

Towards in/Vention in the 21st Century: A Philosophical Case Study

by

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Abstract

This thesis offers a philosophical treatise on Invention in the 21st century, positing our current oppositional dialectic as problematic. Thus, I move to offer a way out of this dialectical negation in order to really invent or effect change. I provide an empirical study of in/Vention in the 21st century as a way of seeing this new mode of invention.

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Introduction

“Before there is 'thought,' there must have been 'invention.’”
--Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power* (293)

Let me begin by telling you where the impetus for this thesis began, where I *invented* the idea. Let me do so by making you aware that the origin cannot be found and I invented nothing. Rhetorical invention, it can be assumed, is concerned with the genesis of ideas; this comprises not merely the selection of persuasive means from an existing body of models or archetypes but the creation of these means as well. Most readily, Aristotelian topics contain an entire history of moments of original thought. Yet, this almost seems too simple—as if it cannot account for all of invention. What’s prior to invention, then? My task in attempting to trace where this thesis originated from, is to attempt to answer the question of invention. Yet, to do so, I would need to go back prior to invention to the level of engagement. Thus, this thesis emerged out of engagement—a sixth canon, perhaps, to account for what comes before invention. My enquiry into invention exists at the interchange between two very distinct fields, Philosophy and Classical Rhetoric. Yet, the nature of this project begs that I don’t too carefully delineate and categorize fields, discourses or other sign systems. Thus, my notion of invention most explicitly and perhaps most simplistically deals with classical rhetoric and philosophy; however, it will no doubt touch on several other fields. I make mention of this only because this style of engagement will feed into the discussion of affirmative invention in the 21st century. At its premise, then, the argument of this thesis is old and worn out: I begin by claiming that invention is the neglected canon of rhetoric in the digital age; this is despite the prodigious scholarship done on composing in and amongst new media and the Internet. The 21st century is now a decade old. What have we done in this first decade of this century? That is, what have we created? Written? Kathleen Yancey calls this era, the “Age of Composition,” which means we are composing as never

before. Yet, what are we composing? Or more to the point, *how* are we composing? What is being composed and among which mediums?

In writing studies, we ostensibly value invention as important to the writing process, but we also value digital media as important to composing and writing; however, we don't yet reconcile or integrate the two. This thesis will take on the question of Aristotelian invention in the 21st century. As we compose written work, we are undeniably online. We are connected to several other people, hundreds of other ideas and opinions, through Google, Facebook, Wikipedia, thus the question, nay problem, arises: how do we invent? What does it mean to invent a sentence, essay idea or Facebook update in what Johnson-Eilola calls the "datacloud" and Jenkins "convergence"? This thesis provides one moment of invention. Through a 4-month case study of one person's composing process, I hope to provide a momentary answer. As a proposition, then, this thesis will combine postmodern theory, rhetoric and empirical data to discuss invention in the iGeneration. Yet, whether we are discussing a new concept, fresh reading, or novelty, it all emerges by somehow negating particular others. Like John Muckelbauer in *The Future of Invention*, however, this argument looks toward invention as affirmative. Thus, this thesis seeks to open up a dialogue on the rhetorical canon of invention in the digital "datacloud" and multimodal composing, but in doing so, I do not want simply to repeat old models of invention.

It has been stated now quite extensively that writing is no longer the lonely writer in the garret. Margaret Syverson, Paul Prior and Charles Bazerman all go to great lengths to demonstrate how writing emerges out of social surroundings. Invention is not the inspired moment deep in the night as you sit alone with your feather pen; invention does not arise out of nothing. It is not the platonic view that invention is a solitary act which arises only in inspired

truth-seekers like Socrates. Rather, invention, as Karen LeFevre writes, is a “social act...dependent on social structures and processes not only in their interpretive, but in their constructive phases” (x). LeFevre defines the social act as “that which is oriented to take into account the behavior of others” (LeFevre 35). I won't belabor this point, for it does seem that invention and writing are no longer viewed as private acts. Yet, what counts as social has yet to be amply expanded. As our world becomes increasingly technological, increasingly online, increasingly virtual, it also becomes increasingly wrapped up into our intertextual lives. What is online must be accounted for in the “social act” of invention.

Invention must be, and demands to be, looked at, then, as technologically intertextual. For example, in Johndan Johnson-Eilola's *Datacloud*, he mentions that “the increasing use of IM programs is only one of the many places in which working and learning are being re-articulated in our culture” (31). In light of Syverson's ecological view of writing and Prior's notion of intertextuality, Johnson-Eilola has overlooked the relevance of, for example, IMing in all other areas of life. He specifically mentions and directs the conversation to workspace and learning or school space, but ignores the other areas of technological culture. That is, if writing is no longer the lonely writer in the garret, then neither is online use. It has become obvious as Jennifer Daryl Slack and Gregory Wise say, and Henry Jenkins, among others, that we are living in an ontologically and epistemologically changed culture: “We fail to understand that these new structures and processes are not merely breakdowns or failures," but also new modes of invention (53).

As we make the inevitable turn towards Bolter and Grusin's *Remediation*, they do look at some ways to understand invention. They discuss new medias as Foucaultian genealogies, not origins, but as a “myriad of events through which—thanks to which—against which—they were

formed,” and further, how new media and the internet “remediate” hundreds (thousands) of years of practice (Foucault 83). They change the technology argument from one of strife over new media to one over the history in our new re(media)tion. This is a refashioning or repurposing of our everyday into virtual spaces and online activity. While they don't consider in grand detail the writing that takes place online, they do offer many useful terms and ideas for my examination of writing online. I find useful as well their idea of genealogy (taken from Foucault) because it encompasses an ecological approach to writing and challenges a solitary isotopic approach: “what is acting at the same moment in any place is coming from many other places” (Latour 200). Thus, for Bolter and Grusin, digital culture is remediated; its traces come from many directions. Yet, the question of invention is not sufficiently explored. They write that repurposing is what's "new" about the internet and new media, and, yet, it simultaneously is what is not new about new media. Their definition of invention in new media is, then, repurposing. However, how do they account for staring at the screen for ours until words, sentences and ideas finally emerge. Is this re-purposing? Moreover, is this invention? Which artifacts are we constantly plugged into in techno-culture that may serve as an impetus for invention?

In digital social media, Facebook can be seen as a paradigmatic case of just how integral web 2.0 artifacts have become in our culture. Slack and Wise articulate the inextricability of technology and culture in their book, *Culture and Technology*; more specifically, I would like to emphasize the inextricability of our present culture and Facebook. Facebook, then, is part of our tradition of digitality; “the meanings, values and artifacts that are handed down to us,” while at the same time it is ordinary--it is those daily codes and routines of a habitual existence (4). Thus, the social act is now intertwined with online artifacts like Facebook, twitter and chat. Human agents act dialectically with their surroundings, others and socio-cultural

interconnections. Inventors or, more appropriately, *iVentors*,¹ those inventing in the digital sphere, create always in the context of audience. LeFevre wrote that inventors “always require the presence of an “other”--either the rhetor, him or herself as internalized other, or a perceived audience of actual others” (x).

This includes, then, the daily and habitual logging into Facebook, the posts and comments and the academic writing done balanced between Facebook and word documents. As we persistently become intertwined acting with Facebook, its exigencies have become a culture. Our acting with its prose has created a culture of aphorisms² which begin with your name...what is Mary doing? Mary is writing a paper. When I, following Slack and Wise, affirm that culture is a whole way of life, I mean it as understood as a process that includes artifacts such as Facebook—then Facebook becomes integral to culture, not separate from it. It is a part of our typical parable of life: Mary wakes up, makes breakfast, sits down before her screen and begins the routine—checking her Facebook, checking her email (likely Gmail), the newsfeed, virtual fish and articulates her existence for that moment in one short aphorism beginning with her name. Mary has a similar parable for writing. But what exactly does it mean for us to live among, within, in and about Facebook culture. It means the practice of recording our words and actions beginning with our name. It means thinking in quips and posts in response to “friends”—

¹ I will hereafter make a distinction between Inventors, those who invent on paper or outside of digitality, and *iVentors*, those who invent within and among digitality. I make this distinction to separate what was considered intertextual or social prior to the rise of internet culture. The name *iVentors* is obviously taken from apple's iPod to suggest that this generation—the *iGeneration*—can be named and perhaps represented by that small “i” before words. This small “i” as representative of 21st century invention will become crucial to the argument.

² In 1882 Friedrich Nietzsche bought a typewriter, his writing was no longer legible and he feared the death of his writing without this technology. He wrote *DayBreak* in 1881, but went back after he had the typewriter to compose the preface which now introduces *Daybreak*. The German media scholar Friedrich Kittler wrote that Nietzsche's prose “changed from arguments to aphorisms, from thoughts to puns, from rhetoric to telegram style.” In a similar vein, I am briefly stating that Facebook culture has given rise to these shortened rhetorical devices. However, I am at the same time referencing Derrida's work on the name as aphorism in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*.

it means sending virtual flowers, taking care of virtual fish and even giving virtual hugs. It means creating a meta-identity on the web to be archived, to create a story about ourselves by composing on a daily basis, a running account of our various activities. It means drafting with Facebook, reflecting with Facebook and writing the self with Facebook. What was formerly the province of diaries meant to be seen only by their creator and perhaps a few intimates now resides, universally accessible, on the Internet. Such writing must shape our thoughts and our manner of thinking. If Facebook is our culture, then writing is necessarily wrapped up in this artifact. However, to think of Facebook as Bruno Latour's concept of actor, is to represent it not as a mere thing, or intermediary; rather, Facebook as actor draws attention to the practices, representations, experiences, and affects that constitute writing, but further, that Facebook as actor brings our attention to the way these practices, representations, experiences, and affects articulate (with Mary) to take a particular dynamic form.

I largely see this thesis, then, as a direct response to John Muckelbauer's book *The Future of Invention*. That said, I will spend some time elucidating his argument in the first chapter before replying most directly in the second chapter. Additionally, I do not see my work on invention as irrelevant in a larger context, so latent in my chapters is the current rhetorical exigency of invention. We are at a point where old ways of invention are not birthing the change we need in our current reality; this is largely because we need to re-conceive of invention and move beyond the current dialectic.

This thesis has two distinct chapters. The first chapter will be a rhetorical endeavor and treatise on the state of invention in the 21st century. I will provide a brief history of invention up until now, illustrating what invention means to us as a canon. Additionally, building on the work of Bolter and Grusin, Lefevre and Muckelbauer, I will argue for a theory of iVention, of

composing with Facebook and digital media. I will discuss the state of *iVention* according to the case study with a turn towards postmodern theory, where some crucial implications have been overlooked. Most notably, this is what Muckelbauer calls the "problem of change," where invention only emerges out of negation, but I will argue for an affirmative invention in digital composing, meanwhile making larger connections to the reality-at-hand.

Chapter two presents a case study which addresses how writing looks in the 21st century based on data collected from Mary, a 21st century writing student; it includes 3 hours of following Mary with a video recorder, 303 screen captures of writing activity, and 22 drafts of her academic work done during the time of my observations. My research reveals that Mary often wrote (writes) with Facebook. As she sits down to compose, she opens her Facebook, her Pandora music station and her Word documents. Her writing, I will show, takes place across these windows with the most prominent actor in her writing being Facebook. As she writes her paper, she drafts through Facebook, both in status updates and posts. These status updates then map into her writing. As an example, she may post a brainstorming question as her "update" and then later that update--nearly untouched--appears in her draft. Thus, her *iVention* and delivery are bound up with the interaction and rhetorical exigencies of Facebook. Additionally, I will address how Facebook, when seen as an actor, "bends space" around itself, thereby changing what rhetorical invention and delivery means in the digital era. This would include an expansion on what Latour elicits by the term actor and what that does to change the rhetorical canons. By way of conclusion, I raise theoretical implications about what it means to have acting technological artifacts, Facebook as a culture (which is both ordinary and a whole way of life) and Latourian actor. I offer, based on the various components of the conversation of new media, suggestions of a new way to look at writing with technology and thus a new way to see

technology in our lives, and our lives in technology. Ultimately, this new invention emerges by way of the acting Facebook artifact.

I see the two chapters as necessary to understanding iVention. It is not enough to have an empirical study alone on iVention, for empiricism alone cannot account for the history of ideas and theoretical windows. Similarly, a rhetorical and philosophical study alone would not offer the field of rhetoric and composition the data and concrete examination of iVention needed to progress; thus, I require both in order to fully illuminate both Invention and iVention.

Chapter 1

MO→POMO→ALMO: Dialectical Negotiations in the Digitality of Change

“What this means, in terms of invention, is that if we cannot avoid repetition, everything hinges on how we repeat, on the inclination within any particular encounter and on how we modulate the rhythm of invention”
--John Muckelbauer

“Over time I've come to believe that our quest for ‘new ideas’ may not be that different from our quest for new cars, new clothes or new entertainment.”
--Astra Taylor

In this first chapter, I would like to bring relevance to my topic of invention. While I am discussing rhetorical invention mainly through writing, I see this as wholly applicable to recent conversations about change. What we need are radically new ideas to see change, to effect change. Yet, what it means to invent has transformed. Our invention processes are concerned in and diffused through social and technological systems. How these transformations concern rhetorical invention within information spaces is less clear. For example, how can old ideas bring forth any movement in techno-culture? It seems that new realities should yield new concepts. There must be someone thinking new thoughts, designing new arguments and approaches; there must be some inventive or visionary way of looking at the world, some demiurgic theory that's about to emerge and help us make sense of everything. However, it is my contention that we cannot get at these ideas until we arrive at a new way to invent: affirmative invention. Thus, I will first in a philosophical manner parse out what this means, offering a sort of state of invention and explicate the moves necessary to create a new model of invention, or perhaps simply to be made aware of a radically new model of invention emerging in digital artifacts.

What we have come to call invention, was first thought of by Aristotle as *dianoia* or 'thought,' and later termed by the Latin rhetoricians as *inventio*. This 'thought' was defined throughout books 1 and 2 in *The Rhetoric* as “discovering the available means of persuasion”

(27). This is considered to constitute the whole of rhetoric—discovering the available means of persuasion. I don't mean to suppose that invention has not changed since Aristotle, only that this is the groundwork from which we are working. If we accept this premise, then, that inventing is discovering the available means of persuasion, it may seem obvious that discovering those available means of persuasion is exponentially multiplied when a writer is online among several screens and users at once. This concept has elsewhere been variously called “convergence” by Henry Jenkins, Danielle Nicole DeVoss, and others. When a writer is online, amongst various screens synchronously, the distinction between “lasting texts” or official texts and social and pragmatic communication breaks down, and all communication is digitized and archived. This allows the rhetor/author/iVentor many more scripted and present means from which to invent and persuade, thus changing the writing space and processes, allowing more indexed lines of communication between people and technologies. This points us back to Karen Lefevre's argument that invention is a social act; however, it takes us further as well. Inventing is not only, then, “social” in Max Weber's definition, where social “is that which takes into account the behavior of others,” but it is—in iVenting—social in that it also takes in the behavior of machines, digital artifacts, websites and the behavior of virtual lives (qtd in LeFevre 33). As mentioned in the Introduction, we are not here going to re-hash whether the writer is lonely in the garret, but we are going to complicate this already refuted notion within the context of digital invention.

Allow me to explicate John Muckelbauer's arguments on invention as it applies to iVenting. I see his arguments in *The Future of Invention* as crucial to understanding invention among digital artifacts, yet he makes no mention (even though his book was published in 2008) of what this means to writers who compose and invent among several digital artifacts. This

includes, perhaps, even his own book. This was likely composed across several screens working with several digital actors, yet his notion of invention never so much as utters the words digital. Gesturing aside, Muckelbauer makes some profound arguments that deserve our attention.

To begin, why invention, and which invention? Since we are discussing rhetorical invention, it is important not to negate the long and varied history associated with rhetoric. Derrida begins “Plato’s Pharmacy” with “We have already said all we meant to say, so forgive me while I go on for awhile” (71). When thinking of invention, it is easy to conjure images of newness and beginnings, something original and new, exciting and unbeknownst to the world. This relationship to invention, however, rests on the binary between same/different; a binary Muckelbauer asserts “has remained firmly intact”—this, despite a series of and postmodern history about the problematizing of other binaries and dichotomies (3). Our customary notion of invention, then, is contingent upon producing something different or innovative from what is already the same or traditional. This binary remains persistent as we enter the 21st century conception of invention. What Muckelbauer brings our attention to, however, is that the problem of invention lies within this binary. We constantly enter and re-enter the dialectic to create something different according to what is deemed traditional, and back and forth we pivot between same/different. It is the very persistence of this binary fulcrum that prevents us from change; this Muckelbauer has termed the “problem of change.” The binaries will remain imperforate as long as the model used to effect change exists only as a replacing of the binaries. That is, a history of merely new binaries supplanting the old, to create change, but yet repeat the same problems of opposition. As Edward Schiappa writes “The Postmodern Challenge is not merely to reverse our evaluation of such pairs as rational/emotional, literal/figurative, truth/opinion, physis/nomos, and Philosophy/Sophistry...we do not overcome such binary

oppositions by preferring one over the other; we only overcome them by moving beyond the Hegelian framework” (63). It is not the binary that presents the problem as much as the contingency that invention relies upon the negation of what is traditional or selfsame.

As Muckelbauer points out, though, the Hegelian dialectical framework is one of negation between two fixed points; however, the positions (same/different, etc) are not fixed points, but rather are constellations of actions. Yet, because invention is tied to the Hegelian dialectic, it enters into this feedback loop and cycle involved in the “endless play of domination” (Sarrup 84). Invention, then, never really invents anything. In this sense, Hegel was right in seeing the whole of history as one dialectic. When we invent something new or innovative, we only do so by reproducing the same oppositional relationship between same and different or Plato and the Sophists.³

To create an affirmative sense of invention, Muckelbauer contends, and I take up here, we must look more at the movement between same and different, traditional and innovative. This requires looking not at two fixed points, or any number of fixed points, but at the constellation of movements between and amongst these articulations. The internet offers a particularly robust place to trace movements because everything is archived and so one can very explicitly see the moves made amongst constellations. This attempt to move “beyond” the Hegelian dialectic is an attempt to respond differently to any given situation: “In short, what is at stake is the possibility of inventing a style of engagement that is irreducible to the dialectical movement of negation” (Muckelbauer 5).

At the risk of sounding too abstract, I would like to explicate what this dialectic means as I see it and how tracing the movement between same/different can look. The traditional model of

³ See Marback (1999) for a more thorough explication of the dialectical relationship between Plato and the sophists.

invention is wholly wrapped up in dialectic: the presentation of an argument and then the presentation of the counter argument. Dialectical exchanges generally result in the privileging of one idea or argument over the other.⁴ Muckelbauer characterizes three types of dialectic of negation, which I will briefly paraphrase: advocacy, critique and synthesis. Advocacy is the dialectical argument in which one “emphasizes a traditionally privileged concept” through argument to negate its traditionally underprivileged counterpart. As an example, the good writer, in confrontation with the bad writer, realizes his/her superiority in this exchange. This re-affirms the good writer's superiority. This can take place any number of times. In fact, the good writer will seek out these comparisons to re-affirm his/her self. This is what Muckelbauer calls “the repetition of negating particular others” (7). This, however tacitly, encourages a particular position. The second style of dialectic is “critique,” which “advocates a traditionally underprivileged concept” (7). Thus, the dialectic is flipped from the previous example. The bad writer will rise up to overthrow the hegemony of the good writer, arguing for a re-evaluation of values conceiving what holds power and why, thus making the bad writing good and so on. However, the problem with this, as Schiappa points out, is that dialectical models such as this one only create change by “reproducing the oppositional structure itself” without moving past this problematic structure (7). The third style of dialectic is “synthesis,” which is the valorizing of the indeterminate “in-between” (8). In this model, both bad writers and good writers would be valued. This is an attempt to move past the negation model of dialectic, choosing words like “hybrid,” “heterogeneous” or “mixed” to discuss the space between the two poles. We may see this as a valid attempt to destabilize the traditional structure of opposition; however, even as it

⁴ The most obvious example here would be the method Socrates uses and Plato often demonstrates. I'm sure my readers are well aware of the definition of dialectic, but I want to be clear before I move on.

does so, it presupposes the existence of the two poles. That is, to have an indeterminate—a hybrid—there must first be separate and oppositional forces: “the indistinguishable blending that occurs in contact zones or boundaries assumes that there is a distinguishable separation somewhere other than the boundaries. In short, to demonstrate the indeterminate or ambiguous in-between is to simultaneously reproduce the oppositional dynamics that characterize the nodes or poles 'between' which something exists” (Muckelbauer 9).

These three dialectical models offer different constituents—historically privileged, historically underprivileged and the indeterminate—however, each still reproducing in a series of repetitions the same model. The movement of change, then, is quite un-revolutionary and trite; it is this movement from same to different and different to the same or new to different, different to new and then the space between, but always maintaining the oppositions. Each dialectical style, then, may seem different, but the movement is always the same: “the one thing that does not change is the movement of change itself” (Muckelbauer 10).

It is this movement we are most concerned with then, for the challenge is to move “beyond the Hegelian framework” or negative dialectic for the sake of change (Schiappa 63). Except that each attempt to move past the dialectic necessarily evokes the negative. As Muckelbauer writes, “any effort to overcome binary logic or move beyond the Hegelian framework simply reproduces this framework...even as it attempts to move beyond dialectical change—indeed, *precisely because it attempts to move beyond it*—such a response remains trapped in the complex repetition of dialectical change” (emphasis his, Muckelbauer 11). Because of the structure of the negative model of dialectic, once we negate a particular thing in favor of change, we have already entered back upon the tired model which merely alters positions as its change. Thus, we will always have an oppressed/oppressor, a master/slave,

rich/poor, etc. These binaries will hold steady as we continue to repeat the model. As I said, negating the model only recapitulates the model, besides the model does present us with the ability to effect change, thus, the double-bind is that we cannot negate the dialectic nor accept it—that is, “we cannot simply repeat dialectical engagements and we cannot *not* repeat them. We cannot just advocate a position, critique a position or synthesize positions—but neither can we reject advocacy, critique and synthesis” (Muckelbauer 12). Thus, we arrive at this seemingly impossible position in our relationship with the oppositional dialectic.

Muckelbauer sees our way out of this double-bind through “affirmative invention”; he sees this as a difference in how one repeats dialectical engagements. If one’s orientation is toward the affirmative sense, or what he calls—taken from Gilles Deleuze—“singular rhythms,” then one can respond differently “in actual encounters with the world, the possibility...of engaging in everyday practices such as reading, writing, and thinking through something other than the negation of otherness” (Muckelbauer 13). These singular rhythms are “intense non-linear lines of flight” (35). Thus, affirmative invention is the following of the *movement* of dialectic, it is the following of the singular rhythms; these are most specifically connected to “lines of flight” (Deleuze and Guattari 7). Singular rhythms may be understood as singular movements within confined structures, such as dialectic. In fact, confined structures make the singular rhythms possible, in that they form out of the repetition of structure. Derrida perhaps captures this best in *Of Grammatology*, when he writes: “The movements of deconstruction...are not possible or effective, except by inhabiting these structures. Inhabiting them in a *certain way*, because one always inhabits, and all the more so when one does not expect it” (24 emphasis his). These singular rhythms, then, form as nonidentical movements arising out of the repetition of dialectic. However, it is important to note that, for Muckelbauer, invention as affirmative is “best

rendered as a kind of inclination within any given actual encounter” (35). It is an orienting toward the affirmative, toward the singular rhythms that make it possible. Because these rhythms are singular and nonidentical, one cannot merely and simplistically decide the identity of a counterpart based upon repeated and recognized categories. That is, the same trite and repeated responses of the dialectic of negation would be backgrounded in this orientation toward singular rhythms: “Rather than orienting toward the other as toward an identifiable ‘who’ or ‘what,’ this inclination orients itself towards the singular rhythms that comprise any particular ‘who’ or ‘what’ (Muckelbauer 35). A sort of “plugging into” the situation, dialectic or person must take place in order to see these singular, nonidentical and nonrepeated movements. Before we can see how this affirmative invention relates to inventing in and amongst digital spheres, we must first fully understand Deleuze and Guattari’s notion of the “line of flight” which is connected to the singular rhythms of invention. This is where I make my inevitable break from Muckelbauer. I will extend and structure singular rhythms to lines of flight, in order to enter into a discussion on invention.

The Line(s) of Escape, Flow or Flight

I want to try to “articulate” Deleuze and Guattari's theory in *Kafka Toward a Minor Literature*. In investigating Kafka’s writings, which are defined as a minor literature, Deleuze and Guattari introduce the key concepts of re- and de-territorialization as well as assemblages. An assemblage, which they say is a perfect object for narrative, is defined as having two sides. First, it is “a collective assemblage of enunciation” (Deleuze & Guattari 81). An understanding of how the actors themselves represent or perform as assemblages necessitates a further explanation of the territorializing function of verbal and spatial enunciation. The territorialization of phenomena is adjacent to their definitions, but territorialization places a

belonging or purpose upon phenomena which definitions lack. Whereas definitions attempt to describe the attributes, effects and makeup, a territorialization represents a set of possibilities. Thus, a verbal territorialization is not located upon the words employed, but is reflected upon the opening and closing possibilities of phenomenal objects.

That explicated, it is important to understand here the complex definition and relationship of the word escape. Generally speaking, most translators have translated Deleuze and Guattari's idea as "escape." However, the original French word is *fuite*, which means much more than just the act of fleeing, escaping or evading; it can also mean flowing, leaking, seeping and disappearing into the distance. For example, the vanishing point in a painting is called the *pointe de fuite*. Thus, the *fuite* can be leakage or seepage. It is the "flight" or fleeing that takes place within striated space. A "Line of flight"⁵ is a creative and librating escape from standardization, oppression, and stratification of society. "Lines of flight are everywhere. They constitute the available means of escape from the forces of repression and stratification. Even the most intense strata are riddled with lines of flight" (Deleuze and Guattari 504).

In the diagram below, we can see how smooth space and striated space exist only in tandem. According to Deleuze and Guattari, smooth space is tactile and continuous. It represents constant change and orientation and, unlike the heterogeneity of striated space, it is rather defined as amorphous. Striated space is rule-governed and can create homogeneity. Striation makes things quantifiable and measurable. It represents a "closing off" of a surface and "re-allocation" of a closed space (481).

⁵ Deleuze and Guattari's concept of a line of flight is similar theoretically to Actor-Network Theory, which is taken up in the second chapter, but I would like to make the reader aware of these similarities and the complimentary relationship between Actor-Network Theory and "lines of flight."

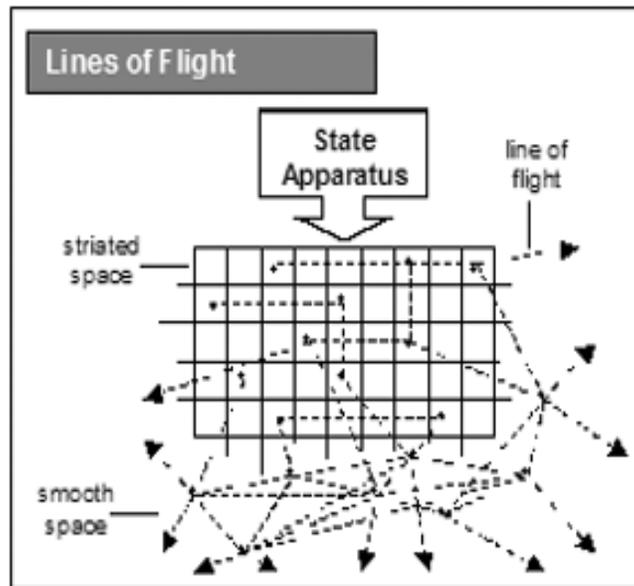


Figure 1(Riddick)

This oppositional dance between smooth and striated, smooth-striated, births lines of flight within their dissymmetry. “All progress is made by and in striated space, but all becoming occurs in smooth space” writes Deleuze and Guattari; thus, we are to take from this that the two occur together; they are not clearly delineated in binary form, but rather coalesce as a mixture: “smooth space is constantly being translated, transversed into a striated space; striated space is constantly being reversed, returned to a smooth space” (474). Deleuze and Guattari use the desert as an example: The barren desert can be striated, “one organizes even the desert”; then, the desert “gains and grows” (475). The two—organizing and gaining and growing—can happen simultaneously. The desert can be smooth, transformed into striation, but then infused with lines of escape, thus returned to a smooth space. There is a flow between the two.

It is important to mention that the “state apparatus” (see diagram above) does not refer to any one fixed point, identity or singularity; rather, it may be helpful if we can refer to the “state apparatus” as the rhetoric of interface in Facebook and MySpace, which limits, “striates” certain space and may even govern certain desires, but that this entire assemblage is connected. Because

Deleuze and Guattari define striated rhetorical space as “rule governed,” we can see (even if it is more tacit) that Facebook is a rule governed site, fraught with boundaries—whereas “smooth” rhetorical spaces allow more freedom, continuous movement and becoming (48).

In the example of Facebook, upon its invention (2004) and in the peak of its popularity (2010), it has striated space—both virtual and tangible. It has codified and regulated the information necessary to be a friend on Facebook. It has made the question: “what are you doing?” a routinized and confined part of many people's day (Facebook interface). For example, there is no way to get around starting the answer to that question without using your name⁶. John is, John wants, etc. Additionally, it has made responding to that question a normalized part of many people's daily lives and some people's hourly lives⁷. Yet, within this striated space, several people have found lines of escape. That is, they have figured out different ways to begin their sentences; the use of the colon, semi-colon or equals sign have become moments within the smooth space, lines of escape from the rhetorically striated interface of Facebook. Further, some have gone as far as changing their name to something else entirely like “the” in order to “gain and grow,” or escape the striated space.

For instance, the other day a colleague of mine angrily lamented that one of his students had tried to “chat” with him on Facebook. He seemed fine with adding his student as a “friend” on Facebook⁸, but drew the line when this student tried to chat with him via the same medium. To the student's credit he/she was chatting for the express purpose of the upcoming paper. However, the event strikes me as an important place for critical inquiry. Social networking sites are just among one facet of the digital world, but one that seems far overlooked by not only

⁶ This is because the Facebook interface is: what are you doing right now? This forces you to begin your answer with the name you used to start your profile.

⁷ It is now not uncommon to use texting capabilities to update your Facebook status wherever you may be.

composition theorists, but rhetorical theory as well. My colleague's student was, in my interpretation, searching for an outlet, a space, or medium to live as a writing student both in the classroom and in some other mediation. For the students' life and increasingly the teachers' life⁹ are taking place across several mediums, dimensions even, yet, the classroom is still only one, uni-directional space. In looking at this articulation as a part of an assemblage, this seepage ("leakage") could be the students' line of escape or flight. For Deleuze and Guattari this means precisely a leakage or flowing from the network, which is, again, precisely the thing that bothered my colleague about this "seepage"; the student clearly didn't obey the lines of familiarity, of striation and custom. It is inappropriate to "IM" your professor because it connotes familiarity and non-studentship. However, this is the students' attempt to *fuite*. The student found him/herself within a space, a "stratum" and began experimenting. This line of escape was made possible by the rhetorical striation of Facebook and the striation of teacher to student customs. In so doing, the student did not cross a line, but created a line, in trying to make a new connection. Had my colleague actually responded to the message, perhaps there could have been more movement, but this line of escape was immediately re-territorialized back into the bigger assemblage—the one of comfort, of rules. Facebook's interface while it presupposes many things on its users and bends much space within its strata, a student found a line of escape, a smooth space and, thus, a transformation however small.

Turning back towards affirmative invention, let us move forward into techno-culture and cyberspace. Lines of flight stand, not in opposition to dialectic, but perhaps *antistrophos*¹⁰ to the dialectic because cyberspace offers a nontotality—each identity is made intelligible through

⁸ Or being "friended" as they say in Facebook world.

⁹ In my case, I inhabit the peculiar grad-student space of being both a student and a teacher.

¹⁰ I purposefully use Aristotle's word here from his opening line to the *Rhetoric*: "Rhetoric is a counterpart to dialectic" (30).

articulations and singular rhythms. According to Laclau and Mouffe, this distinction—between dialectic totality and singular rhythms—is crucial because cast as a “critique of every type of fixity,” they stand as an “affirmation of the incomplete, open and negotiable character of every identity” (104). The internet and, particularly for this thesis, Facebook, are spaces of singular rhythms. For one, Facebook, as it becomes our whole way of life, is explicitly stated as a social utility, and if we define social as “an ensemble of differential positions,” as Laclau and Mouffe have, then we can see Facebook as the base site in which these singular rhythms and lines of flight can take place. Each status update is an articulation of self, but not of total self, just of momentary self. Because Facebook offers this deconstruction of totality, we are forced then to see and orient towards singular rhythms and most of all towards affirmative invention.

iVention

Lines of flight as they relate to affirmative invention will become especially germane in the second chapter, where I will extend this notion to Bruno Latour’s Actor-Network Theory. While ANT does not take up lines of flight specifically, it does, however, see constellations of actions, practices, representations, etc. These constellations arrange together in what Deleuze and Guattari call an “assemblage.” This notion of assemblage becomes particularly transparent in cyberspace and amongst technological artifacts, but most noticeably and readily on facebook.com, where an author will articulate his/her existence for the moment. It is this acknowledged and tacit realization that each update is but a moment, which resists totalization. In Laclau and Mouffe’s conception of “articulation,” they position it in antithesis to dialectic because it is a “practice establishing a relation among elements such that their identity is modified as a result of the articulatory practice” (105). That is to say, and to be specific, in articulations of Facebook updates, the author is resisting completeness and privileging

contingency. Therefore, cyberspace is a space of the deconstruction of totality, placing the social into this assemblage¹¹.

Thus, the question becomes one of movement and lines, which we will gain an image of in the second chapter. The internet offers us many more lines to follow and the ability to follow them. However, before we depart, it is important to note that what we are discussing here is a reconfiguring of the future, “refiguring futurity itself” (Muckelbauer 143). Carolyn Miller writes that “novelty under the Platonic worldview must be absolute, revolutionary, even unrecognizable” (141). As a researcher I have seen many people attempt invention while remaining wholly connected to Facebook. That is, I have seen them invent for their courses via word document while remaining active on Facebook and various other internet sites. This activity, I argue, is unrecognizable now as invention or as anything fecund or effective, but because of its novelty, its nonidentical nature, perhaps it is just that we can’t see what constitutes invention. Thus far, we have only philosophically rendered what a new image of dialectic might look like. Through Muckelbauer’s view of oppositional dialectic, I enter the conversation offering a place for affirmative invention, as well as bringing our attention back to something prior to invention: engagement. Engagement has been often subsumed under invention, but becomes crucial and important in its own rite as we enter into the age of invention. Engagement brings our attention to intertextuality and the assemblage of threads in online communication.

¹¹This can be summarily defined as: “an a-totality, the elements of which exist with only contingent connections” (Sahay 550).

Chapter 2

Lines in Flight: A Case Study

“Usually the great advantage of visiting construction sites is that they offer an ideal vantage point to witness the connections between humans and non-humans. Once visitors have their feet deep in the mud, they are easily struck by the spectacle of all the participants working hard at the time of their most radical metamorphosis. This is not only true of science, but of all other construction sites, the most obvious being those that are at the source of the metaphor, namely houses and buildings fabricated by architects, masons, city planners, real estate agents, and homeowners. The same is true of artistic practice.”
--Bruno Latour

“We’re actors—we’re the opposite of people”
--Tom Stoppard

“What I began by reading, I must finish by acting.”
--Henry David Thoreau

Prelude

I would like to start very simply by asking: how do we invent in the 21st century? Hanging off this question is whether we invent at all—or have we, in Derrida's words, “already said all we meant to say?” Amid what Kathleen Blake Yancey calls “the age of composition,” there are various proclamations of the end of invention. If this is the age of composition, then surely we are concerned with the pure mass of writing tacit in Yancey’s coinage. Students are said to plagiarize at a higher frequency than ever before and when their own ideas may emerge it is merely an imitation of what's already been said on Wikipedia or other sites. However, I want to claim that amongst these disparaging critiques, we have yet to offer data or research on invention in the age of composition, in the age of the omnipresent Internet. It is now, among the alleged end of invention, that this challenge may be heard. I offer here, then, one writer’s struggle, Mary, with invention and writing in the 21st century.

Before we go on, though, we must recall how a person might invent outside of the online world. At this point, I ask readers to listen to the audio essays as wholly and completely a part of this text.

Go to <http://trisha77.files.wordpress.com/2009/04/invention1audio1.wav> and listen to one poets' recounting of invention. She tells us that invention comes to her during unpredictable moments in her day usually prompted by what others are saying. In those moments she has to grab the closest piece of paper to her and write down the spontaneous idea that just came to her.

Another poet at <http://trisha77.files.wordpress.com/2009/04/invention2audiocommunity.wav> recalls her experience with invention. She tries to trace how her words in a poem, "eat my words" morphed over into her conversation and then a new poem emerged out of the pairing of "eat my words" and the conversation she was having.

What these poets are describing as invention are: 1) prompts, 2) community and 3) interacting. They invented poems based on the prompts given, the conversations in class and with classmates, but not either of these is extricable from the other. The poets seem to be saying that ideas came out of all of these rhetorical constraints or situations.

Let us move on from here to Mary's writing and invention. Mary writes her academic papers, like these poets, with prompts, an online community and online interaction, begging the question, what does invention look like with constant community and constant interaction? The poets above tell of isolated experiences in their invention moments, and they tell of meatspace experiences. Mary, our case study, has these same experiences, but magnified by the online world. Therefore, a re-definition of a writing scene is foundational to seeing Mary's writing practices. I will relate this study as if Mary were writing in scenes (and in fact she was, a move which will become clearer later), in order to capture the elements, artifacts and people acting in

Mary's scenes of writing. To be clear, I am defining a scene in dramatic terms to mean the continuous action, which takes place in the same setting. Generally for actors on stage, this means remaining in the same place to carry out a storyline. For Mary, this is an analogous situation. She writes in a scene of writing, where her action takes place continuously, yet her physical body remains in one place.¹²

Thus, in this chapter I construct a scene of what iVention looks like within and among our technological artifacts—specifically for our study, Facebook and Gmail. Using Bruno Latour's concept of actor, I problematize Paul Prior and Chuck Bazerman's definition of intertextuality to include the voice and exigency of the technological artifact of Facebook. My reading of Latour suggests that this problem of misunderstanding writing practices results from too myopic a definition. If we construct our scenes too narrowly, we miss the articulations and relationships among actors and lines of flight. Yet, if we interpret the rhetorical situation/constraints and exigency¹³ of the Facebook status and post and view this interchange through Latour's notion of actor, it establishes that the two—Facebook and Mary—act together, unearthing a lively exchange, which includes a proliferation in prose style, as well as instances of affirmative invention.

Scene

Summer 2009, months after C's¹⁴ and in the middle of an intense shift in writing and literacy.

¹² This is an attempt to answer Paul Prior's concerns about Linda Brodkey's (1987) definition of the "scene of writing" (140). Brodkey concretizes the scenes as "the garret, study library carrel, prison cell" . . . and the characters in her scene are "the solitary literary writer" (140). I am redefining scenes and concretizing new and different images of setting, character and plot to push her erroneous construction of scenes out of writing studies.

¹³ I will not bore my reader by elaborating much here. I am entering this conversation through Bitzer and Vatz' notion of the rhetorical situation. I have merely re-purposed their argument to be applicable to technological artifacts and speech.

¹⁴ The Conference on College Communication and Composition, dubbed the 4C's or CCCC's or C's.

This chapter is divided into acts and scenes for several multi-layered reasons. First, this “play” is a case study on an ex-actor, now full-time graduate student. Second, this “play” makes extensive use of Bruno Latour’s Actor-Network Theory, which seeks to reactivate the metaphor implied by the word actor. Third, I want to, in form and function, complicate how the social influences invention. If it was once a rightly conceived of myth, it no longer exists and I seek to prove that here. Lastly, by evoking the drama and “play” metaphor, I hope to bring my readers’ attention to the multiple actors and characters in writing and invention so as to impose, if possible, this metaphor in the classroom.

[Enter on scene] *chorus*

A study done at Michigan State University by Danielle Nicole DeVoss, R. Joy Durdin, Douglas Eyman, et al. on a digital rhetoric course relates their findings concerning new media, and begins to describe students acting with digital media. Like Johnson-Eilola, they take up the issue of changed and changing workspaces. The article begins by situating us deep within the digital word, in—what the authors’ call—“the late age of print” (243). It is within this world that everything is publishable and immediate, where the writer lives ever interconnected with other worlds. What’s more, they define “digital writing” as a transformed composing environment, which is not simply a new medium, but changes the way communicating and writing are done. They point out the immediacy of writing and communicating; the large disperse audience of that communication, and interactivity, but do not touch on how that may affect invention in writing. The article’s main breadth is in pointing out the changing medium and thus the changing writer, that writing is done differently now. The writer can alternate between graphics and texts seamlessly; then, instantly publish and widely distribute their work. This kind of integration, as I stated in the introduction, has come to be known as converging or “convergence” by Henry

Jenkins in *Convergence Culture* and by the authors above. While they do provide observation and evidence of this usage, their painted scene is not extensive and is nevertheless already three years old, which in this accelerated culture is almost antiquated.

The work being done on new media is prodigious, but has not yet visited writing with this much alacrity. Many of us are talking about new media and writing with new media, but where is the data, the research, the invention amongst new media? There are apparently breakdowns, remediations, convergences, and dataclouds, but how does this *look* in writing practices and what might it all say about writing as we know it and teach it? I would like to situate myself as one among many more that will capture writing and invention in the “age of composition” rather than just theorizing about such a defining “age.” Additionally, I would like to offer my glimpse of invention as contributing to affirmative invention and lines of flight in the 21st century—when we need change to finally become a reality.

[Exit] *chorus*

[Enter] *Researcher*

Return for a moment to those audio essays on invention: in both accounts, the poets were attempting to trace their thoughts, their words and their composing. I asked them what invention meant to them and they, through memory, gave those brief accounts. They struggled to trace how their seemingly spontaneous ideas emerged. Unnoticed or unattended is how finally the digital allows researchers a near complete history and tracing of writing and invention. In this case study, Mary has most every conversation online; thus, there is an archive and remnant of the very thing those poets tried to capture through a verbal relation of memory. These implications concern what I call the nature of invention in digital composing, which can now be talked about at greater length than previous conversations because we have some sort of a record—an

unimposed record. That is, a record used by the writer, not a record imposed by the researcher. Technological culture is changing so rapidly, however, that this portrait cannot be accurate as a whole image of 21st century writing practices, but it can represent this sliver of time in 21st century writing, perhaps even if it is only the first decade. I think it crucial to distinguish 21st century composing as inherently changing; indeed, these tracings and archives I work with now will become more exact and accurate. Thus, a characteristic of 21st century literacy is its very dynamic, its flux and changing nature. To be clear, I present to you here just one moment of writing, which, as I will show, is related almost totally to Facebook¹⁵ and Gmail chat. Behind these artifacts is the screen, where writing is mediated across several sites simultaneously. At the level of presentation, then, the argument of this chapter is not terribly complicated: I begin by claiming and showing the demand for research and data on composing. More succinctly, I bring up a most worrisome of canons: invention. It is a latent concern on all of our minds as the proliferation and pure mass of writing and ideas can be found by a click. How can one invent amongst and amidst the flow of information, and a more startling question not taken up here, why bother at all to invent? I offer, the first of its kind, a case study of one graduate student's writing practices and with that an argument about her invention process. This will point us back to the first chapter of the dialectic and the ways in which Mary enters into this dialectic in an affirmative sense.

¹⁵ Facebook.com, launched in 2004, is a free-access social networking website that is operated and privately owned by Facebook, Inc. Users can join networks organized by city, workplace, school, and region to connect and interact with other people. People can also add friends and send them messages, and update their personal profiles to notify friends about themselves. The website's name refers to the paper called "Facebook," depicting members of a campus community that some US colleges and preparatory schools give to incoming students, faculty, and staff as a way to get to know other people on campus. The website currently has more than 200 million active users worldwide.

[Exit] *Researcher*

(Anti)-Theoretical Framework

Scene

Henceforth, the digital is wrapped up in 21st century literacy, but it also, even in its perceived ephemerality, presents us with the first visible, palpable and traceable¹⁶ account of exchange, so the researcher can effectively spoor and hunt what's being produced.

This thesis is about intertextuality and plural voices in writing, so I would be careless here to name one or two theorists who inform this research—there are, in fact, several—perhaps an incalculable amount. I hope you will trust then that with each sentence, there are many others speaking.

[Enter] *Bruno Latour*

Writing has never been genuinely the lonely writer in the garret, but, until now, we have not had the ability to trace what Paul Prior calls “laminations,” Bazerman’s “intertextualities,” or LeFevre's argument that “invention is a constant potentiality woven into the whole fabric of social life” (Prior 276). Speech acts have been captured in the past, but here I present what is becoming re-articulated speech: chat. What's more, I present what is becoming re-articulated journaling: Facebook. Because these interactions are recorded digitally, there is an artifact left behind to be traced, which, as we hunt builds us a scene of writing.

Part of making this iVention *seen/scene* is by shedding the formulaic structure of writing. Therefore, for this thesis, the work that will frame and make visible this construction is Bruno Latour’s Actor-Network Theory (hereafter, ANT), more accurately translated as “sociology of translation” (106). His work is informing my entire project as I would have never considered the

¹⁶ It's odd that something intangible and ephemeral can provide us with a tangible tracing of exchange.

computer, online activity or Facebook as actors, bending space, through ANT; however, I can at least begin here. I see Deleuze and Guattari's enterprise as very similar to Latour's and thus the move from them in chapter 1 to Latour in chapter 2 does not seem all that strange. Collectively, I see the three philosophers as looking towards a spatial view of technology, employing terms like "assemblage" and "network" in very similar ways. For Latour, a network is a summing up of the relations between actors and processes—they are maps of articulations. Likewise, an assemblage is, for Deleuze and Guattari, made up of articulations. In their own words, an assemblage is "constellation[s] of singularities and traits deducted from flow—selected, organized, stratified—in such a way as to converge...artificially and naturally" (406-407). Thus, a network and an assemblage are both form of content and forms of expression, machinic, human and nonhuman. Amongst these two concepts, we may see articulation as a binding force between them.

However, ANT is not in traditional terms a theory; it does not theorize about anything; rather, it allows a researcher to see how the social is interacting, and Latour reminds us that our research is only how much we allow our actors to do and say. My theoretical framework is not ANT, but it is where I am situated, allowing me to describe Mary in different, concrete details, "to find the unique account of" Mary's situation and her "idiosyncratic" language (Latour 47). This framework takes "pillars, infrastructures and frames" from the architectural metaphor in which they are based as a literal meaning—"what it means for an interaction to frame, to structure or to localize another" cannot become lucent until we think of the theoretical framework as its literal definition—a frame in which to see work, a work held up by pillars or made from structure (Latour 194). A framework does not simply frame the work to be seen/scene; it creates the work to be seen/scene—by framework I mean, then, the structure of what I am constructing.

That said, it is not what ANT allows me to see, it is what ANT allows me to create. So, grant me an explication of the key terms and ideas used for this creation. This notion of the Latourian *actor* has been sprinkled through writing studies (and already throughout this paper), but never fully explicated or applied. An actor, as Latour defines it, can be animate or inanimate, an ambulatory person or the mere stone a computer is reduced to after a crash—for Latour these are both actors. Because I think this very innocuous term can take us a long way, I will focus specifically for this thesis on the relationship of our actors and their behavior herein. This notion of actors, key to the concept *actor-network theory* and chosen because “to use the word actor means that it’s never clear who and what is acting when we act since an actor on stage is never alone in acting,” which includes props, the stage, the audience and so on, as the actor can be defined in three crucial ways: first, an actor “bends space, making other elements dependent upon itself;” second, an actor is never alone, he/she/it is always acting with other actors (that is, with other technologies and people); third, an actor “translates their will into a language of its own,” which could be culture, systems and technologies (Callon and Latour 286). When you write a letter in a word document, you translate your thoughts into a white screen, up-right at a desk, moving your fingers across the QWERTY keyboard. To say actor and to refer to actors is to “dislocate” action—“the very word actor directs our attention to a complete dislocation of action,” meaning action that is dislocated, dislocal (47). Dis means *not* or *away from*, thus action is not local because it is “borrowed, distributed, suggested, influenced, dominated, betrayed, translated,” but Latour does not mean this in the sense that it is then its opposite—global—rather that we are uncertain where the action comes from (46). That is, we cannot simply articulate and re-articulate the actor or action into the global or social language, but we must remain uncertain of its origin, and so follow the actors, which helps us trace the engagement.

[Enter] *Samford Meisner*

Actor is not an accidental term and it is quite permissible to allow the referents associated with actor to surface. As such, let's take this term even further in its implications—to acting or dramatic theory. There is an approach to dramatic acting called the Meisner method; given the Latourian notion of actor being applied to animate and inanimate actors, the Meisner method emphasized the connection between actors as the most vital to the life of the scene. Even when a director has two stellar actors, with perfectly memorized lines, they will not create the scene individually; rather the scene emerges in their *interaction*. For example, Meisner had an activity where two actors had to repeat the same sentence over and over again to each other: “Do you get nervous at auditions?” This is repeated five or six times until a change is sensed by one of the actors; when that change is sensed, the sentence may change to respond to this change: “this question upsets you.” So, we can say, “this question upsets you...this question upsets you,” and we can then repeat this phrase until another change is sensed (132). Meisner writes, “We are beginning to see that working off an actor's response, determines our own; that the two of us are in an action-reaction dance that creates a palpable flow of energy” (132). While Meisner may be discussing two live actors, Latour takes this to denote two actors regardless of pulse. Thus, in sum, the work that will frame the remainder of this thesis will be both the theory of actors given by Latour and the Meisner theory of an “action-reaction dance” between these Latourian actors.

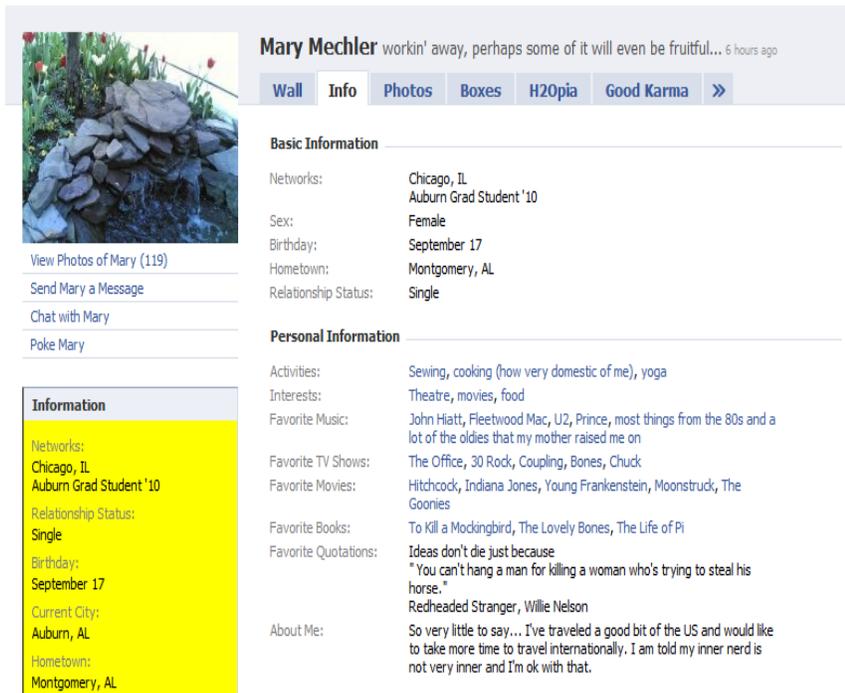
[Exit]

Bruno Latour and Samford Meisner do no exit here; they remain on stage throughout the entire play

Without Further Ado, Mary

Scene

There are three pertinent angles to seeing Mary. I followed her for three months every Saturday and Sunday to her “favorite library spot” with a video recorder. However, because I was and am most interested with how she works online, I followed her public writing activity on facebook.com, as well as the private g-chats she had throughout the three months. I recorded these online movements through digital screen capture¹⁷. The last angle was more traditional—I gathered her papers written over the three months, which she saved at every draft.



[Enter] *Researcher*

If I may talk at length for a moment about Mary: it is no mistake that she is a graduate student. Mary was chosen because, while the oldest student of her incoming graduate school class, she has a very involved online writing

life. While perhaps not at the age of our oft-discussed composition students, and perhaps not

Figure 2

embodying the quintessential 21st century life, she is at the

same time quintessential. Mary plans to pursue her PhD immediately after her MA and then plans to teach literature, write and research, generally doing what academics do; yet, as we will

¹⁷ I integrate some of those digital screen captures into this paper so that Mary can speak for herself. I captured her words and idiosyncrasies un-articulated by me, the researcher.

Education and Work

Grad Schools:	University of Houston '98 MFA, Theatre Auburn University '10 Pursuing MA, Literature Auburn '10
College:	Auburn Montgomery '96 BA, Liberal Arts/ Theatre
High School:	Robert E. Lee High School '92
Employer:	Auburn University
Position:	GTA
Time Period:	August 2008 - Present
Location:	Auburn, AL
Description:	Teaching Assistant while pursuing MA in English.
Employer:	Northwestern Memorial Hospital
Position:	Staffing Specialist
Time Period:	September 2005 - July 2008
Location:	Chicago, IL
Employer:	Hampstead Players
Position:	Actor
Time Period:	February 2000 - December 2003
Location:	Center Barnstead, NH
Description:	Touring theatre company.
Employer:	Tecumseh
Position:	Actor
Time Period:	May 2002 - August 2003
Location:	Chillicothe, OH
Description:	Historical outdoor drama about the life of Tecumseh and his struggle to unite the tribes against the American government and army.
Employer:	Bridgework Theatre
Position:	Actor
Time Period:	January 2003 - May 2003
Location:	Goshen, IN

Figure 3

see, she represents a very different way of scholarly academic engagement and activity. She is, by our own academic definition, exceptional, thus her writing model cannot represent deficit in process. I think it important that we see Mary not as a questionable student, but as a writer of the 21st century, who, despite any unorthodox practices,

does, even by our academic standards, produce finished, thoughtful work.

[Enter] *Mary, Writing and Facebook*

I present here (in figure 1) not a definition, but an example, an image, a construction, a moment of 21st century literacy. Because this is a progressive thesis about the digital lives of our literacy, I proffer here Mary's own words: how she refers to herself on facebook.com, and, further, how she articulated herself for this research. My thinking behind allowing Mary to speak rests on Latour's own arguments about having the "courage not to substitute an unknown expression for a well-known one" so as not to mar what the actor is doing, saying, thinking (48):

 **Mary Mechler** to me

[show details](#) Apr 5

 Reply

Ok, I'm not sure what would be helpful.

Can i just tell you stuff and you make it sound good? I'm going to work with that premise

I'm an actor who loves to get excited about ideas and new interesting facts - new to me at least. I love that I have a brain that stores completely worthless information sometimes, but sometimes it's annoying. I think I'm better at expressing my ideas verbally than I am at writing them so I think out loud to friends long before I ever write a sentence. I'm intimidated by my lack of writing skill. I hate writing about myself ;) Ideas strike me at weird times and from very strange prompts, which can be frustrating when I don't have anything to write down a good idea because I know I'll forget. I think that the places where I have lived and worked and all the people I've come to know have only increased my desire to learn more about people and places. I suffer from terrible wanderlust at times. Right now, it's killing me that I can't hop on a plane to Europe or Alaska or somewhere else exciting. I always hope my excitement will rub off on my students.

- Hide quoted text -

Figure 4

Notice that Mary admits she is better at expressing her ideas verbally and that she “thinks out loud to friends long before” she ever writes a sentence. As I watched Mary, she confirmed this talking through of ideas long before she writes them down. Although, she does so with one catch—her verbal conversations are online, in textual and written articulated format. She verbalizes them and thinks aloud with her Facebook friends long before she then writes them into her Word document. This marks a crucial moment in our analysis, as Mary seems vaguely aware that her writing through Facebook is equated to verbal expression and that her writing with the word document is equated to Writing. She treats the two actors differently. Or rather, she interacts with the two actors differently—one clearly represents academic writing, real writing, while the other represents casual conversation. She is intimidated by her “lack of writing skill” and yet writes constantly with Facebook, which somehow escapes the Written. This tacit discovery points to the various contingencies different acting artifacts offer. Here, the contingencies created by the interactions between Mary and Word and Mary and Facebook beget

entirely different perceptions and writing.¹⁸

Scene

A Saturday at the library of a Research 1 university, it is around quarter to one. Sunlight is

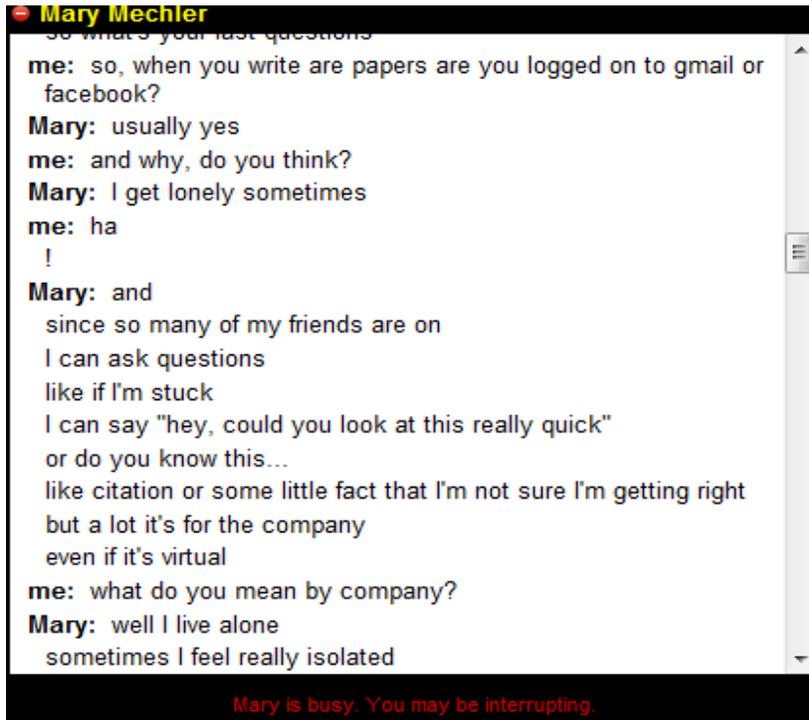


Figure 5

peering in through the window that Mary loves to sit by. The researcher sits nearby with a video camera watching Mary, while also beginning a conversation with her online. Mary is sitting at a traditional library table, computer open with several screens also open, while reading through a book that sits directly in front of her computer.

Mary, in a chat interview, writes that she remains continually logged into her networks both for the feeling of community it gives her and to “ask questions.” She also mentions that sometimes she gets “stuck.” In following Mary and recording her work practices, she often would switch back to her Facebook screen or Gmail screen, take a quick glance and go back to her paper. She used this time to think about what she might say next, or to ask for help from her online community. Although, most often it appeared that just having Facebook and Gmail open

¹⁸ However, these artifacts are not “on their own,” a priori existences, rather the nature of these particular actors are as systems devised by human actors for their own ends and who were, in turn, interacting with the material and exigencies they used to then create such artifacts.

and available to look at was enough “company” for her. These actors, while voiceless, provide Mary with a feeling of connection and a sense of audience.

Scene

In the same library, Mary Begins Work; it is roughly around 10am; she finds her favorite table on the 3rd floor; she carefully takes out her white Mac laptop, regardless of any typed work she may or may not need to do. She logs into her Gmail, her iTunes, her Facebook and opens a Microsoft Word document. As she sits, her screen is now filled with five open windows. She begins rapidly moving through them.

[Enter] *Mary, Computer, Researcher, library façade, books*

Now that we’ve met Mary, let’s begin to see how she works.

Video: Mary caught in the act

At this moment, please go to <http://trisha77.wordpress.com/acts/act-i-scene-v-2/>, to watch a clip of Mary writing. If you watch carefully, you can see how many windows she has open and is using simultaneously as she is also writing a paper in Word. She makes a joke at this point that she asked her Gmail chat friend to watch her stuff as she ran to the bathroom. This is, of course, a glimpse of her sense of humor, but it also demonstrates the significance of her connection with an online community.

Mary generally spends 10-15 minutes catching up on Facebook comments and status updates before she *can* begin writing. This involves looking through her “friends” updates to see what may be new in their lives and then often responding. The minutes before she is ready to begin her own work, she ritualistically updates her status to represent and reflect what she is about to do, almost as if she is articulating for herself and her audience what she needs to do that

day or that moment. Mary, in making “verbal thoughts visible” through this articulation, “creates her *self*” on the page (Bolter 210). This articulated written act is “reflexive,” which allows Mary

to define herself out of the confusion of thoughts (212). For example, (in figure 6) is Mary on a

Saturday, after making comments on others' status

updates, and now

preparing for her work

within her own status

update. She admits she is

“having trouble focusing”

but at the same time

articulating that she “has

got to get this paper done!”

anyway. She writes herself

into existence. This may

resemble what many of us

are used to calling

metacommentary—a writer

gathering their self-

concept, their sense of the

work of their writing, and

their sense of path to that writing. However, in its traced path, Mary's metacommentary becomes

a part of her writing process rather than separate from it. In order to write herself into existence,



Figure 6

to metacommentate, however, she must deal with Facebook as another actor. Generally in the received view of technology, Facebook might be seen as a passive, acted upon artifact, rather than something capable of acting, but if we see Facebook as an active mediator and actor in Mary's writing, Facebook is complexly able to translate and bend space around it. Mary is articulating and writing herself into existence, but she must negotiate this interface, this actor who has entered stage right. Within the space of acting with Facebook, Mary reacts to Facebook's exigency. Facebook asks her "what's on your mind?":



Figure 7

She is made to act by the interplay of Facebook, so she responds with a sentence that follows logically after her name (another demand by the acting Facebook). She begins with her name and articulates from there.



Figure 8

Facebook then tells her she can only have a specific number of characters, so she alters her sentence to answer the question, "What's on your mind?", which must follow logically after her name, and be within the bounds of the character limit. This mediated action is co-shaping Mary's act of writing her *self* into existence. Facebook thereby demands to be dealt with in a certain way. However, Mary fluidly responds to each response, each action she encounters. Latour's example of such mediators would be speed bumps, which mediate driving speed, computers which mediate people so they are hunching to type and work (as I am now),

telephones which mediate voice level, and so on. Mary acts with Facebook as Facebook acts with Mary. For example, as mentioned above, Facebook seems to be setting all the parameters of conversation; however, within this dynamic exchange, Mary has responded in different ways, playing with the demands Facebook insists on. In the examples below, Mary does not respond to Facebook with a sentence that logically follows from her name—she simply wrote “top of page 9” when asked “what is on your mind?”

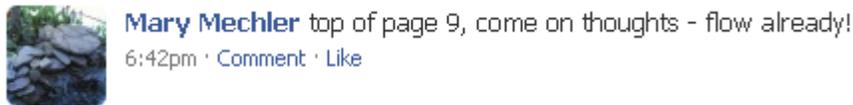


Figure 9

In the following example, she goes a step further; she does not even respond in a complete sentence or a sentence that follows logically after her name—it just reads Mary Mechler meh.



Figure 10

“Meh” is neither subject, object nor known verb—it is an utterance, sigh and an undefined outcry. As I watched Mary write this status, she stared at the text box negotiating what was on her mind. Finally, after several minutes, she wrote “meh,” which came after interacting with Facebook. Mary also has several posts where she begins with a colon, an apostrophe, a dash or other variants to change the way she responds to Facebook. In this way, she acts and reacts to Facebook, even changing her re-action as it occurs during their exchange.

We’ve established, then, this very tangible Facebook as actor, which makes Mary act. More than that, we have established this interaction between the two actors, where Mary’s response emerges out of the constant interaction between her and Facebook. Now, let us return

once more to Bolter's claims on articulation and writing oneself. Mary, as aforementioned, articulates what she is about to do through her status update. This articulation brings her work or her intentions into being and its "relative permanence," Bolter avers, "is a tremendous aid in defining what the writer thinks" (213). With the added actor of Facebook, however, this articulation of self becomes an articulation amongst two or more actors. The Mary that is revealed in the writing is a result or effect of the interplay between the actors, rather than merely Mary writing, reflecting and concretizing herself into fruition, but at the same time Mary brings Facebook into fruition acting with it and causing it to act. Bolter acknowledges that the written self will be different based on the different writing technologies—handwriting versus typewriting, etc. With the multi-faceted and prodigious amount of artifacts, websites and mediums in which to write, writing and self change with each one. Facebook offers a different interaction and writerly self than Gmail chat and status updates, than Word documents and so on.

Each time Mary begins to write academically in her Word document, she first articulates it in both her Gmail status and her Facebook status. However, each update is represented a little differently. She does not simply repeat herself across actors and mediums. Rather, out of the interaction, the connectivity between Mary and Facebook and Mary and Gmail, two different responses materialize. Below are articulations of her work on her Facebook page and on the same days in the same hours, articulations in her Gmail status update.

Gmail Status: March 9th, cannot get organized.



Figure 11

Gmail Status: March 6th, tired of her rude neighbors—don't they know I need to concentrate.



Mary Mechler has so many ideas she's finding it difficult to organize them.

March 6 at 5:30pm · Comment · Like

Figure 12

Gmail Status: March 4th, spending her day in the library, once again.



Mary Mechler researching George Colman, the Younger... why do I keep choosing people who have done so much?

March 4 at 7:31pm · Comment · Like

Figure 13

It is evident that two very different interchanges take place. In her Gmail status, she isn't having the same conversation because the Gmail status has different rhetorical constraints. It does not ask that she begin with her name, nor does it limit word count; further, the window in which to place her response is significantly smaller than Facebook's window: Set status here ▼

These characteristically different replies illustrate the acting involved in communication with these two artifacts. Gmail and Facebook, in acting with Mary and on Mary, have shaped Mary's sentences. This is a type of translation that happens when two actors speak together, they begin to understand how the other may speak, react or move and thus tailor speech and actions to meet and communicate with our other actors.

Scene

The Library, a dialogue

[Enter] other actors

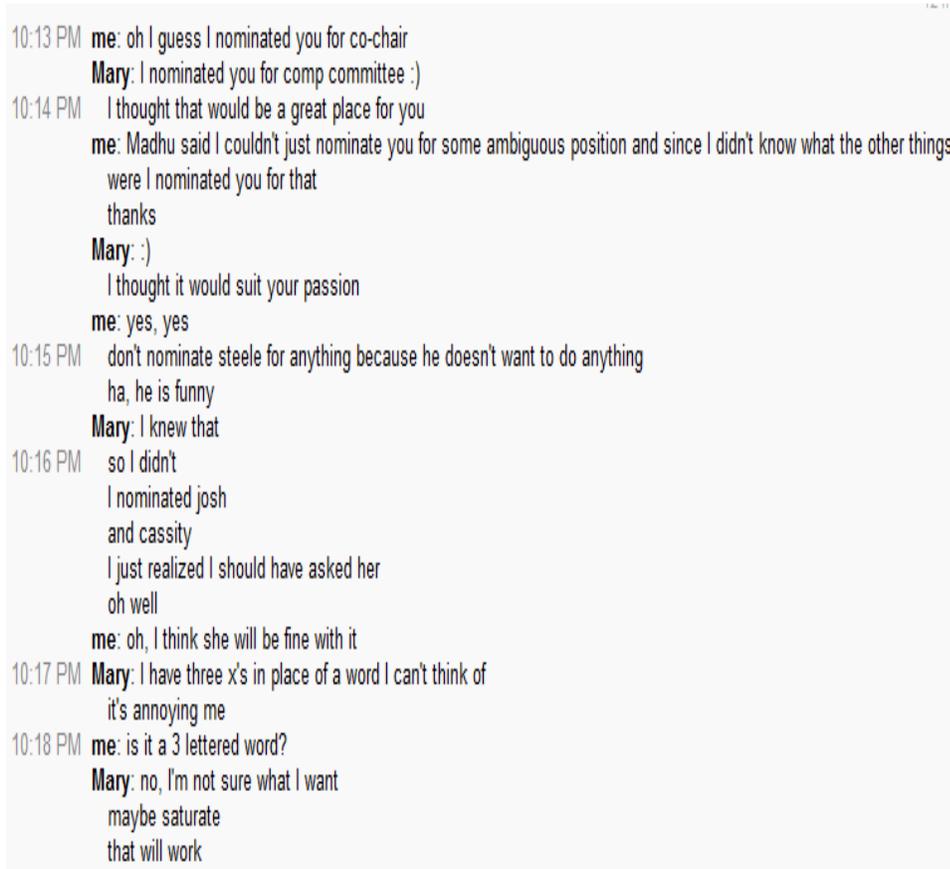
Mary begins her work one Saturday at 2:39pm; she arrived as per usual 15-20 minutes earlier than this post, logged onto Facebook and began perusing, commenting, etc. When she was

ready to work, she interacted and articulated with Facebook to write: “Mary Mechler having trouble focusing but has got to get this paper done!” She then began working, having concretized her thought. She switched back to her Facebook page at 3:46pm to reply to Kirsten's comments to her, then again at 4:33pm and again later that night at 9:49pm. In this exchange between graduate students, Mary brings up her paper or her research in each post. In her post at 4:33pm, she is actually drafting, making revision ideas: “I have to really try to keep it focused,” and then she makes a decision on revision in the middle of the post: “Maybe I'll add it all in and then start cutting...” She decided finally that this will be the best way to write her paper and then immerses herself in writing until the break she takes at 9:49pm to reply, and this time with her paper finally underway because of the revision decision she made in her last post, she replies with levity and banter. An actor is never alone or isolated. One actor is always connected to another, perhaps even an indeterminate amount of other actors. Mary is connected to Facebook (she is at the same time connected to an acting Word document, an acting Gmail chat window and email), and as she interacts with Facebook, other actors are also interacting with Facebook subject to the same exigencies. In this example, while interacting with Facebook, she interacts with Kirsten and R.B, who are interacting with Tong, PB, Wehrs, Aubie the dog, and other virtual artifacts I was not privy to. Each of these actors represented is bending space, acting with Mary, with each other and with Facebook (this is the visible acting happening). When I spoke with Mary at 10:13 that same night, she was still working on her paper, but with less alacrity. Here is our brief exchange:

In this exchange, she is once again drafting and making revisions; she voices that she cannot think of a word and has placed 3 x's in place of the word. I reply somewhat unhelpfully because I

Figure 14

am confused, thinking it is a three-lettered word



10:13 PM me: oh I guess I nominated you for co-chair
Mary: I nominated you for comp committee :)
10:14 PM I thought that would be a great place for you
me: Madhu said I couldn't just nominate you for some ambiguous position and since I didn't know what the other things were I nominated you for that
thanks
Mary: :)
I thought it would suit your passion
me: yes, yes
10:15 PM don't nominate steele for anything because he doesn't want to do anything
ha, he is funny
Mary: I knew that
10:16 PM so I didn't
I nominated josh
and cassity
I just realized I should have asked her
oh well
me: oh, I think she will be fine with it
10:17 PM Mary: I have three x's in place of a word I can't think of
it's annoying me
10:18 PM me: is it a 3 lettered word?
Mary: no, I'm not sure what I want
maybe saturate
that will work

she is looking for,
and in the midst of
our conversation and
with her very next
reply, she thinks of a
word: “maybe
saturate/ that will
work” and we sign
off. Mary has been
logged into Gmail
and Facebook for the
entirety of this

Saturday. When I speak to her here, she switches from her acting Word document to her Gmail chat screen. In talking to me and interacting with Gmail, she is able to think of a word she could not think of in her Word document. Yet, this word or her idea to use this word comes out of the exchange between us all.

As Mary works, she is always online, almost continuously logged into Facebook, yet she hands in a single dimension, double-spaced paper with only her name on it, and none of the remnants of life, conversation and acting that went on while she was writing. In *Nostalgic Angels*, Johnson Eilola writes “Composition has constructed (and allowed the construction of)

borders around a scant handful of specific forms of hypertext, declaring other, more culturally popular forms of hypertext out of bounds. In this mapping, compositionists think and work with “traditional” texts (first-person essays, literature and literacy criticism, argumentative papers, and the like), whereas other disciplines work with 'mundane' texts (online documentation, databases, and informal notes passed from person to person)” (5). This border Johnson-Eilola speaks of is what frames Mary's academic papers. She turns in a document, which is within these borders negating all other writing, articulating and drafting done elsewhere as out of bounds. This begs the question, if Mary is always online, always connected how does this—if we bring it in-bounds—map into her writing?

In Paul Prior's discussion of authorship in “How Texts Come Into Being,” he writes, “when we see that tracing the composing of a text, what classical rhetoric termed invention, involves the contributions of multiple people, it becomes clear that tracing the writing process also implicates tracing authorship” (169). For Paul Prior and Charles Bazerman, writing is intertextual and it does implicate other collaborators, people, lives, situations: “we create our texts out of the sea of former texts that surround us, the sea of language we live in” (Bazerman 83). Granted, as Mary drafts through status updates and receives feedback from her social network, those voices map into her writing; however, as we've traced Mary's scene of writing, many actors have contributed, have interacted with Mary, thereby calling into question the tracing of authorship once again. Before we become too hastily involved in who is writing what and where, let us return to our original inquiry about invention. Paul Prior reminds us that invention “involves the contributions of multiple people” (169). An author is most notably a person, or several people, and even authorship as Paul Prior sees it still refers to “multiple *people*” (emphasis mine 169). Yet, Mary's reactions arise out of acting with Facebook as an

actor, Gmail as an actor, and the exchange with other people acting with Facebook as part of these conversations. Mary writes based on the exigencies of Facebook and Gmail; while she writes, she is actually drafting parts of her paper, concretizing runaway thoughts to be recorded in her academic paper, but these thoughts come out of her constant acting with technologies that then play a significant role in her academic paper. That is, if we take Latour's conception of actor mingled with the Meisner method, we have the vitality, the energy of response emerging as an effect of the synergy between actors. What Mary writes is a result of acting with Facebook and Gmail; thus Facebook and Gmail as actors are implicated in the authorship of Mary's texts, and further Mary's academic writing. This calls for a re-definition of Bazerman's intertextuality. A straightforward definition of intertextuality would be "the relation each text has to the texts surrounding it" (84). Thus, for our purposes, intertextuality would be the relation a Facebook aphorism has to a larger context of words, how the aphorism uses those words and how the aphorism is positioned with other words. And then, how that aphorism is then re-purposed into a sea of other words within a Word document, making our invention and originality as writers come from arrangement—how we put words together—in new ways, thereby requiring that Facebook, Gmail, Word—and other software not mentioned here— become co-authors in this arrangement and therefore invention.

[Exit] Mary

Postlude

If the question of invention imposes itself on writing in the 21st century, it no longer does so in order to summon what invention should be, could be or isn't. Rather, invention is alive and, at least partially traceable. Mary has multiple lines of communication always flowing and so

invents her sentences and ideas out of this network, this body of actors; she pieces together her own writing. Her invention process will never be lonely; she will never sit upon a chair, between mute walls and come up with words to say. Rather, her invention process will always include the various voices of an online community and the rhetorical exigency of those internet artifacts she daily, even hourly, interacts with. With Latour's help, we are put within a "thick imbroglio where the question of who is carrying out the action has become unfathomable" (46). Thus, we need to consider what invention means to us in academia and how we are fostering its growth in the digital age.

As we end our scenes, the actors all exit and we are left with Mary's finished seminar paper, a typed double-spaced and single dimension document, only containing the single name Mary Mechler, without any of the lively interaction which took place in our scene. Yet, it is technology Mary is working with; it is technology Bruno Latour refers to as actors. These actors bend space around themselves. While working at a computer, we hunch and level our hands in a certain way to connect with the keyboard. The computer has inflicted many a backache and neck ache by altering human bodies around its demands. Mary's artifacts are also bending space because they shape and translate the space around them; they bend Mary, so to speak, to mold to their space. However, I don't merely wish to give technology agency, but I want to take this and writing studies a step further. I am suggesting that we erase, ignore or efface the human/machine trope. It is increasingly impossible to distinguish between the two, as Mary is always acting with her artifacts. What is more useful, rather, is how writing is technology and technology writing. There is no longer technology and writing or computers and writing; there is only technological writing. Further, this is an advantageous way of looking at our relationship to technology because it deemphasizes technology as mere tool and underscores their activity in

our everyday existence. In doing so, it complicates our view of writing in this world, where students are now always plugged in and connected to Facebook and/or Gmail, even while writing in Word. Their flow of writing to the Word document is working with one actor, but they work with many actors simultaneously each demanding a different kind of writing. When we teach writing, are we considering the inextricable role technological artifacts have in writing and their role in our arrangement of words on the page?

This research finally legitimates what we might call a multi-tasked or multi-focal or multi-site writing process, whereby a writer's modern technological "distractions" are not distractions at all, but, in ways we've always suspected but not demonstrated, actually facilitate the thinking, inventing and drafting. Thus, the study of Mary begs the question—how are we teaching to this mode of invention. Mary's ideas come out of her conversations, but they are online conversations. While I am not negating the importance of meatspace interaction even to writing, I am wondering what classrooms do to account for the flow of ideas needed for Mary and others to write. Mary always has a sense of audience as she writes, a sense of large audience, not simply teacher. She knows she has a group of interconnected people who are listening as she updates. This larger audience is missing in our writing courses. We may try to get them to imagine an audience, but this has proved ineffective. Besides, why have students imagine an audience when they could be actually digitally connected to a large audience as they write? This may be too radical for our time now, but I wonder what a writing class might look like where the students had an online space to all be plugged in and conversing while writing their academic papers. I wonder what kinetic ideas might emerge out of that virtual think-tank and if we might finally move past the stumped composition student who can't find anything to write about. Moreover, the students would all be writing to each other as they wrote in their

Word document, thus writing in two or three different rhetorical situations and working with several actors in a network of people. I realize this goal may be lofty, but I ask you to wonder for a moment at a classroom such as this and wonder long enough to invent a pedagogy that speaks to this new, always connected, communal, alive way of invention and writing.

[Curtain]

Conclusion

I make that customary¹⁹ move now to conclude this thesis and in doing so will offer a sort of meta-response to how I have elucidated iVenture thus far.²⁰ As I sit, gathering my thoughts preparing to in/Vent this conclusion, I engage, not only with people around me, but those acting artifacts online.²¹

Within Mary's iVenture process or, more accurately, engagement processes, lines of singular flight ebb and flow out of her work. Yet, I want to be clear, I am not arguing that Facebook is a site of dynamic invention ready to solve the world's problems, but, rather, a site in which we can see and quite literally visualize a new way to invent: to iVent. Yet, how this comes about is less clear, even abstract at times. Our current model of invention moves in the most traditional and old-fashioned sense; it repeats the same movement over and over again. This is the precise movement from favored side, opposition or binary to the other. The poor wish to over-throw the rich, and once they do we have the dichotomy reestablished—reinvented, in fact. Thus, the question and problem of invention is wholly wrapped up in the question and problem of the binary. As we veer out of the postmodern and into the alter-modern or that which has yet to be named, the binary between same/different remains nearly untouched²². Our theories of invention are hinged upon this binary. What is considered invention or inventive can only emerge out of negating what is “the same” and replacing it with what is “different.” Thus, our whole history of invention hangs upon the dialectic of negation. Yet, the problem with this

¹⁹ At this moment, I switched screens to thesaurus.com, trying to locate a word different than “tradition.” As you can see, I came up with “customary” as a better choice.

²⁰ As I pause for thought here, I found myself on Facebook updating my status to reflect that I am only a conclusion away from being done with my thesis.

²¹ At this point, I switch screens to re-read and re-peruse Derrida's chapter “Psyche: Inventions of the Other”; I do this to gather my thoughts and invent what I am about to say.

²² Switched screens to locate a different word for “intact” because I know I have already used this word elsewhere in my thesis.

dialectic is that it both is a modicum of change—it has historically worked in favor of progression *and* it keeps us bound within its logic. As soon as I negate the dialectic, I have merely enacted the dialectic. Our goal, then, should not be to escape this dialectic and yet at the same time should be our goal. We need to both think past the dialectic and not negate the dialectic.

I suppose one might consider our current model of invention of the dialectic as suitable for change; yet, I would argue and urge you to think otherwise. The dialectic, while responsible for change in some ways, has put us in a place where scholarship, research and revolution only work to²³ replace and displace one side of the binary for another, thus constantly maintaining an inequality within our system of invention. However, it is not the binary which troubles us so much as the fixed points the dialectic presupposes on invention, for the binaries are rather a part of an arrangement of actions. So, we find in the dialectic harrowing news—that invention surfaces out of the most uninventive traditional move: one binary to another.

So, we sit in a world with a worn out dialectic, searching for change and different ways of being in the world, finding only the same movement over and over again, thus searching in vain. Yet, it is within this very archaic movement that we can re-examine invention, to “reinvent” invention. So, movements become our main focus, and not just the movement between same/different, but all the movements that lead up to and away from this binary, the constellation of movements and points.

What we find when we trace these movements is that a particular orientation toward affirmative invention is what makes the affirmation, rather than the negation, possible. In orienting towards the affirmative, we make the singular rhythms seen/scene and thus invention is

²³ Switched to Facebook to refresh and take a moment to think. I read several updates and then returned to my

born. iVention offers us both a site where constellations and assemblages can be more easily followed, as well as an active place in which these lines of flight might be fleeing (*fuite*). As we saw with Mary, she writes her papers only as she is connected to several technological artifacts. Her writing is no doubt changed as she switches back and forth between screens, breaking the flow and movement of her work.

It would be unfair to accredit Mary and Facebook with the ponderous weight of iVenting in a new, neither for nor against, (un)dialectical way. Yet, at the same time²⁴ Mary's work allows lines of flight and thus different modes and ways of thinking. Her very work situation makes assemblages transparent and readily accessible. Thus, we have lines of flight taking place online, but our work needs to orient towards these intensities in order to foster the change and metamorphosis needed for us to invent differently. To be inclined toward this common intensity, therefore, indicates neither a simple repetition of the tradition nor an attempt to overcome that tradition. Instead, to be inclined toward affirmative inventing means that we are inclined towards an orientation of engagement and becoming or emergence. Thus, we are again before the doorstep of invention, at engagement. This time, however, it is central to affirmative invention in the 21st century. For, it is within engagement that we orient ourselves and respond to the lines of flight.

As I have customarily concluded, I have also in/Ventively? concluded, offering an illustration of engagement with technological artifacts. We need, though, to make a model of iVention that celebrates lines of flight and directs power toward affirmative invention. This begins by going back to what is before iVention with the acceptance that invention and iVention

document.

²⁴ Switched screens to my online derby forum so I can relay that I will not make it tonight because I am still working on this conclusion.

require different models and modes of thinking. iVention is particularly concerned with the level of engagement, which is where these models should exist and can foster lines of flight in digital iVenting. I remarked in the beginning that invention was the forgotten or neglected canon, and I meant this in the sense that invention requires more attention and scholarly inquiry. Our models are tired and worn out. I have proposed that invention can no longer comfortably rest as the first canon, but must owe its allegiance to engagement, for writing takes place through this traceable engagement and as our attention turns towards engagement, we can begin to orient and teach toward affirmative invention and iVention in the digital.

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