together. Of course, the inseparability between human and nonhuman actions in such tactical projects *does not* mean that *we humans do not do* anything. Adam Harvey developed his Anti-Drone Wear. Walid Raad made his archive of the Lebanese Civil War. And the Electronic Disturbance Theater coded the Transborder Immigrant Tool. If we take to heart, however, that the materiality involved is *emergent*, and itself irreducible to *mere* presence, then attending to the agency of the nonhuman elements in these projects is *neither* seeing matter as determinant *nor just* the affordances of an artist's materials, like the particular grain of a carver's wood, or the veins in a sculptor's marble.

That is, my argument points to the multiplication and intensification of tactical interventions in the world, rather than to their exhaustion. My emphasis has been on the ways that such projects intervene in and perform a movement of assembly and composing, at once in material, affective, ontological, and discursive domains of being. Like the Heideggerian rhetoric that Rickert develops, I have pointed to the ways that the many entities encountering each other in these tactical projects reveal and conceal aspects of their being. Their disclosure opens certain kinds of effects, and like the veins in a sculptor's marble, affords certain kinds of interventions, withdrawing from the encounter other possibilities. At the same time, though, I have pointed to the ways that the entities

involved can divert, pervert, or convert those disclosures, tactically reorienting the things they come into contact with. This *ontological* sense of the rhetorical tactic is an understudied dimension of possibility for political projects. Taking seriously what the artist-activists studied here already know, that the drone and the border are *turned* (troped) into different things in encounter with the respective tactical projects—taking that seriously as a mode of rhetorical invention opens different possibilities for rhetorical practice.

But if this political, interventionist rhetorical tactic is pregnant with possibilities, it is also laden with untold risks, because it implicates tactics that themselves are not *simply* real, but undergo a process of realization. Meanwhile, the “materiality” that is involved in these tactical encounters is, likewise, not *simply* present, there exerting its force. These two characteristics, emergent tactics *and* emergent materiality make the political utility of deploying tactics riskier and more unstable than those found in, say, Certeau or Critical Art Ensemble’s manifestos. In this way, one risk I have faced in making this argument is to take seriously the insights of the material turn, to chart the emergent character of the materialities involved and their tactical potential, *while* keeping interventionist politics as a possibility with respect to the tactical, *without* recentering the human agents as origin or destination of all of the tactical movements involved. Thus, my argument has been for concepts that have been described frequently with the modifiers “not *simply*,” “not quite,” and so forth, to mark the virtual and emergent qualities of the retooled sense of the tactical that I am developing. This emergent and virtual character, though, poses challenges for those who wish to make interventions in real matters of deep

concern. Locating the tactical in this way, though, has distinct advantages that can come to overwhelm such challenges.

If we take seriously these materialist insights—that material tactics are emergent through “things” that are never reducible to their merely present characteristics or there-ness, that what we are dealing with is “ambient” (in Rickert’s terms), an “assemblage” (in Deleuze’s terms), or a “chain of associations” (in Latour’s terms)—then the very act of political intervention, public rhetorical action, is altered significantly. For, in this way, change is no longer a matter of simply displacing a troubling relation of power, redistributing the resources of a society, or of reframing the terms of a particular social issue. In recognizing that each of these very things is *part* of a cluster of relations, an ecology involving the typical terms of public rhetoric and politics—symbols, concepts, discourses—and a material ecology, a chain of associations involves a significant realm of other things, and changes in those associations may indeed affect the other formations in the ecology. By developing my understanding of the tactical along these lines, I have essayed to address the main objections such thinking can face: On the one hand, it may appear at first that in such materialist thinking, conceptualizing and enacting political projects is seemingly unnecessary, or useless. On the other, that if the effects of such actions are not reducible to the aims and intents of their human agents, their political character, such as it is, becomes arbitrary.

I have addressed the concern that distributed agency renders political action both useless and arbitrary by arguing that if agency is distributed among many different entities within an ecology, displacing and decentering human activity in the understanding of what constitutes political action is not the same thing as evacuating

human activity altogether. By extending the work of other scholars (Latour, Bennett, Rickert and others), who reframe the concept of the political in materialist and ecological terms, I have argued that conceptualizing and enacting political, *tactical* projects is revived, rather than emptied out by an ecological understanding of the political. In fact, my argument has been for the kinds of micropolitical actions that have always characterized the tactical, actions that can ripple out, or, as often, come to an immediate stop. In any case, the tactical has always—since Certeau—been a politics of ephemerality and contingent risk, indeterminate, and *inventive* as much as inter-ventive. What characterizes my twist in the concept is in my insistence that the tactical actions in such projects are not always and only undertaken by their human agents, and that this is cause for reflection and careful analysis, rather than despair, since it affords greater opportunity to rethink the mechanisms, levers, tools, aims, and agents of the tactical.

From Invention to Tactical “Making”

The turn I have made in rhetorical theory has been to pivot from rhetorical invention to a sustained interest in (the) rhetoric (of) as “making” and “doing.” As my redefinition of the tactical has made clear, my understanding of rhetoric has been inflected on the concept of making, rather than invention. If the turn toward making is to have any traction in rhetoric, it has to, as I see it, demonstrate a useful distinction between making and the canon of invention. Three recent developments in theories of rhetorical invention bear on my version of rhetorical tactics, which is similar to each, but finally becomes different conceptually—Hawhee’s “invention-in-the-middle”; Muckelbauer’s appropriation of Deleuze’s virtual; and Peter Simonson’s “inventional media.”

Debra Hawhee's "invention-in-the-middle" has influenced a great deal of thinking in rhetorical studies about the canon of invention. According to Hawhee in "Kairotic Encounters," theorizing invention through the grammatical middle voice in Greek offers an "alternative to the distinctly objective and subjective models" of invention normally in circulation (17). "In the middle," she argues, "one invents and is invented, one writes and is written, constitutes and is constituted" (18). This passive and active middle voiced invention occurs through the *kairotic* moment of discourse, through which the subject "is called upon to produce discourse" (18). Hawhee advances an exceptionally useful definition of rhetorical invention for my uses here, in grounding it not only in the qualitative "kairotic" moment, but also in the "movement" of discourse, the "turning" that the trope effects, all of which occurs in discourse between subject and object (22). I have argued in a similar fashion for the irreducible "between-ness" of the tactical rhetorical encounters mapped throughout this dissertation, claiming that the tactical reorientation of a thing's being in an encounter with other entities is itself a rhetorical act, regardless of difficulty in locating a discrete actor behind that act. Hawhee argues that the in-the-middle form of invention (between discovery and creation) follows a double movement. First, the "discursive encounter itself forges a different subject," and then this "emergent subject becomes a force in the emerging discourse" (17). In these ways, the movements of tactical influence are similar to the movements Hawhee maps in "Kairotic Encounters."

However, in having emphasized the various ways that various *kinds* of materiality affect and redirect each other, I have moved my understanding of rhetoric beyond discourse, toward including attention to entities irreducible to the discursive. In other

words, to advance a *posthuman* sense of tactical rhetorical invention in-the-middle of things, people, places, affects, radiating body heat, and so on and so forth, it becomes necessary to decouple the concepts of rhetoric from strict association with language, discourse, and subjectivity. The rhetorical encounters studied here, in other words, do indeed involve emergent subjects, whose emergence influences in turn the situation through which they come into subjectivity. Entangled with this subject, though, is also the active role that many other things and materialities play in the process, placing the rhetorical encounter “in-the-middle” here between not only subjects and discourse, but between these, and between things, affects, objects, and so on.

But, if the concepts that have been developed in the present work are to be *useful* to those who wish to intervene in troubling social and political situations, they must tackle, on my view, the side of invention that is concerned with novelty, change, and variation—or Deleuze’s virtual. To what extent, for instance, is the drone “invented” as something *else* in its encounter with Anti-Drone Wear? Or the Lebanese Civil War, an event already past, in its re-imagining through Walid Raad’s Atlas Group Archive? Muckelbauer’s Deleuzian “future of” invention—its virtual character—is useful here because, like Hawhee’s emphasis on the qualitative characteristics of *kairos*, it conceptualizes novelty and change in a qualitative, affective key, short-circuiting the dialectic that insists on understanding the new as either repetition of the same “with a twist” or as a radical break with tradition, the perpetual flight and co-optation of the avant-garde.

Muckelbauer’s extension into rhetorical theory of Deleuze’s concepts—developed especially in *Difference and Repetition*—help advance my conceptualization of what sort

of change occurs in the tactical rhetorical encounter between different (kinds of) things. The virtual, as discussed in Chapter 4 above, in Deleuze's sense, and in Muckelbauer's extension of it, points to emergence rather than to causality. The "future" of invention, Muckelbauer argues, is not caused by its present, but rather *emerges* from it. This "itineration" of change is different from the direct application of rhetorical and political projects with the aim of effecting some specific change in the world. Change, in this Deleuzian and affirmative key, happens through the movements of the virtual. Muckelbauer concludes by arguing that imagining the "future" for invention cannot simply be the attempt to imagine "what comes next for invention," to invent, as it might appear I am doing here, a "new" invention, since, he argues, "such an approach is necessarily a perpetuation of the tradition simply because tradition is nothing other than its own self-overcoming, its own reinvention." He claims, then, that the way to imagine a future *for* invention, a future invention is to "be inclined toward" the common "intensity" of the simultaneous stabilizing and self-overcoming force of tradition (165).

In pointing to the tactical nature of rhetorical encounters among many different entities, in advancing the posthuman retooling of the tactical for rhetoric as a concept inseparable from, but not quite the same thing as, invention, I am suggesting a different way to index a different kind of intensity. Emphasizing the intensity of conceptual contours in the "tradition's" reproduction and self-overcoming, that is, may obscure the way that encounters enact tactical redirections, which I have argued for throughout this present work. We need, then, the Deleuzian invention that Muckelbauer describes, paired with a sense of rhetorical making and making do, to get to the tactical encounters that I theorize here. In other words, as I argued in the preceding chapters, Deleuze's concepts

of intensification and the virtual are crucial elements in my articulation of the materiality of the tactical rhetorical encounter. I view that encounter, and its virtual futurity in much the same way Muckelbauer views rhetorical invention—an instance or moment of novelty that is not reducible either to existing terms for “the same,” nor to a conception of the new that is somehow radically opposite to existing terms. Nevertheless, my analysis tracks a different dynamic than Muckelbauer’s in *Future of Invention*, following the many various forms of materiality, and their intensities involved in the production of the tactical rhetorical encounter.

Addressing many of the same issues raised by Hawhee and Muckelbauer, as well as many others, Peter Simonson offers, as a retooling of invention, the concept of “inventional media.” In Simonson’s recent *RSQ* survey of invention theory, called “Reinventing Invention (Again),” he proposes a new definition of rhetorical invention: “the generation of rhetorical materials,” claiming that the verb “generate” signifies in many different ways and thus, rhetorical generation can occur through “finding, creating, assembling, translating, channeling, or giving form to” (313). Sympathetic to contemporary posthumanist theories, Simonson argues that in addition to traditional discursive forms of rhetorical invention, rhetorical materials “are generated through vitalities that traverse human and non-human realms” (313).

The tactical media works analyzed in the preceding chapters, and the “critical making” works discussed below, all demonstrate tactical rhetorical work that, while inseparably connected to it, exceeds invention. The “in-the-middle” tactics analyzed in the preceding chapters do indeed function in many ways to “generate rhetorical materials,” and produce a kind of rhetorical change that is virtual in the sense that

Muckelbauer (via Deleuze) means, that is variation and repetition all at once. But in pivoting my rhetorical theory toward the tactical space that emerges “in-the-middle” between making and making do, I am suggesting a different key of analysis for materialist rhetorics, oriented toward the complex interplays of materiality and discourse, of things and subjects, complexities that are not quite captured under the sign of invention.

In the concept of tactics that Certeau offered, the individual member of consumer societies tactically “made do” with the products of capital, at once perverting them from their commercially intended purposes and *reinventing* them in the process. The tactical media practitioners inspired by Certeau added dimensions to that in their hacking and re-purposing projects, like those analyzed in the present work, in *making* new things like the Transborder Tool by “making do” with the devices of contemporary power and digital culture. In the same process, though, as I have argued, these devices themselves made and made do with each other, multiplying the various ways that the tactical operates and can be made to do. So, while rhetorical invention “in-the-middle,” coupled with its virtual dimensions, and attention to the various “inventional media” through which invention “generates rhetorical materials,” gets us part of the way toward conceptualizing rhetoric between making and making do, the concept of the tactical encounter conceptualized in the present work is meant to get us further, in large part by building its argument alongside “invention,” in a separate path. So, the retooling of the concept of tactics for a *posthuman* sense of rhetoric is not (only) a retooled concept of rhetorical invention, but is, while inseparable from invention, offered as a different concept.

My argument is that re-tooling the concept of tactics for this “material turn,” giving space to the ways that materiality “makes do” as much as we do not only gets at the problems raised here conceptually, but *adds* inventive facets to a posthuman practice of tactical, political, and ultimately rhetorical work. Working in the background, meanwhile, has been my conviction that rhetoric has always been a *technology* of tactical making do—as Aristotle had it, making do with the available means. I have proposed that we reimagine rhetoric an inventive tactical technology that is not *simply* wielded by its human users.

Thus, the posthuman sense of tactics that this project develops continues to reveal the “tactical” as a crucial rhetorical tool of political change. Yet it emphasizes that the tactical is not reducible to human intentional action, because there are dimensions to the movement of tactics, the process of “making do” that are not, simply, initiated by, directed by, or concluding with a human subject. The absence of a human agent as *sole* origin of the movement of tactics, of the movement of material rhetoric, meanwhile, is not *simply* filled in by the determining actions of self-present matter or technology. Rather there is a co-production, co-action, co-emergence of the humans and nonhumans involved. Finally, that relationship needs to be studied and intervened into if we are to invent *new tactics* for rhetorical and political intervention.

Tactically Remaking Participation

So my innovation in rhetorical theory has been to push it toward developing a concept of rhetoric as “tactical making,” and one that locates the “maker” and “tactician” elsewhere than in a human subject. I reposition the rhetorical act of making in a context of

assembling matters, the coming together and comingling of many different things in encounter. I have developed most of my argument by looking at works that I have identified as tactical media projects, even when, as with Walid Raad's work, that designation is arguable. I have done so to retool the concept of tactics for my posthumanist sense of rhetoric. But less explored here has been the concept of "making," and why it would be necessary to turn to it or analyze it in the first place.

In the 1980s and 1990s, Certeau and the tactical media practitioners who were inspired by him, responded to a cultural imperative to "consume," with the concept of the tactical, the redirection and repurposing of the things of consumer society. An emerging cultural imperative over the past decade appears to replace "consume" with "make," insisting on (while pretending to invite) one's self-fashioning and DIY manufacture. Customization, tinkering, and the like, all of which were connected to practices of resistance in Certeau's formulation, have become, to an increasing degree, neoliberal injunctions.¹

From this cultural and technological situation, a practice called "critical making" has recently started to take shape. Itself a descendent of the art historical projects of tactical media, critical making deploys the tinkering, hacking, customization that is characteristic of neoliberalism toward different goals, addressing the contemporary urgency to re-make democratic participation, through projects like community-building and alternative news media.² Meanwhile, other *kinds* of tactical making have begun to take shape as attempts to remake practices of democracy, which have not been included in the forming paradigm of critical making. Emerging from Silicon Valley ideology have been forms of inventive technological mediations of public problems that further

entrench, rather than “disrupt” (to use a term popular in Valley thinking) the very structures and relationships through which many of the problems come into being in the first place. The project that distills this tendency to its essence is the project called “Code for America,” a non-profit founded to fuel a neoliberalizing version of democratic participation through coding projects that intervene in municipal and local problems. In stark contrast to this tendency has been an intensification of practices of protest, resistance, and direct action, returning to some of the kinds of tactics Certeau and developed.

Also emerging is a return to popular protest, with a concomitant interest in making, hacking, refashioning, and so on. While I have already discussed how the “streets” are no longer “dead capital,” as Critical Art Ensemble wrote in 1996, it is important to recall here that in their return as sites of resistance, the streets have not come back the same as they were in 1968, and appear as highly technologically mediated. That is, street protest and resistance practices from the Occupy Wall Street protests starting in fall of 2011, to the widespread rebellions against police violence in the US starting in summer of 2014, involve and intersect with the same digital materialities involved in the tactical media projects discussed above. At the same time, though, the kinds of hacking, retooling, and making do demonstrated in the recent exhibition at London’s Victoria & Albert Museum, called “Disobedient Objects,” show engagements with technologies and materialities that exceed the digital communication technologies that have been the focus of the present study. Returning attention to these other *things* at the end of this project points outward, toward the multiple ways the retooled concept of tactics developed here can be put to different work.

In a 2011 series of collectively authored manifestos on “Critical Making,” organized and edited by Garnet Hertz, several different praises of the cultural possibility of making are offered. Daniel Charney, for instance, in his contribution called “Power of Making,” claims that “it seems we are in the midst of a great awakening of making, or even as some have declared the dawn of the next (maker driven!) industrial revolution,” and defines “making” as “a type of applied thinking that sits at the core of creating new knowledge of all kinds,” and argues that “the sensibilities of making should actively be made a part of our future” (Critical Making: “Manifestos”). While equally invested in the positive possibilities of “making,” Michael Dieter and Geert Lovink in the same manifesto remind us that “it is no exaggeration to claim that the maker-as-individual is a key figure of today’s neoliberal ontotheology.” They argue that the “philosophy of making emerges at a time when the theoretical project of ‘68 transitions from the work of negation (“unmaking”) to embrace a vitalist position.” Their understanding of the “critical” aspect of critical making, then, is to locate it in a similar gesture to that developed throughout the present work. “The system may be rotten,” they aver, “but it no longer needs to be taken apart,” and claim that they want, instead, to know how to “make history by a thousand small steps.” Expressly rejecting what they read as Latour’s and Bogost’s “acritical” attitude, while accepting the turn to nonhuman activity, Dieter and Lovink ask about the “enigma of the creative critical thing” (Critical Making: “Manifestos”).³ For Dieter and Lovink, the promise of critical making is as aesthetic as it is political, since they claim, “beyond the tired dialectics of real and virtual there is the eternal demand for beauty.” Consonant with the manifesto form, that sentence is followed with a provocative declaration: “Nothing is real but design.” In this way, and throughout

the Critical Making booklets, the practice of critical making is akin to the “critical art” that the Critical Art Ensemble developed as their form of tactical media: critical, political, aesthetic, and material. Meanwhile, their understanding of the “critical” in critical making has more in common with than in distinction from Latour’s position, as is clear from my readings of Latour in the preceding chapters. In any case, the possibilities, and possible shortcomings of making as a critical, tactical practice that involves and implies a host of actors that cannot be reduced to human intending subjects is explored in depth in the Critical Making booklets.

Since the Critical Making booklets were published in 2011, there have been at least two edited volumes on the practice—*DIY Citizenship* and *The Art of Critical Making*—while UC Berkeley, RISD, and several other art schools offer curricula in the practice. Like its predecessor, tactical media, then, critical making operates within the art world as a practice that apparently combines rhetorical and artistic invention. It operates, too, or at least has ambitions to operating, within the activist public sphere. In Hertz’s manifestos, meanwhile, the practice is also emergent from the general technological “makers” culture popularly centered on magazines like *Make* and the series of TED talks. In Hertz’s intro to the first “Critical Making” manifesto, he positions his definition of critical making as something that exceeds the interests of *Make* magazine:

Make has avoided things that are at the core of how I envision this field. Things such as hacker work that circumvents infrastructures, tactical media that is political, circuit bending work that is interested in opening up and messing around with the sealed black boxes of consumer electronics, media archaeological work

that is interested in history and intervening and playing with it, or people that are into making custom “bespoke” things like lowrider cars or bikes (n.p.).

Hertz’s critical making, then, includes forms of cultural, artistic, political, and rhetorical inventions that are not completely contained by neoliberal calls to “tinker,” and, likewise, are irreducible to traditional categories of political participation, categories that have been troubled throughout the present work.

The volume *DIY Citizenship* exemplifies this orientation. In the introduction to that book, the editors, Matt Ratto and Megan Boler, argue that “critical making signals the ways in which productions—whether of video, web-based communication, gardens, radio transmitters, or robots—are understood as politically transformative activities” by the participants and the critics analyzing the activities (1). They also, though, gesture toward the style of materialist thinking I have deployed here, when they claim that critical making, as a concept, also “invites reflection on the relationship of the maker to the thing produced, reflection on how elements (whether nuts and bolts, bits, and bytes, or breath, blood, flesh, brain and neurons) work together—in short, consideration and awareness of the mediated and direct experiences of interacting with the material world” (3). To their thinking, the “emerging community” of critical makers and “political protestors” are “aptly described as DIY citizens” who are engaged in becoming “producers as well as consumers” in a “horizontal process” that has, in the Occupy movement, already “conscientiously created and developed distinctly DIY organizational processes, values, and norms” (5).

They also draw on Rancière’s “distribution of the sensible” to model their understanding of DIY citizenship and critical making, arguing that critical making enacts

such a distribution (15). As I argued in chapters 1 and 2, while keeping Rancière's concept in building a renewed concept of the tactical, limiting the distribution of the sensible to human actors limits our understanding and enactment of tactical activities like critical making. That is, Rancière's concept can be pushed further than he would likely brook—toward including in “those who have no part” in society, the “unseen” and “unheard” who always form a remainder in every account of a community, including in that excess those unseen entities who are not in themselves human. This inclusion forces us to rethink what critical invention and participation may become.

One shortcoming of the critical making movement is that while it, at least in the *DIY Citizenship* iteration, is identified with the direct action politics of Occupy and similar manifestations, its embrace of the consequences of that form of remaking democracy is equivocal. While the practitioners and theorists involved in *DIY Citizenship* are clearly theoretically opposed to neoliberalism, their conception of citizenship is not as far a cry from Silicon Valley's as they may imagine it. The *DIY Citizenship* discussions and projects analyzed favor some of the same “disruptive” logic found in Valley thinking. That is, the primary orientation of much of *DIY Citizenship* is on creative *solutions* to problems that exist through entrenched institutions, with the DIY citizen taking from such institutions the creative potential of the media systems that institution has captured control of; many of the chapters, for instance, discuss citizen news making as an alternative to corporate media. This functions as an inverted form of Valley thinking, which “disrupts” in order to make available for the private market social functions that had so far been public. What remains to be pursued is a stronger relationship between

critical making practices and direct action politics, which will be hinted at below, in the discussion of “Disobedient Objects.”

At the same time, contributors to both the *DIY Citizenship* and the “Critical Making” manifestos, in the end, situate critical making as a practice between art and political participation. Attending, however, to the unstable ways that the things made also actively participate, as Dieter and Lovink hint at but retreat from, and reimagining such making as a tactical encounter involving many different *kinds of things* and *different kinds of making*, means, in the end, situating such practices between art, *rhetoric*, and political participation. In both cases, meanwhile, there is an evident awareness that the tactics involved are not simply there waiting to be taken up, but need to be *made*. While Dieter and Lovink, Hertz, and the editors and contributors to *DIY Citizenship*, are all sensitive to the dynamics of materiality in the process of making, it is still worthwhile to push their work a step further and seek the ways in which “making” emerges from not only a cultural and historic moment (“neoliberalism”), a studied practice (courses in “critical making”; *Make Magazine*), or a politically inventive response to social problems, but also in the intensive encounters among a host of different kinds of entities.⁴

Remaking the Demos

One approach to remaking democratic participation that is enjoying a great deal of popularity is the Silicon Valley approach, which unabashedly embraces neoliberal technocracy at the same time as it embraces and foments “maker culture,” the radical self-fashioning individual as consumer-maker. The general tendency of the Valley approach to participation is isomorphic with neoliberalism: that individuals are

consumer/citizens, what Wendy Brown has identified as *homo oeconomicus*,⁵ and market solutions, especially connected to innovations in digital technology, “creatively disrupt,” and thus solve problems that were once the province of policy and the public.

Code for America, a non-profit connecting political participation to Valley understandings of maker culture, is an excellent example of this tendency. At the beginning of her TED Talk introducing Code for America, called “Why Good Hackers Make Good Citizens,” Catherine Bracy announced that her talk (and by extension Code for America) would be “about hackers,” but she worried that the public image of hackers was not good. The public image of the hacker, she argues, is likely that “of a pasty kid sitting in a basement doing something mischievous, or of a shady criminal who is trying to steal your identity, or of an international rogue with a political agenda.” But hacking is not only that, and is “really just any amateur innovation on an existing system, and it is a deeply democratic activity. It’s about critical thinking. It’s about questioning existing ways of doing things.” These sentiments, which the critical making practitioners and even CAE might agree with, are followed by a different sentiment altogether: “from the Wright brothers to Steve Jobs, hacking has always been at the foundation of American democracy.” This elision of the difference between technological innovation for commercial purposes (Apple) and democratic participation is at the heart of Code for America’s understanding of both “hacking” and “democracy.” Bracy’s next sentiment expresses this clearly: “So if there’s one thing I want to leave you here with today, it’s that the next time you think about who a hacker is, you think not of this guy,” she says, when a picture of Julian Assange appears behind her, “but of this guy,” as the picture switches to Benjamin Franklin, who, she argues “was one of the greatest hackers

of all time.” Thus, the “questioning of existing ways of doing things” that Assange engaged in is illegitimate, while Steve Jobs and Benjamin Franklin are more or less representative of the same democratic spirit. “Hacking has equal power for good as it has for evil,” Bracy argues, and it is clear to her and her TED audience which column each of these people belongs in.

Code for America’s practice, though, does not really engage what it calls its “civic hackers” in “questioning existing ways of doing things,” but rather folds its form of civic participation into a neoliberal concept of problem solving for municipalities and federal governments who, Bracy reminds us, “are being asked every day to do more with less.” In her talk, she describes projects that exemplify the Code for America spirit of participation. In Honolulu, teams of Code for America “civic hackers” participated in a “write-a-thon” that developed the FAQ section for a new city website. This was, to Bracy’s understanding, “something radical,” that ordinary citizens were asked by government to participate in the “business of government” by “writ[ing] the content” for the city’s new website, which performed a “new way for citizens to participate in their government.” In Oakland, Code for America repeated the Honolulu project, and Bracy herself participated, experiencing a great “sense of empowerment and responsibility that [she] feel[s] for the place that [she] live[s] based simply on this small act of participation.” Combining many such small acts of participation, Code for America hopes to “reenergize citizenship and restore trust in government.”

What Code for America provides, though, as is evident from another project Bracy discusses, is free labor to underfunded governments in the clothing of civic participation. In Mexico, the federal government had awarded a 9.3 million dollar

contract to a software firm to develop an app for the legislators to track the progress of bills. Bracy reports that people were outraged by the price of something that only is to be used by “a handful of legislators in the House,” but, instead of “taking to the streets,” they, meaning Code for America’s local branch, “issued a challenge” in which “civic hackers” could develop and submit a better app for a “prize” of 9,300 dollars.

Now, whether the original app was overpriced or not is not the point I would address here, but rather the model of democratic participation on offer by Code for America and similarly minded organizations is entirely reduced to a neoliberal style of subjectivity that atomizes and imagines all kinds of relations in a singular, market-like key. I dwell on this particular example at length not only to problematize what it imagines participation to be. I also wish to bring into greater relief the differences between this model, which is common, and what I am tracing in the present work, that of the retooled, posthuman tactical project of political participation. In the tactical project of participation, one would find oneself entangled with others and other kinds of beings in such a way that every time one essays to “participate” democratically, one hardly knows where oneself begins or ends, and would find, thus, the moment of “empowerment” in a wider swath of activities than in the narrow solution of municipal problems. In other words, what undermines Code for America’s attempt to remake democratic participation is that it limits the demos and the participants to already self-evident and self-present subjects, and the form of their participation to one that is already becoming the dominant norm, discrete actions plugged into discrete problems. What would open such a project up, instead, to actually “innovating on existing structures,” as Code for America defines hacking, would be greater openness to and reflection on the participation of many

different kinds of members of the demos, and understanding a more dynamic “existing structure” in which to operate. It is easy, perhaps, to contrast the Code for America mode of remaking political participation to that on offer from the theorists and practitioners of “critical making,” but yet another modality is not emphasized by them either.

If democratic action should not be reduced simply to the obviously civic acts of unproblematic subjects working (for free) for their municipal governments, nor only to the community-building that “critical making” emphasizes, the recent exhibition at London’s Victoria and Albert Museum, called “Disobedient Objects” brings us back to the kind of direct action politics that undergirded the spirit of tactical media. In the book accompanying the exhibition, curators Catherine Flood and Gavin Grindon argue that “disobedient objects” have been central to the history of social movements and “have played a key role in social change” (9). Focusing the exhibition on the design and making of “social movement objects,” the curators find that disobedient objects “tend to foreground promiscuous resourcefulness, ingenuity, and timely intervention” (11-12). Take, as a key example (the instructions for which are featured on the exhibition book’s cover), a “disobedient object” made for the street protests in Istanbul in 2013. The “Makeshift Tear-Gas Mask” was made from a two-liter plastic bottle, elastic bands, foam tape, and a painter’s mask. Cut in such a way that the bottle formed a clear face mask, that covered the wearer’s whole face, without limiting their vision (much), the “Makeshift Tear-Gas Mask” was used by Turkish protestors in Istanbul’s Taksim Square protests in 2013 (Flood and Grindon, 48-49). This simple tool allowed people to participate in popular resistance with a diminished likelihood of suffering the brunt of tear gas attacks from police. Flood and Grindon note, too, that in the same protests, those

who had been tear gassed found relief in a mixture of water and antacid. In prior protests in Greece, though, a mixture of Maalox and water left a white residue on the faces of protestors, which marked them out for the police. In Turkey, instead, “pocket-sized sachets of antacid in the form of an oral gel (Riopan), which left no residue, became the popular remedy” (48). With the plastic mask and the two mixtures of antacid there are clear affordances and possibilities (in affording people the chance who would not feel safe participating otherwise), and unintended risks (being marked out for police by the white residue of the antacid remedy).

In contrast to the Code for America approach to participation, then, Flood and Grindon admit that there is a deep risk of failure in the disobedient object, an enactment, they argue, of [Judith] Jack Halberstam’s “queer art of failure” (13). While disobedient objects may “seem like ‘hope in the dark,’” they argue, citing Rebecca Solnit’s phrase, “their acts of composing things otherwise, in defiance of all that is wrong around them, are beautiful failures that throw teleological definitions of success into question” (13). Flood and Grindon claim that all “successful movements are made up of very large numbers of people carrying out small, seemingly utopian experiments without seeing or even necessarily knowing of each other” (13). In the end, though, in Flood and Grindon’s understanding of the role they play in the success or beautiful failure of social movements, the “disobedient object” is only disobedient insofar as it is a tool for a disobedient subject’s action, and is understood as prosthesis.

While the kinds of political participation that Code for America and “Disobedient Objects” model are roughly opposite, both could be transformed by reimagining a more tangled relationship between subjects and objects in projects of political participation,

whether they are direct action projects that experimentally build social movements aimed at concrete social change, or are aimed at civic participation that solves discrete municipal issues.

So, we have examples of three broadly different tendencies in attempts to remake political participation in the current historical moment. First, with “critical making,” related to and descended from tactical media, we can see a political aesthetics of participation, one centered on the communal and political possibilities of creativity and inventiveness. Its rhetorical foundations are interesting to consider here as it relates quite closely to the *kind* of tactical rhetorical encounters I have mapped in this dissertation: making is a rhetorical and political practice that inherently involves a great many kinds of agencies and materialities.

Second, in addition to the critical making tendency, is the neoliberal tendency exemplified by Code for America, which places as high a premium on “hacking,” tinkering, and refashioning as Certeau would have, but to obviously different political ends. In their model of the “civic hacker,” Code for America invents a democratic participant whose involvement in the process of politics is connected at once to digital media making and exceeds the limits of occasional votes and attending city hall meetings. Its form of civic participation, though presented under the sign of radically questioning existing ways of doing things, in practice hews closer to CfA’s other definition of hacking and democratic participation: “innovating on existing structures.” Dedicated as it is to *simply* solving the kinds of problems municipal and provincial governments face under neoliberal privatization, by providing more privatized, free labor in the costume of participation, CfA’s program does not *seem* to advance much of an alternative form of

participation. But what is interesting to consider is the connection made between democratic participation and the creative practices of “making,” the tactical possibilities of which exceed, when other problems are considered, the essentially conservative and self-serving ideology of CfA.

Third, and finally, are the street protest tacticians whose objects are displayed and aestheticized in the V&A exhibition, “Disobedient Objects.” Emphasizing the design of *ad hoc* and ephemeral object making in the process of social movement building, the “Disobedient Objects” exhibition found objects as material tools for resistance practices, tools that participated in human political communities in concrete ways. But the objects, if studied in the context of the concepts developed here, are likely to be disobedient in other productive (and likely frustrating) ways, such as the visible white residue left on Greek protestors’ faces, marking them out for police scrutiny. As such, the role of matter in direct action politics warrants even further study.

Returning now to Ian Bogost’s carpentry, discussed in the first chapter, is helpful to illuminate this point. As I noted in Chapter 1, Bogost understands “carpentry” as a practice of *making* philosophy through means other than textual argument. Bogost’s carpentry, as he articulates it in *Alien Phenomenology*, is a concept that I take to be consonant with my retooling of the tactical—it is a practiced style of relations that relates things that are not all subjects and symbols. That is, in the view of philosophy as a practice of carpentry, it is something “made,” and made from multiple kinds of beings, and made *by* multiple kinds of beings. To rethink these three ways of remaking political participation as each one kind of political technology with Bogost’s carpentry in mind, is to broaden further understanding of the various different dimensions of making that can

take place. Like Latour's injunctions to reconceptualize democracy as a "parliament of things," and even like Rickert's concern that Latour's "parliament" hangs onto humanist assumptions about representative democracy, my orientation toward opening and rethinking the terms of re-making political participation is to invite the opportunity to rebuild the concepts through which we build what we call politics, and what we call rhetoric as one of the arts of making politics.

If tactical media practices and critical making are oriented toward direct politics, rather than representational forms, as the editors of *DIY Citizenship* argue, and if objects as well as people can be "disobedient," then the work remains to be done of rethinking the terms of direct democracy through the insights of new materialism. How we imagine a direct politics that is "made" of the direct actions and participatory citizenship of entities that cannot be (simply) called human becomes a question as inventive as it is vexing. One insight that the present work has hoped to make clear is that when what is conceptualized as the rhetorical moves away from argumentation in its strictly linguistic form and rhetorical production comes to include the objects, devices, and codes of networked digital culture, the canon of invention is perhaps too narrow to contain all the contours of rhetorical action in motion. In the encounters between drone sensor and radiating body heat, the encounters between desert and GPS signal, the "in-the-middle" of invention that is discovery and creation is not quite the whole story. Nor, however, is it the wrong story. In the making and *making do* I have studied here, there is indeed discovery and novelty in the encounters between the many rhetorical entities involved. But there is something more, some ontological redirection and re-orientation that is the tactical dimension of their rhetorical encounters, which I argue is irreducible to, but

inseparable from, the movement of invention, even in its messier form which does not distinguish discovery from creation nor completely between discoverer and discovered, creation and created.

Finding New Weapons

Here, at the end, I would like to return to the epigram that began this dissertation, the short quote from Deleuze's "Postscript on Control Societies." There, Deleuze wrote that moving forward politically—and I would add, *tactically*—was not a matter of determining which system is better or worse, since there are elements in any system that both "free and enslave us." Instead, he argued, "it's not a question of worrying or of hoping for the best, but of finding new weapons" (*Negotiations* 178). The "new weapons" I have conceptualized in this dissertation are connected to an understanding of a tactic of invention that is irreducible to its human participants, even as their work is essential. Meanwhile, this tactic is laden with a kind of risk that, like Flood and Grindon's "disobedient objects," complicates "teleological" notions of success and failure. It operates through entanglements and energies that are woven so complexly that determining a *telos*, a discrete political aim the tactic is useful for, becomes impossible. This does not mean, though, that such a tactic is not political or rhetorical. Rather, it is something that invites different considerations of what constitutes either term.

Meanwhile, this tactic of invention is put into infinite motion, relating ultimately to a claim Foucault made in an interview with Hubert Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, that his "point is not that everything is bad, but that everything is dangerous, which is not exactly the same as bad. If everything is dangerous, then we always have something to do." This

position, in recognizing the danger in every inventive move, does not paralyze action, but rather, according to Foucault, “leads not to apathy but to a hyper- and pessimistic activism” (*Ethics* 256). Such an activism, resolutely non-utopian, does not posit universal grounds for conduct, except in the suggestion that conduct is universally compelled. Foucault’s ethos of critical invention might seem to be in tension with the directions explored in previous chapters, charting the territory of the interstices not between self and society, or present and tradition, but primarily between human and nonhuman inventive forces. But in joining these trajectories, it is clear we can get another ethos of our current moment in modernity, one in which the political project of critically remaking the present accounts for relations among things unlike human subjects. The lesson here, then, is that tactics are *thingly* modes of resistant invention, materially rhetorical modalities of political participation necessary and available in the current phase of networked culture. What my study reveals is that there are tactical maneuvers emerging as possibilities *within* this nexus of thingly materiality, networked culture, and computational agency, all suggesting the possibility for rhetorical action that does not *just* involve or implicate human subjects.

My gamble is that following this logic all the way through, the argument is that all the elements are made different through the encounter. Orienting our conceptual, critical, and theoretical attention toward these tactical and rhetorical moments of encounter between different materialities will allow us not only to map further the myriad ways rhetoric appears materially. It will also help us begin to conceptualize ways of *inventing* these encounters. The agency of drones, cell phones, GPS satellites, or any other material object for that matter, either in their normal functioning, or their perversion by something

like the Transborder Tool or Anti-Drone Wear, does not originate in a human subject, even if one is involved—and at risk—in its movement. Such are the stakes faced in the current moment. Put differently, the point that this project helps illustrate is that rather than *simply* or *just* being an issue of embodiment, in certain encounters we ourselves, our bodies are media *things* in the world, just as irreducible and emergent as the obviously *made* things we interact with.

So what does “making do” look like now? What do “tactics” look like now? And rhetoric? First, now there is a different sense of the *materiality* implicated in “making do,” while, also, there is less confidence available in claiming that human action is the sole origin of its movement. The things we “make” and “make do” with, in a real way, have their own agendas and actions that intersect with ours. And second, by tacking this back to Latour’s sense of the “mediator” and the “chains of association” linking different elements together in what we call the demos, there is renewed sense of *possibility* in the *project* of tactically “making do,” of intervening, and rhetorically *trying*, if we accept that “transforming” those mysterious chains of associations is the only task that *matters*.

Now, as for what this offers us as scholars in rhetorical studies, as well as for those who engage in the practices surveyed here, of *tactically making*, I have two conclusions. First, this rethinking is itself a sort of tactical “making do,” making the concepts familiar to rhetorical studies and other areas of English studies do, perhaps, what they were not originally *tooled* for: the analysis of the activities of nonhuman agents, and the advocacy through our *hermeneutic* and *conceptual* practices of a different orientation toward those activities. Second, for the makers of tactical projects, I throw my lot in with the notion of critical making of at once attending to the “vibrant” force of

matter, as Bennett has it, *and* to the urgent need to *do* something. My retooling of “tactics” for posthumanity offers an additional reservoir of inventional actions to draw on.

NOTES

¹ See Christine Harold, “On Target: Aura, Affect, and the Rhetoric of ‘Design Democracy,’” for a discussion of the emergence of, and ambiguities of, maker culture in the context of the aestheticization of late capitalism and consumer culture.

² See, especially, chapters 11, 14, 17, and 21 in *DIY Citizenship: Critical Making and Social Media*.

³ Though it is beyond the scope of the present argument, it would be worth exploring the resonances between what Dieter and Lovink are after here, in their “creative critical thing,” and Foucault’s later work on the “care of the self,” and his examination of an ethic of (self-)invention. Foucault’s analysis in the interview published as “Friendship as a Way of Life,” and the essay “What Is Enlightenment,” offers interesting possibilities for aligning with a “critical making,” that inflects and emphasizes both the “critical” and the “making.” In any case, Foucault’s ethic is squarely oriented toward the invention of the subject, rather than the things through which it comes to be. (See Foucault, *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, New York: The New Press, 1997.)

⁴ Noortje Marres (a former student of Latour’s), in her book *Material Participation: Technology, the Environment and Everyday Publics*, is close in her thinking to what I am after here. Her aim in that work, though, is to chart the kinds of material participation that emerge in engaging with the public matter of concern around environmental change and risk. Her “material participation” focuses on a “specific mode of engagement,” in which there is a “particular division of roles among entities involved” in the process of forming public and political participation (2). One way I would extend that work is in tracing the role of “tactical” forms of politics, and their connection to direct politics, practices of resistance, movement formation, and disobedience.

⁵ Wendy Brown, *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism’s Stealth Revolution*. Brown argues that democracy, in both its liberal and radical forms, is moribund under the specific conditions of neoliberalism. In these conditions “all conduct is economic conduct; all spheres of existence are framed and measured by economic terms and metrics, even when those spheres are not directly monetized. In neoliberal reason and in domains governed by it, we are only and everywhere *homo oeconomicus*” (10).

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