# TECHNICAL DIFFICULTIES:

# MODERNISM AND THE MACHINE

A dissertation

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## Abstract


### Technical Difficulties: Modernism and the Machine

This dissertation explores the boundaries between technology and the ideology of the human in the twentieth- and twenty-first-centuries. As a movement that motivates theoretical interventions such as Walter Benjamin's "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," Theodor W. Adorno's *The Culture Industry*, and Mark Seltzer's *Bodies and Machines*, modernism exhibits a pervasive anxiety about the status of the human in relation to technology. Examining this relationship through multiple theoretical frameworks, I argue that modernism is marked by *technical difficulties*: moments of rupture and dissonance that disrupt and fragment narratives, produce interference over communications lines, and reconfigure time and space. Casting my reading across generic, temporal, and geographical boundaries, I read the Professor in Joseph Conrad's *The Secret Agent* (1907) as a figure that troubles the man/machine binary by operating on the brink of what Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari call "becoming machine"; put Samuel Beckett's play *Krapp's Last Tape* (1958) into conversation with Kazuo Ishiguro's novel *Never Let Me Go* (2005) as they challenge the modernist ideology of the human through narratives that privilege the recorded voice or copy; examine the telephone in Muriel Spark's *Memento Mori* (1959) and *The Girls of Slender Means* (1963) as an insecure and antagonistic medium of communication that articulates a global tension around the threat of surveillance in the postwar era; bring Samuel Beckett's experimental

short, *Film* (1959), to bear on Michael Haneke's *Caché* (2005) as they construct a theory of perception as always already paranoid; and consider modernism's role in the shaping of postmodern network culture through James Joyce, whose literary and critical oeuvre anticipates the generative effects of technology in the digital age.

Together, the texts in this dissertation reveal modernism's preoccupation with media that are inherently unstable, that breed discomfort through disembodiment, and that produce institutionalized methods of control. Through their investment in the technical difficulties that expose the fantasy of security, closure, and connection and that reveal the cracks in our humanist frameworks, these texts consider the effects of the human engagement with the machine and call for a reexamination of assumptions about how technology functions as a producer of knowledge and a recorder of individual and collective histories.

This dissertation is dedicated to

Joseph A. Walsh,

who believed that dreams really do come true.

“Right-O, Poppy.”

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## Table of Contents

# Introduction

## Modernism and the Machine

> We created the Machine, to do our will, but we cannot make it do our will now. It has robbed us of the sense of space and of the sense of touch, it has blurred every human relation and narrowed down love to a carnal act, it has paralyzed our bodies and our wills, and now it compels us to worship it. The Machine develops—but not on our lines. The Machine proceeds—but not to our goal. We only exist as the blood corpuscles that course through its arteries, and if it could work without us, it would let us die.
>
> E.M. Forster, "The Machine Stops"

In 1909, E.M. Forster published a short story titled "The Machine Stops" in *The Oxford and Cambridge Review*. The story takes place in an "accelerated age" in which the human race has retreated below the surface of the earth, believing that the air above has become toxic and the land uninhabitable. In this underground world, people live in isolated chambers and their actions are mediated through the Machine, an enormous structure composed of "rooms, tier below tier, reaching far into the earth, and in each room […] a human being, eating, or sleeping, or producing ideas" (158). The infrastructure of the Machine is likened to a beehive, with each person confined to his or her individual cell.[1] Physical contact is discouraged by the Machine: basic needs are accessible with the push of a button and communication is available through "speaking tubes" and interactive screens, mechanical devices that offer "a general idea of people," an

idea which is commonly believed to be "good enough for all practical purposes" (148). Vashti, an older woman who was born into the world of the Machine, embraces this antiseptic lifestyle as she favors the seclusion of her private cell, putting faith in the Machine to protect her from what she calls "the terrors of direct experience" that exist beyond her door (154). But her rebellious son Kuno perceives the Machine in a very different way, describing it as a parasitic "monster"[2] that feeds on human life and that poses a threat to the future of humankind (186). In the epigraph above, Kuno exposes the oppressive nature of the Machine as a powerful governing force and positions himself against it, establishing the antagonistic rivalry between man and the machine that this dissertation will examine through a broad range of literature and media from the modernist period to the twenty-first century.

This dissertation reads modernism as a literary and cultural movement that positions the machine as a source of modern cultural anxiety. As such, modernism ushers in a flood of artistic endeavors that struggle to work out the complex relation between the somatic and psychological understandings of the self's putative authenticity in contrast to its mechanical other. The relationship between modernism and its many machines—from the printing press, to the gramophone, to the telephone, the radio, and the cinema—has long been the subject of critical interest and, in recent years, it has garnered even more attention as literary scholars have begun to think about the changing state of modernist studies in the digital age.[3] One only has to look at the wave of theoretical interventions emerging both alongside and immediately out of the historical moment of

modernism in order to anticipate this critical shift, as writers and thinkers of the modernist movement voice strikingly similar concerns about the transformative turn towards technology and its effects on their social, political, and cultural spheres. Among some of the most influential of these interventions, of course, are Walter Benjamin's writings on mechanical reproduction and media, recently recollected in *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility and other Writings on Media*, Martin Heidegger's *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, and Theodor Adorno's critical examination of mass culture in *The Culture Industry*. While these interventions are certainly foundational to my discussion of modernism, my argument is also informed by more contemporary contributions from new media theorists and cultural historians such as Lisa Gitelman, John Durham Peters, and N. Katherine Hayles, who consider how the introduction of machines designed to improve efficiency and increase the range and scope of cultural production and communications continue to radically alter the way we perceive both the world and ourselves in our current moment. But before looking more closely at the historical trajectory of my argument, I want to return to Forster's story as it articulates what is at stake in the examination of man's anxious relation to the machine in modernism.

Forster's self-proclaimed "fantasy"[4] of a world governed by the Machine imagines the machine as an active force, anticipating Martin Heidegger's reading of the oppressive bond forged between the human and technology in *The Question Concerning Technology*: "everywhere we remain unfree and chained to technology, whether we passionately affirm or deny it. But we are delivered over

to it in the worst possible way when we regard it as something neutral; […]" (Heidegger 4). Written a half-century earlier, Forster's story posits a crucial question that takes the argument of my dissertation a step further: what happens when the Machine stops? As the story approaches its dramatic conclusion, the Machine experiences technical difficulties, a familiar phrase that I will complicate and theorize in the chapters to follow. In Forster's example, technical difficulties are represented through a series of glitches and malfunctions in the Machine that signal its imminent breakdown. These difficulties have serious consequences as they produce a state of emergency, revealing the cracks in the Machine's purportedly stable framework and exposing its promise of safety and security as nothing more than an illusion.

I examine how technical difficulties emerge within modernist texts as moments of rupture, static, and dissonance that disrupt and reconfigure narratives, produce epistemological gaps, and perpetuate a sense of crisis or instability for the subject that encounters them. Difficulty, of course, is not a new concept for modernism. As Leonard Diepeveen argues in *The Difficulties of Modernism*, "difficulty's place in modernism was driven by shared understandings of what difficulty was, understandings that routinely allowed localized instances of difficulty to stand in for all of modern culture" (43). High modernism in particular is notorious for making difficulty an aesthetic worthy of both admiration and frustration. As T.S. Eliot argues in "The Metaphysical Poets," "we can only say that it appears likely that poets in our civilization, as it exists at present, must be *difficult*. Our civilization comprehends great variety and complexity, and this

variety and complexity, playing upon a refined sensibility, must produce various and complex results" (248). Eliot demands that the work of art in the twentieth century be infused with difficulties that challenge the reader to confront the changing state of the world around him. Eliot's insistence on the poet's investment in "variety and complexity" is visualized in *The Waste Land*, a poem whose incorporation of a wide range of languages and cultural references as well as the inclusion of footnotes marks its accomplishment as one of modernism's most difficult texts.

Eliot's contemporary W.B. Yeats, on the other hand, argues for an end to the celebration of difficulty as he laments that "the fascination of what's difficult / Has dried the sap out of my veins, and rent / Spontaneous joy and natural content / Out of my heart" ("The Fascination of What's Difficult" 93; ln. 1-4). In this poem, Yeats issues a poetic response to Eliot by positioning the modernist "fascination" with difficulty as tiring and destructive: it has "dried out" the creative energy and simplicity once admired in works of art and turned the "joy" of reading into a laborious and cumbersome process.[5] Similarly, in his essay "Surgery for the Novel—or a Bomb," D.H. Lawrence complains about the unwieldiness of the modern novel, choosing James Joyce's *Ulysses* as his main target. He writes: "through thousands and thousands of pages Mr. Joyce [tears himself] to pieces, strip[s] [his] smallest emotions to the finest threads, till you feel you are sewed inside a word mattress that is being slowly shaken up, and you are turning to wool along with the rest of the wooliness" (518). My dissertation engages the traditional difficulties of language, style, and form that these

writers—as well as their critics—attribute to modernism in its all-too-familiar insistence on "making it new." This imperative encourages artists to break from traditional modes of representation in an effort to capture the flux and instability of the times, an instability that, on a broader scale, reflects the very concept of modernity itself.

Susan Stanford Friedman explains that the problem of modernity is in its plurality. She states that "modernity…has no single meaning, not even one location. […] Globally and locally, modernity appears infinitely expandable" ("Planetarity" 473). In *Identity Crisis: Modernity, Psychoanalysis and the Self*, Stephen Frosh echoes this reading of modernity in his assessment of the modern condition, arguing that "whatever the self is, all selves are thrown into confusion when faced with the contradictions and multiplicities of modernity" (5). Maintaining the insistence on plurality and contradiction articulated by Friedman and Frosh, I consider the crisis of modernity through the lens of the machine, positioning technology as the privileged site of contradiction and multiplicity that informs the way the human subject is both constituted and complicated.

The first half of my dissertation focuses on how the changing climate of the twentieth century is shaped by the introduction of machines that transform the way people think about making art and, in turn, that radically reconfigure how we understand the making of the human subject. As Walter Benjamin argues in his seminal essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," the intrusion and proliferation of copies gives way to questions of authenticity and autonomy that are crucial to our understanding of the human as original and

unique, challenging ideological assumptions about the human as distinct from its mechanical other. Benjamin explains that "the whole sphere of authenticity is outside technical—and, of course, not only technical—reproducibility" (220). Technology for Benjamin comes to diminish the authority—or "aura"—of the original (art) object: the introduction and dissemination of copies gives way to a "shattering of tradition" that produces "shock effects" in the social mechanism at large (221). While these effects are certainly disruptive in that they give way to a loss of control on the part of the artist they are also, as deconstructionist Jacques Derrida demonstrates through his engagement with play, potentially productive. We can witness the competing effects of this "shattering" by returning to Forster's story and observing what happens after the collapse of the Machine.

The "defects" articulated by Forster's mechanical system of the Machine indicate a structural breakdown that jolts its inhabitants out of their safety nets and propels them towards a future unknown: music is periodically interrupted by a "jarring noise;" food arrives moldy and the bath water starts to stink; even poetry is tainted by "defective rhymes" (189-90). These disturbances cause great panic within the community, perpetuating "gradations of terror" that recall Kuno's initial warning about the Machine's potential to destroy us (192). A similar warning is produced by Joseph Conrad in a letter written to his friend R.B. Cunninghame Graham. This letter, written in 1897, cultivates similar anxieties around the increasing mechanization of experience as it invokes the nightmare vision of a knitting machine, an image that I examine in my first chapter as a metaphor for artistic production. The knitting machine informs my reading of the

machine as destructive agent; Conrad describes it as a "thing" that "evolve[s] itself" (*Collected Letters* v.1, 424-25). Positioning this machine as a "tragic accident," Conrad situates his reading of the machine within the framework of difficulty: its coming into being is offered up as a mistake. The inhumanity that Conrad posits in his deconstruction of the machine as being "without thought, without foresight, without eyes, without heart" is what makes it both antagonistic and indestructible. Conrad remarks: "you can't interfere with it" (425). But unlike Conrad's machine that refuses the possibility of interference, Forster's Machine remains vulnerable to breakdown. At the end of the story, as Forster's Machine grinds to a halt, the people inside are forced from their cells into the seemingly borderless waste land of the great outdoors, a conclusion that, offered alongside Conrad's, articulates the multiple and contradictory effects of technical difficulties.

In his 1932 reading of T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*, a poem that is, in itself, littered with machines, F.R. Leavis argues that the literary text reflects the social and political conditions of the world it is born out of. Leavis writes:

> What is the significance of the modern Waste Land? The answer may be read in what appears as the rich disorganization of the poem. The seeming disjointedness is intimately related to the erudition that has annoyed so many readers and to the wealth of literary borrowings and allusions. These characteristics reflect the present state of civilization. The traditions and cultures have mingled, and the historical imagination makes the past

> contemporary; no one tradition can digest so great a variety of materials, and the result is a breakdown of forms and the irrevocable loss of that sense of absoluteness which seems necessary in a robust culture. […] In considering our present plight we have also to take account of the incessant rapid change that characterizes the Machine Age. The result is breach of continuity and the uprooting of life. (173-74)

In the spirit of Conrad's turn-of-the-century vision, Leavis positions Eliot's poem as a literary machine that articulates the crisis of the subject through its unconventional modes of production, giving way to feelings of "loss," disjointedness," and "disorganization." The "uprooting of life" that Leavis understands as crucial to reading Eliot's work is also reflected in Forster's story. As she is cast out of her cell and into the open air, Vashti comprehends the death of civilization as she knows it. She observes that "only the whispers remained, and the little whimpering groans. They were dying by hundreds out in the dark" (195). But suddenly, in the midst of all of this destruction, Forster opens up a space for something new to emerge out of the darkness, a space that allows me to suggest that technical difficulties also pave the way for productive possibilities. The final paragraph reads as follows:

> […] the whole city was broken like a honeycomb. An air-ship had sailed in through the vomitory into a ruined wharf. It crashed downwards, exploding as it went, rending gallery after gallery with

> its wings of steel. For a moment they saw the nations of the dead,
> and, before they joined them, scraps of the untainted sky. (197)

Forster's story articulates the paradox of the machine that this dissertation finally engages in its consideration of both the destructive effects and generative possibilities that emerge out of man's encounter with it. The texts that I read in the following chapters pick up where Forster and Eliot leave off, revealing a preoccupation with media that are inherently unstable, that breed discomfort through disembodiment, and that produce institutionalized methods of control. Through their investment in the technical difficulties that expose the fantasy of security, closure, and connection; that reconfigure the way we think about temporality, community, and meaning-making; and that reveal the cracks in our humanist frameworks, the texts in this dissertation consider the effects of the human engagement with the machine and call for a reexamination of assumptions about how technology functions as a producer of knowledge and a recorder of individual and collective histories.

I aim to reposition modernism as a movement marked by technical difficulties to consider how the effects produced out of the modernist engagement with machines continue to register into the twenty-first century. In his Preface to *Camera Works*, Michael North observes: "that there should be some significant relation between aesthetic modernism and new media seems true almost by definition. Modernism, after all, stakes its initial claim to fame on new modes and new methods, innovations so drastic they seem not just to change the old arts but to invent new and unrecognizable ones" (v). North draws important parallels

between literary modernism and the visual arts through his engagement with the camera (both still and cinematic), which he argues opens up "all sorts of possible new languages" through "the new association of word and image suggested by the photograph" (11-12). Engaging North's argument, I argue that the modernist machine produces "new and unrecognizable" forms that respond to the emerging media of its time. The "new" thus comes to be figured in this dissertation as a multi-directional and multi-dimensional concept that allows for the eruption of possibilities. I explore this concept through a broader range of media than North—looking at machines from the wireless to the telephone, tape cassettes to digital archives—to consider how the appearance of the machine in modernist texts makes difficulty a structural principle that is integral both to the work and to the movement of modernism itself.

Throughout the dissertation, I position technical difficulties as symptomatic of a rapidly changing global landscape, a world in which the ideology of the human as both authentic and separated from its mechanical other is perpetually challenged and exposed as an illusion. While I situate these moments of difficulty first within a modernist context, I go on to extend this reading beyond the boundaries of modernism to reflect on how such difficulties register in today's globalized economy. This trajectory is, in part, motivated by a desire to expand the historical argument articulated by Hugh Kenner in *The Pound Era*, which observes the continuum between eighteenth- and nineteenth-century attitudes towards the machine and those reflected in the work of the high modernists. Kenner writes: "The Luddites smashed machines. The machine is the

evil symbol of romantic poetry; mills are dark and satanic; 'mechanical' is Blake's ultimate pejorative adjective, and a hundred years later is still Yeats's" (305). While my first chapter takes a brief look back to Charles Dickens and his contemporaries as they rage against the Industrial machine, I ultimately want to think about how modernist concerns maintain their relevance after the postwar period and the traditional "end" of modernism, as machines become increasingly ubiquitous. This movement requires a consideration of what Mark Goble calls "the mediated life." In *Beautiful Circuits: Modernism and the Mediated Life*, Goble positions modernism as a moment of "'ubiquitous communication,' a term adapted from computer science and product design, and evoking the complex ways technologies seem to vanish as they become more incorporated into our lives and as we come to assume their inevitable presence" (13-14). Goble's invitation to think more about our "love" of media and the "relationships made possible *by* technology" takes his project in a different direction than the project that I am currently pursuing, but the construction of modernism's incorporation of technology informs the later chapters of my dissertation, which explore the consequences of technical difficulties for mediated subjects in a mediated world (Goble 12).

Bringing technology to bear on our understanding of modernism is one of the projects of The New Modernist Studies, a movement introduced and defined by Douglas Mao and Rebecca L. Walkowitz in a 2008 article published in *PMLA*. In this article, Mao and Walkowitz discuss the "transnational turn" in modernist studies, which works towards the construction of an interrelation between local

and global models of reading, as well as trends towards parallelism (reading texts side-by-side rather than in opposition to one another); the problem of dissolving boundaries (both temporal and geographical); and an ever-increasing focus on innovation and reinvention ("The New Modernist Studies" 737-48). My project situates itself at an angle to this expanding critical discourse through its interdisciplinary approach, which brings a diverse set of twentieth- and twenty-first century texts into conversation with current scholarship in the fields of modernist studies, cultural theory, and new media studies. Each of my chapters promises to make a valuable contribution to existing scholarship in the field. Pairing canonical modernist writers such as Joseph Conrad, James Joyce, and Samuel Beckett with contemporary artists such as Muriel Spark, Kazuo Ishiguro, and Michael Haneke, I break down traditional borders to open up new networks of relation between literature, philosophy, critical theory, and the visual arts. This study crosses generic, temporal and geographical boundaries in order to consider how modernist concerns about technology anticipate emerging postmodern culture and the continued dissolution of boundaries in the Information Age. As a means to that end, I now want to examine the various permutations of the machine that are under investigation in this dissertation by providing brief snapshots of the chapters as they engage both the machine and its inherent difficulties.

Up to this point, I have been using "the machine" as an umbrella term for technology in general. But there are specific instances of the machine that my dissertation aims to highlight and explore. First, I consider the machine in its

material forms: as an object or a thing that supports and extends human functions. Marshall McLuhan's *Understanding Media* establishes a context for reading the machine as a prosthetic device. McLuhan argues that "the personal and social consequences of any medium—that is, of any extension of ourselves—result from the new scale that is introduced into our affairs by each extension of ourselves, or by any new technology" (7). McLuhan's articulation of the machine as "any extension of ourselves" invites us to think about the complex relation between bodies and machines that, more recently, has been explored and complicated by cultural historians and new media theorists such as Mark Seltzer and N. Katherine Hayles. The social tensions produced by what Seltzer identifies as the "coupling" of bodies and machines in his study *Bodies and Machines* or what Hayles posits as the "seamless articulation" of the human being and the "intelligence machine" in *How We Became Posthuman*, are explored in the first two chapters of the dissertation through characters whose intimate connection with the machine blurs the physical boundaries between them, challenging both our somatic and psychological understandings of the self in contrast to its mechanical other (Seltzer 3-4; Hayles 3).

My first chapter, "Conrad's Machines," reads the Professor in Joseph Conrad's 1907 novel *The Secret Agent* as a figure who embodies what Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari identify in *Anti-Oedipus* as "becoming-machine." The Professor is Conrad's anarchist *par excellence* whose indifference to human life is propelled by his ambition to produce the most "perfect detonator" (68). His investment in the bomb is what makes the Professor an explosive force in the text:

he walks the streets of London with his finger poised over the trigger of the tiny detonator that he keeps in his pocket, ready to exterminate everything in his path. Inextricably tethered to this destructive apparatus, the Professor operates on the brink of "becoming machine." As Slavoj Žižek helps us to understand through his discussion of this Deleuzean construct: "what we get here is not the relationship of a *metaphor* (the old boring topic of 'machines replacing humans') but that of *metamorphosis*, of the 'becoming machine of a man'" (16 *my emphasis*). I argue that the Professor applies a steady pressure that threatens the stability of the novel and its constructed world, marking a crisis for the modern subject who must confront the idea that this explosive force of the man-turned-machine may be all that remains for the future of mankind.

My second chapter, "The Perversion of Playback," continues to explore the intimate relation between man and machine through another medium: the tape recorder. This chapter introduces the effects of what Jacques Derrida refers to as "archival" technologies, devices that aid in the construction and preservation of cultural and historical memory. Designed to store voices, images, and events in order to preserve them for personal or collective histories as records and remembrances of things past, these technologies produce copies that look and sound just like their human counterparts. The articulation of the copy as a potential substitute or stand-in for the human, made possible by its often too-close-for-comfort resemblance to the original, troubles the man/machine binary that modernism attempts to sustain through its humanistic stake in the originality and authenticity of the subject. Michael North argues that this troubling of the

binary marks the beginning of modernism: "the common beginning of modernism in literature and in the arts is to be found in the recording technologies that brought the whole relation of word, sound, and image into doubt" (4). While North's historical account privileges photography and film over phonography as media that promise a language "impossibly more flexible and more various than any of the written languages," his introduction speaks more generally about the potential consequences of recording technologies that I argue are also effects of the recorded voice (8). North writes: "having put such great emphasis on recording as an automatic and therefore impartial transcription of the real, apologists for the new technologies were faced with the threatening idea that the distortions obvious in their recordings revealed an inherent instability in the relationship of human perception to reality" (9). The possibility that the reproduction of a sound or image contains a distortion places that recording at a distance from reality or lived experience, exposing its inauthentic or mechanical roots.

The relationship between the pure, authentic voice and its source or subject is complicated in modernism by writers who express a cautious uncertainty about the introduction and popularization of the mechanical voice.[6] Sebastian Knowles suggests that modernism is born "alongside the gramophone" (2). The gramophone makes frequent cameo appearances in literature of the period that expose the tension between the original and the copy that I have just discussed. For example, in *Brighton Rock*, Graham Greene's bad-boy protagonist Pinkie Brown expresses his anxiety over his lover's request to record his voice on

a gramophone record so she may keep it as a souvenir and replay it "one day" when he is "away somewhere" (176). Pinky immediately feels resentful of the request as he takes it to be a "dangerous" one: "he didn't like the idea of putting anything on a record: it reminded him of finger-prints" (176).[7] Pinky's anxiety is the result of a fear that, in inscribing his voice on a record, he gives himself up to the machine. The vulnerability of the subject in relation to the recording machine is also explored in Virginia Woolf's *Between the Acts*. In this novel, the mechanical *chuff chuff chuff* and *tick tick tick* of the gramophone's moving parts as it begins to break down in the midst of a long-awaited pageant give way to the anxious dispersal of its audience, exposing public anxieties about the breakdown of communication and the loss of identity in the postwar period in which the novel is set. The eerie refrain that Woolf attributes to the gramophone—" '*Dispersed are we,*' "—resonates long after the pageant has ended as the characters question their place in the world and how they might preserve something of themselves within it: "they were suspended, without being, in limbo. Tick, tick, tick went the machine" (*BTA* 196-97; 178).[8]

In the examples above, the gramophone produces disorienting and dehumanizing effects. Through the process of mechanization, the voice becomes detached from the subject-who-speaks and tethered instead to a speaking machine that plays it back again. Reproduced at a distance from the body, this manufactured voice can be difficult to trace. "As soon as [the voice] departs from its textual anchorage," Mladen Dolar writes in *A Voice and Nothing More*, "[it] becomes senseless and threatening—all the more so because of its seductive and

intoxicating powers" (43). While the mechanized voice takes on a *semblance* of a human voice, it can no longer be assumed or privileged as something or some*one* distinctly human. Archival technologies, then, expose communication as a mediated event in which the authenticity or truth of a presupposed original subject is in jeopardy.

Reading Samuel Beckett's play "Krapp's Last Tape" alongside Kazuo Ishiguro's novel *Never Let Me Go*, my second chapter considers the limits of the voice on tape as a product of machines that purport to remember, to (re)construct, and to hold onto a "truth" or origin of the self, producing copies that look and sound just like their human counterparts. While distinct in their approaches to and representations of the voice and the copy, Beckett's play and Ishiguro's novel invite a reconsideration of the ideology of the human that modernism insists upon, yet simultaneously deconstructs. Understanding playback as a repetition or return of the voice vis-à-vis a recording device, as well as a narrative trope, I call upon Jacques Derrida's reconsideration of the hierarchical relationship between speech and writing in *Of Grammatology* to help me demonstrate how Beckett's Krapp and Ishiguro's Kathy H. respectively use playback to maintain their relationships to an outside world that they feel is quickly slipping away. In both the play and the novel a linear narrative is refused in favor of a self-archiving process that ultimately proves to be incomplete and unreliable.

The second part of my dissertation continues to consider the effects of archival machines that allow for the reproduction, transmission, and dissemination of information across time and space. Under particular scrutiny in

my third chapter, "Muriel Spark and the Mediated Life," are the telecommunications devices of the wireless and the telephone. This chapter engages an understudied figure in modernist studies as it argues that Muriel Spark's interrogation of media and mediated spaces in both her autobiographical and fictional work challenges the way we think about community and meaning-making, blurring the boundaries between self and other, space and time, truth and fiction. Spark occupies a central position in my dissertation as her literary and critical oeuvre straddles the borders between what we historically define as modernism and that which comes to be identified as postmodernism. Spark's self-proclaimed status as a writer in exile—born in Edinburgh, Scotland in 1918 but perpetually moving between continents until her death—makes her difficult to locate within any given canon and therefore offers her work as similarly mobile, opening it up to be read within multiple historical and cultural frameworks.

Spark's autobiographical essay "The First Year of My Life" frames my discussion of the mediated spaces of Spark's novels. In it, the author positions herself as a child born into and out of modernism, a product of the multiple realities and technological influences of the Machine Age that she experiences by way of the wireless transmission. The problems of safety and security in the mediated world are illuminated in my readings of Spark's postwar novels as they engage systems of communication that consistently fail to communicate. Specifically, I read the telephone in *Memento Mori* and *The Girls of Slender Means* as an insecure and antagonistic medium of communication, claiming that the technical difficulties that occur over the lines of communication—ranging

from bad connections to anonymous callers to broken lines—articulate the tensions produced around the threat of surveillance in the period immediately following the Second World War. Finally, I argue that the intrusion of calls that yield few answers prescribes an unstable and potentially fatal future for the modern subject, a future anticipated by the play of call and answer that destabilizes both the narratives and the reader's experience of them. Informing my argument are the voices of literary and cultural theorists such as Avital Ronell, Steven Connor, and John Durham Peters, who position the voice over the telephone as always-already tied to death and the telephone as an apparatus that produces disembodiment and disconnection as it destabilizes the relationship between caller and being-called.

My penultimate chapter, "From *Film* to Archive: Beckett, Haneke, and the (Hidden) Camera," turns to the world of cinema as it interrogates the relation between the camera and the subject-being-seen through readings of Samuel Beckett's experimental cinematic short *Film* and Michael Haneke's *Caché*. Yoking the human eye to the eye of the camera, Beckett's *Film* offers a distinctly modernist theory of perception as inescapable and perceiving as an act that makes visible the split in the subject. I argue that Haneke's *Caché* positions itself within this modernist discourse, but with a discernible difference: rather than attempting to close the gap between perceiving and being perceived by exposing the cinematic apparatus, Haneke's film situates itself within that gap, refusing to articulate a stable viewing position. Through the presence of a hidden camera whose eye is multiplied by the articulation of myriad points of view, *Caché*

interrogates the inevitable failure of perception and the consequences of that failure both for the modern subject and for the construction of human history.

My final chapter, "Modernism's *Wake*: James Joyce and the worldwide connection," engages a broader reading of difficulty as it emerges alongside what Jacques Derrida reads as the "machine" of literature itself.[9] In this chapter, I position James Joyce's literary and critical oeuvre as a vehicle for thinking about modernism and, by extension, the field of modernist studies, as an ever-evolving network. Shifting focus from the machine as a tool or object to the notion of the machine as a metaphor for institutionalized methods of reading and thinking, I argue that the transformative potential of the Joycean Industry, articulated through a reading of *Finnegans Wake*, gives way to a broader claim about modernism as it continues to generate debates about "making it new" in the twenty-first century. Considering current approaches to modernist studies that evoke the image of the network as they trend towards plurality, the global, and the "planetary" I argue that, like the Joycean Industry, modernism becomes a machine that participates in the construction of new networks for reading, writing, and thinking in the twenty-first century.

As a point of departure, I argue that the concerns raised in the modernist moment maintain their relevance in the twenty-first century as the boundaries between the human and the machine continue to blur, becoming increasingly permeable and unstable.[10] A current example of the persistence of these concerns is the appearance of Watson, an IBM computing system, on the American quiz-show *Jeopardy!* On February 14, 2011 the program introduced Watson as its first

non-human contestant. Watson proceeded to make both history and headlines as it beat out two of *Jeopardy*'s all-time champions in a three-day tournament of wits. The media pounced. BBC News reported that "IBM's supercomputer Watson has trounced its two competitors"[11]; Melissa Maerz of the *LATimes* blog *Show Tracker* took the victory a step further with her headline "Watson Annihilates Weak Humans"[12]; *FreakonomicsMedia* blog announced, "It's Official! The Computer's Smarter"[13]; and Gabriela Perna of the *International Business Times* declared, "Game Over Humanity. Watson Wins *Jeopardy!*"[14] Much of this buzz about Watson read as old news as media coverage of the event collapsed into cliché, hyping the rivalry between human and machine over and above the possibilities that a Watson victory could open up for the future of humankind. But Ken Jennings, who rang in at a not-so-close second to Watson's first-place finish, confirmed a heightened preoccupation with the man/machine rivalry at the end of the last show that offered a more serious conclusion to its outcome. Jennings delivered a strange concession to the machine, which he signed below his Final Jeopardy answer. "I for one," Jennings wrote, "welcome our new computer overlords"[15] (*Jeopardy!*). Taking Jennings at his hyperbolic word, Watson's participation in the game suddenly gave way to different stakes than bragging rights and a cash reward. A win for the machine indicated a loss for the human—a loss that is already pre-determined in our absorption into the machinery of the televised performance. Granting the machine this agency in its position as "overlord," Jennings's statement argues that the machine does, in fact, occupy a position of authority in the twenty-first century. It might even have a mind of its

own. And with that recognition comes the power to obfuscate or to annihilate the human. And so Watson returns us to the epigraph that initiated this discussion of modernism and the machine to demonstrate that the anxieties articulated in Forster's story about technology's hold on us have not been alleviated but rather complicated in the twenty-first century. In fact, one might say that they are stronger than ever. And so I offer the following instances of technical difficulties in order to suggest that the issues opened up by the modernists in those moments of dissonance and incoherence continue to produce opportunities for conversation and reflection about our postmodern and posthuman conditions.

# Chapter One

## Conrad's Machines

We are all handymen: each with his little machines.

Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*

I *am* the force.

The Professor, Joseph Conrad's *The Secret Agent*

Man has an anxious relationship with the machine. This statement might seem to be a cliché in our twenty-first century moment, as the world becomes increasingly dependent on computers and digital technology to transmit information and communication. In this rapidly shifting technological climate, new anxieties about the place of the human in a world seemingly overrun by machines have long since begun to take shape. These anxieties are, of course, familiar to readers of science fiction and horror, genres that deal explicitly with the confrontation between man and machine through figures that threaten to infiltrate and annihilate the space of the human: the robot, the cyborg, the replicant. In fact, the Hollywood machine churns out dozens of films by the day that engage with this theme, articulating its power to thrill us and to draw in a box-office crowd. But if we think more broadly about my opening statement and consider all of the possible permutations of the word "machine"—from its etymology as the very structure or *fabric* of the world to its status as vehicle, agent, and apparatus for human progress and production—the problem of man's

relation to the machine becomes quite complex.[16] While the destructive force of the machine depicted in a blockbuster film such as James Cameron's *The Terminator* makes for good entertainment, the terror that is produced out of the human encounter with such a force raises questions that are worth further consideration: What precisely *is* the threat posed to man by the machine? And what is at stake for the subject in the production of machines that function *like* humans but that operate without human emotions or investments?

In this chapter, I consider texts that posit the machine as a complex and potentially productive (though not always stabilizing) force: Joseph Conrad's *The Secret Agent* and Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's collaborative works on capitalism and schizophrenia, *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus*. First, Joseph Conrad's *The Secret Agent* foregrounds the tension between man and machine in its presentation of characters that experience both an association and a confrontation with the machine in its various forms. I argue that, through the character of the Professor, the novel initiates a new way of thinking about the machine as *force* rather than tangible *thing*, marking the beginning of the twentieth century as a period of increased cultural anxiety around technological innovation and mechanical production. Jacques Berthoud argues that "*The Secret Agent* shows that ordinary life is terrifyingly insecure, and that London, far from being a haven of tranquility envied by European capitals shaken by detonations is the site of stress, fear, effort, anxiety, pain, and defeat for the enormous majority of its inhabitants" (109-110). Rebecca L. Walkowitz suggests that, in its presentation of characters that refuse to be marked or characterized as either

British or foreign, Conrad "teaches readers to distrust both apparent identities and 'established reputations'" and therefore turns "the 'fact' of identity" on its head[17] (37-38). The novel transforms London from a bustling, cosmopolitan center of civilization to a "sullen, brooding, and sinister" place, an underground space filled with "grimy brick houses" and shady figures that recalls William Blake's grim eighteenth-century vision of the city as dark and unstable[18] (*SA* 124; 22). Mr. Vladimir's order of a demonstration "against learning" in Conrad's novel articulates the threat of science and technology on what Berthoud calls "ordinary life" and positions the bomb at the novel's center as a machine capable of making "a clean sweep of the whole social creation" (Berthoud 109; Conrad, *SA* 43). Extending Berthoud's argument, then, I suggest that Conrad's emphasis on science or progress as the *thing* that must be attacked and ultimately destroyed positions the machine as both a source of public fear and anxiety and the force capable of annihilating itself and the world around it. However, diverging from Berthoud, I also posit the destructive force of Conrad's machine as opening up a potentially productive space for our consideration.

*The Secret Agent* delivers a cast of characters who operate as "mechanisms maintaining London's social and cultural order" while simultaneously insisting on the introduction of mechanisms that work *against* this so-called order (Clark 2). Crucial to my reading of the novel is the figure of the Professor, the anarchist *par excellence* whose indifference to human life is propelled by his ambition to produce the most "perfect detonator" (Conrad, *SA* 68). The Professor walks the streets of London with his finger poised over the

trigger of the tiny detonator that he holds in his pocket ready to exterminate everything in his path at a moment's notice. I argue that the Professor, inextricably tethered to this destructive apparatus, is on the brink of what Deleuze and Guattari identify as "becoming machine"—and it is the self-proclaimed "force" of his presence that makes him the most threatening figure in the text (*Anti-Oedipus*; Conrad, *SA* 232).[19]

Defining force in the Deluezean sense as something that "arrives from outside to break constraints and open new vistas," I suggest that the threat that the anarchist poses in *The Secret Agent* is precisely the threat posed to the human by the machine: it is that unstable and explosive force that terrorizes us, threatening the very fact of our identity and throwing us into crisis (Massumi xiii). Jill Clark suggests that "what Conrad is really showing [in his novel] is how the politics of progress is leading fin-de-siècle London to an eventual entropic meltdown, a machine stuck in the muck of bourgeois and anarchist struggle" (3).[20] Similarly, this chapter will attempt to read the machine as it manifests itself in Conrad's *The Secret Agent* as a force that destabilizes our sense of ourselves and the world we live in and that leads readers into the twentieth century with an unresolved tension about the fate of mankind in a world overrun by technology.

Deleuze and Guattari provide an apt theoretical lens through which to examine *The Secret Agent* and its multiple machines. In their groundbreaking work, *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze and Guattari define the machine as "a system of *interruptions or breaks (coupures)*," emphasizing rupture as a necessary step in the process of what they term "desiring-production"[21] (*AO* 36). They take up the

claim that we are all already machines, participating in an open system of production that emphasizes function and process over meaning. The narrative gaps in Conrad's system of *The Secret Agent* can be read, through the invocation of Deleuze and Guattari, as spaces of excess, rather than lack. The language of *Anti-Oedipus* reflects its content as it explodes like a "volcanic chain" privileging chaos over "a stable system close to equilibrium" (Deleuze, *N* 84).[22] This work has therefore been categorized as revolutionary, anti-establishment, delirious, and anarchic: it performs as much as it articulates a vision of the bomb that explodes in the center of Conrad's novel.[23]

In the Deleuzean moment that the system breaks down, a space opens up through which another network can emerge. This process gives way to an endless cycle of production that depends upon gaps and ruptures in order to function. The *break* or *cut* that makes up the Deleuzean machine manifests itself in three paradoxical modes, identified by Ronald Bogue as the portioning-cut, the detachment-cut, and the remainder-cut.[24] Bogue explains:

> The portioning-cut both breaks the flow and connects other machines in an additive sequence, thereby producing a schiz-flow of divided yet connected elements. The detachment-cut creates disjunctions between chains, but inclusive disjunctions that allow a mode of coexistence of alternative circuits. And the remainder-cut produces a residual subject that splinters into parts yet conjoins those parts in a summary moment of consumption/consummation. (66)

Deleuze and Guattari thus invite us to posit rupture not only as a moment of breakdown and potential collapse but also as a mode of production itself. The force of the Deleuzean machine is therefore present in its connectivity, in its ability both to connect to and disconnect from other machines. The "essence" of the Deleuzean machine "is in its action, in its 'machining' that produces the dynamic relationships between the parts of multiplicities" (Bogue 68). Reading Conrad alongside the Deleuzean theory of the machine demands an interrogation of the tension between man and machine on new grounds.

Through this unconventional pairing, I argue that man's anxiety about the machine is *not* produced out of the idea that the human is at risk of being annihilated by the machine but *rather* out of the possibility that the human will become part of that machine. Or, perhaps even more threatening, this chapter interrogates the possibility that the human is, in fact, already a machine. Positioning Conrad's central characters in relation to the modes of production that Deleuze and Guattari identify in *Anti-Oedipus*, I read *The Secret Agent* as a novel that takes up the question of man's relation to the machine by becoming that machine itself.

In order to situate the concept of "the machine" as an antagonistic force more firmly within these particular historical and theoretical frameworks, I look to an earlier invocation of the machine from Conrad's letters.

***Conrad's Knitting Machine***

On December 20, 1897, Joseph Conrad composed a letter to revolutionary writer and friend R.B. Cunninghame Graham.[25] This letter invokes the image of a knitting machine. Conrad writes:

> There is a—let us say—a machine. It evolved itself (I am severely scientific) out of a chaos of scraps of iron and behold!—it knits. I am horrified at the horrible work and stand appalled. I feel it ought to embroider—but it goes on knitting. You come and say: "this is all right; it's only a question of the right kind of oil. Let us use this—for instance—celestial oil and the machine shall embroider a most beautiful design in purple and gold". Will it? Alas no. You cannot by any special lubrication make embroidery with a knitting machine. And the most withering thought is that the infamous thing has made itself; made itself without thought, without conscience, without foresight, without eyes, without heart. It is a tragic accident—and it has happened. You can't interfere with it. The last drop of bitterness is in the suspicion that you can't even smash it. In virtue of that truth one and immortal which lurks in the force that made it spring into existence it is what it is—and it is indestructible!
>
> It knits us in and it knits us out. It has knitted time space, pain, death, corruption, despair and all the illusions—and nothing

> matters. I'll admit however that to look at that remorseless process is sometimes amusing. (*Collected Letters* v.1, 424-25)

Over the past century, Conrad scholars have evoked the knitting machine as an apocalyptic vision of the future to come—a future in which machines have the power to "knit us out," thwarting human progress and production.[26] Considering the concept of the machine more broadly as a means of production that aids in the mass dissemination and consumption of material goods, the knitting machine reflects the increasingly industrialized—and, by extension, dehumanizing—climate of England in the early twentieth century, a world governed by an imperialist ideology that Conrad's work historically confronts and complicates.

Conrad's image of the knitting machine also articulates a vision of the world as always already mechanized and, in doing so, constructs a theory of artistic production that binds the textile to the text. This association between textile and text is usefully employed by Jacques Derrida in *Veils*. Derrida writes:

> You're dreaming of taking on a braid or a weave, a warp or a woof, but without being sure of the textile to come, if there is one, if any remains and without knowing if what remains to come will still deserve the name of text, especially of the text in the figure of a textile. (24)

The uncertainty of the thing being produced in Derrida's dream of weaving is anticipated by Conrad's reading of the knitting machine, whose products include the abstractions of "time space, pain, death, corruption, despair and all the illusions" giving way to an unknown and insecure future.

Conrad's reading of the machine as a source of artistic production can also be considered against Hugh Kenner's articulation of the machine in *The Mechanic Muse*. Kenner argues that "what was congenial about machines [in the age of modernism] was their perfect absence of self-consciousness. They never showed off; every move was purposeful" (41). Kenner's emphasis on the point of impact between the machine and its product—discussed through the example of the coin press—is articulated as a space of "exquisite concentration" where something productive happens. Kenner goes on to explain the significance of that moment of production through an analogy between the editing practices of Ezra Pound and the design of the Singer sewing machine:

> Pound might have adduced the sewing machines of that era, adorned with irrelevant gilt curlicues everywhere save where something serious is happening: where the needle plunges through a presser-foot slot down a hole exactly aligned, to transact its momentary business with the bobbin beneath. It was when the Singer designers weren't concentrating on that crucial transaction that they relapsed into ornament. (43)

What Kenner reads as Pound's investment in accuracy and economy—at least, when it comes to the preservation of form in the typing out of text—departs from Conrad's more contradictory notion of the knitting machine, whose insistence on repetition to maintain a constant flow of production makes its work "appalling." Unlike Kenner, Conrad reads the machine as a threat to artistic production—a "tragic accident" whose rebirth "out of chaos" renders it immortal and therefore

indestructible. According to Conrad, the artist's loss of control in this process—offered by the knitting machine's refusal to embroider in favor of a "remorseless" insistence on knitting—elevates the machine as a powerful and maniacal force that both makes itself and makes us, producing destabilizing effects.

In a letter written to his translator H.-D. Davray around the time of *The Secret Agent*'s publication, Conrad explains that "the interest of my work is in the *effect* it produces" (*Collected Letters* v.4, 28-29). Insofar as the artist becomes part of the machine, he must also be essential to the effects it produces: "what the machine knits is itself, knitter and knitted forming one indistinguishable whole without start or finish, continuously self-creating" (Miller 26). With this in mind, I want to simultaneously reposition Conrad's knitting machine as a productive site, opening up an alternative space for artistic production that is both anticipated and unknown. Jill Clark suggests that in *The Secret Agent* "Conrad carefully layers his characters into the landscape of fictional London by demonstrating how their individual characters are 'mechanisms of existence,' mechanisms of the massive 'knitting machine' of Conrad's own theory, a world that ruthlessly weaves such characters in and out of existence as needed for its own advancement" (9). Conrad's novel thus becomes an ideal model for thinking about the human's complex relation to the machine in the twentieth century.

### *The Knitting Continues*

Taking seriously Conrad's claim in his dedication to *The Secret Agent* that the novel is offered as a "simple tale of the XIX century"[27] I read the novel's

preoccupation with machines and mechanical figures as a response to nineteenth-century concerns about the machine as a revolutionary product that gives way to destructive effects. Nicholas Daly argues: "modernity relies on the intellectual separation of people and things. In this light we might suppose that industrial modernity, […], is predicated on the intellectual separation of people and machines" (2). In Victorian literature, we find a consistent framing of the machine as a necessary evil: as an independent entity, the machine emerges as a structure that cultivates anxiety in its threat to the social body of the working class but that, in return, promises cultural and economic development.[28] Charles Dickens provides an apt lens through which to situate this conversation as images of the machine and of production pervade his work and often provide the backdrop for the unsavory climate of his novels. In Dickens's *Hard Times*, for example, the description of Coketown is infused with the caustic effects of industrialization. Dickens writes:

> It was a town of machinery and tall chimneys, out of which interminable serpents of smoke trailed themselves forever and ever and never got uncoiled. It had a black canal in it, and a river that ran purple with ill-smelling dye, and vast piles of building full of windows where there was a rattling and a trembling all day long, and where the piston of the steam-engine worked monotonously up and down like the head of an elephant in a state of melancholy madness. (21)

We read here that same inexhaustibility of the machine articulated in Conrad's letter, but it also bears comparison to the cold exterior landscape of Conrad's *The Secret Agent*. Frederick R. Karl argues that "*The Secret Agent* is a Dickensian novel, not only in its insistence on the primacy of the city but in its ambivalence toward city values. It is a place of great energy, but also of constant deceit, of others and of oneself. […] The city, ultimately, is the place from which nothing ever emerges clearly, whether politically, professionally, or personally" ("Introduction" 15). Dickens's interest in the duality of the machine as both an instrument of economic and social development and an indestructible image of filth, darkness, and alienation is also Conrad's.

The Conradian vision of the knitting machine as a destructive and violent force is anticipated by Dickens's *A Tale of Two Cities* through the figures of Madame Defarge and her knitting circle. The guillotine in *A Tale of Two Cities* marks a turn for Dickens in thinking about the machine not as a tool for industrial progress but as a revolutionary apparatus. This "war machine"[29] is striking in its mode of operation: it kills by way of a blade that cuts the body at the neck, producing a flow of blood that registers, along with the head it drops, as a kind of remainder or excess. I am interested in this image and its position in the novel for two reasons: first, as the thing that cuts off life, the guillotine anticipates the modernist notion of the machine as a death sentence—a theory that I develop throughout the course of this dissertation—and second, as the embodiment of the clash between man and machine that does not stop at the moment of cutting, but

that extends beyond the cut to the knitters who sit in front of it "as in a garden of public diversion…busily knitting" (Dickens, *TTC* 257).

Knitting as a mechanical process involves the working of material through the combination of human hands and tools: the needles function to extend the range and motion of the hands that guide them. In this novel, the human element becomes tethered not only to the mechanical process of knitting itself but also to a process of recording. Dickens's knitters count heads, knitting into their registers the numbers of the executed as they are knitted out of the tale with the fatal crash of the guillotine's blade. In the final scene of *A Tale of Two Cities*, the knitting women function as parts of the machine: they are recorders, marking death through hands that knit with ceaseless precision. Dickens writes:

> As The Vengence descends from her elevation to do it, the tumbrils begin to discharge their loads. The ministers of Sainte Guillotine are robed and ready. Crash!—A head is held up, and the knitting-women who scarcely lifted their eyes to look at it a moment ago when it could think and speak, count One.
>
> The second tumbril empties and moves on; the third comes up. Crash!—And the knitting-women, never faltering or pausing in their work, count Two. (257)

The "Crash!" of the guillotine produces a rupture in the text that the ceaseless motion of the knitters refuses, inviting a reading of this scene as an invocation of Deleuze and Guattari's reading of the machine in *Anti-Oedipus* as something that "operates in fits and starts…one produces a flow that the other interrupts" (*AO* 1).

Like Conrad, Deleuze and Guattari position production as the result of a violent collision or repetitive movement that persists despite the moment of impact and rupture to produce something like a constant flow of heads dropping into buckets. It is this process of rupture and repetition that I argue gets reproduced with an important difference in *The Secret Agent*.

The explosive or revolutionary energy characteristic of the Dickensian machine in *A Tale of Two Cities* returns us to Conrad's image of the machine as a potentially destructive force. But how does the modernist writing of the machine *vis-à-vis* Conrad differ from the Victorian model offered by Dickens? The knitting scene in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899) serves as a point of comparison for thinking about the subtle shift from nineteenth-century notions of the machine as progressive (both in its industrial and its revolutionary status) to twentieth-century anxieties about the machine as a death sentence. Unlike Dickens's knitters who mask the fatal "Crash!" of the machine by continuing to knit without raising their heads (or their eyes), Conrad's knitters serve as hostesses, introducing us into the space of darkness and unknowability that Dickens' knitters refuse to acknowledge. Conrad, in opening up this space, creates a rupture in his text that simultaneously poses a threat and functions as a space of productive possibility for the subject that confronts it.

In the beginning of *Heart of Darkness*, Conrad's recurring protagonist and "spinner of yarns," Marlow, enters the Company's office to begin his journey into the Congo (9). He is received by two women "one fat and the other slim [...] knitting black wool" (13). Marlow feels uneasy in their presence as they seem

disconnected from his world and unfamiliar, focused on the task at hand. He eventually finds himself haunted by the image of these two silent knitters while he is in Africa:

> Often far away there I thought of these two, guarding the door of Darkness, knitting black wool as for a warm pall, one introducing, introducing continuously to the unknown, the other scrutinising the cheery and foolish faces with unconcerned old eyes. "*Aye!* Old knitter of black wool. *Morturi te salutant*." Not many of those she looked at ever saw her again—not half—by a long way. (14)

The invocation of death here is telling: it forges a connection between that mechanical process of knitting as the *knitting out* of Conrad's knitting machine. Knitting Marlow out of the "real" space of the Company's office and into an unrecognizable space of darkness and unknowability evokes an earlier scene of Dickens's *A Tale of Two Cities*:

> the women sat knitting, knitting. Darkness encompassed them. Another darkness was closing in as surely, when the church bells, then ringing pleasantly in many an airy steeple over France, should be melted into thundering cannon; […]. So much was closing in about the women who sat knitting, knitting, that they their very selves were closing in around a structure yet unbuilt, where they were to sit knitting, knitting, counting dropping heads. (132)

This passage yokes the process of knitting with darkness, war, and anarchy through the sounds of thundering cannons that ring of revolution. But while Dickens's scene creates a claustrophobic closing in, Conrad's scene articulates a crucial difference as the knitters at the door allow for the opening up of an unknown space.

While Conrad's knitters certainly offer up a death sentence, it is not marked by the pattern in their wool. Rather, the repetition of the word "introducing" takes agency away from the knitting machine (represented by the women knitters) and into a new space that allows for another yarn to be spun. While Dickens's tale ends with Sydney Carton's firm resolution at the guillotine—"it is a far, far better thing that I do than I have ever done"—Marlow concludes his narrative with a moment of crisis: "the horror" that Kurtz acknowledges remains forever impossible to discern, instilling within him a "vision of greyness without form filled with physical pain and a careless contempt for the evanescence of all things" (Dickens, *TTC* 259; Conrad, *HoD* 69). Tracing the invocation of the knitting machine from Dickens to Conrad thus allows us to see how anxieties produced by the machine (more broadly conceived) register in increasingly complex and contradictory ways in periods of transition, allowing for revolutionary and revelatory effects.

### *Machining the Secret Agent*

*The Secret Agent* invites us to consider the world in its moments of incoherence as a series of gaps and ruptures, a mutating system that shocks us and

that produces destructive effects and productive possibilities, demanding, finally, a reading of the human as both agent and cog of an unstable and ever-evolving system. In the opening paragraph of *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze and Guattari position a reading of the machine that bears a striking resemblance to Conrad's:

> It is at work everywhere, functioning smoothly at times, at other times in fits and starts. […] Everywhere *it* is machines—real ones, not figurative ones: machines driving other machines, machines being driven by other machines, with all the necessary couplings and connections. […]. Hence we are all handymen: each with his little machines. […]. Something is produced: the effects of a machine, not mere metaphors. (2)

The Deleuzean machine is at once complex and uncanny. It insists upon the destabilization of the subject in favor of a collective and mobile body that thrives through its connectivity and multiplicity. While the machine is parasitic in its desire to feed on other machines, this repeated motion of consumption and expulsion is necessary for the machine to function. In Deleuze's theory of production, one machine connects to another *ad infinitum* in order to form a system of machines that functions in fits and starts but that is always already at work. Deleuze and Guattari thus present "machine" as "the name for that which puts parts in nontotalizing relation with one another, as well as the name for that which is put in relation. Machines in this sense 'machine' themselves, form themselves as machines in the process of their operation" (Bogue 68). Conrad's *The Secret Agent* anticipates this vision of the machine and marks Deleuze and

Guattari as its inheritors. Casting the machine as a central part of the cultural landscape of twentieth-century London, Conrad presents characters that function as mechanical "agents"[30] in the text, both to other machines and to the social mechanism at large. I argue that like the Deleuzean machine, the Conradian machine insists upon interference as a catalyst for an event that opens up a space for something to be produced. Through the characters of Stevie, Agent Verloc, and the Professor, Conrad offers three different ways of configuring man's relation to the machine that are instructive in thinking about the status of that relationship in modernism.

If, as Deleuze and Guattari argue "the only literature is that which places an explosive device in its package," Conrad's novel certainly fits the bill (*ATP* 134). Published serially from October 1906 through January 1907, *The Secret Agent* positions twentieth-century London as a "world of contradictions," exposing an instability of identity that is marked by the ambiguity of its characters whose relation to the city and its political and social networks are always in question (Conrad, *SA* 79). The narrative of *The Secret Agent* is centered on an explosion that produces a literal gap or shock in the text that throws the novel and its characters into crisis. Adolf Verloc is the pivot-point of the text, a double-agent who works both sides of the political divide. His position as informant for Mr. Vladimir and the officials of the government Embassy is dependent on his dealings with a circle of infamous terrorists and anarchists. Looking like "a well-to-do mechanic," Agent Verloc is the Deleuzean handyman, operating to *fix* relations between these competing social networks in order to keep things running

smoothly (*SA* 29-30). But as a "man of no ideas" Verloc is "more useful than important" and serves no essential function in the text other than to connect one social body to the other, acting as a part or cog for the larger social mechanism at work (72).

Verloc's shop is the central hub of the novel, but it also serves as the domestic space of the family, merging the private world of the home with the public sphere: "the door to the shop was the only means of entrance to the house in which Mr. Verloc carried on his business of a seller of shady wares, exercised his vocation of a protector of society, and cultivated his domestic virtues" (*SA* 23). The shop functions as an in-between space that ushers people in and out, a place of exchange and mobility that sustains Verloc's place in the novel as its connecting thread. The other occupants of the house include Verloc's wife, Winnie, and her brother Stevie, a simple-minded adolescent whose exposure to the harsh realities of the outside world is limited to newspaper headlines and the strange preoccupations of Verloc's infamous visitors. Stevie articulates the *material* relation to the machine evoked earlier by Dickens's knitters: his body is used as a vessel through which something is produced.

Stevie is characterized in the novel as an artist. He is introduced by Conrad's narrator as

> innocent…seated very good and quiet at the deal table,
> drawing circles, circles, circles; innumerable circles,
> concentric, eccentric; a coruscating whirl of circles that by
> their tangled multitude of repeated curves, uniformity of

> form, and confusion of intersecting lines suggested a rendering of cosmic chaos, the symbolism of a mad art attempting the inconceivable. The artist never turned his head; and in all his soul's application to the task his back quivered, his thin neck, sunk into a deep hollow at the base of his skull, seemed ready to snap. (52)

Stevie's "mad art" recalls the production method of Conrad's knitting machine: it incorporates Stevie as artist into the endless process of drawing circles, making him part of the "tangled multitude of repeated curves" that he simultaneously creates. The image of Stevie at work allows us to read him alongside Dickens's knitters, whose hands work in tandem with the tools of their craft. But Stevie's deep-rooted sense of compassion for others often overcomes him, interrupting his progress and giving way to paralyzing breakdowns. For example, after overhearing Karl Yundt's description of a torture method involving a "red-hot brand," Stevie stops drawing circles and stares "as if rooted suddenly to the spot by his morbid horror and dread of physical pain. […] His scared eyes blazed with indignation: it would hurt terribly" (54). Stevie's visceral response to both the terrorist's disturbing tale and the chaos erupting in circles on the page reveals an anxiety about his relationship to the machine that threatens to break him with a *snap!* His mechanical drawing of circles, like the repeating pattern of Dickens's knitters, gives way to a death sentence—but in this case, the death sentence delivered up by the novel is his own.

Jill Clark argues that "Stevie's circles symbolize the eccentric degeneracy of the anarchist group, but they also represent how human existence degenerates along with the rest of this entropic universe" (2). While I agree that Stevie's compulsive drawing of circles articulates a threat to the subject by privileging a chaotic, rather than stabilizing, artistic vision of the world, I'm not persuaded by Clark's reading of Stevie as the "real anarchist" who "leads London to equilibrium" (3). I would rather suggest that the central rupture in Conrad's text is the "tragic accident" of Stevie's violent death, a death triggered by a technological malfunction that propels the text into crisis.

On instructions from the Embassy, Agent Verloc attempts to destroy the Greenwich Observatory with a time bomb set to explode upon arrival at its destination and without human casualties. Verloc invites Stevie along to deliver the bomb and sets him off on his own to make the drop. But on the way there, Stevie trips the wire prematurely and the bomb explodes, blowing him apart and disseminating his body in "a heap of mixed things" (Conrad, *SA* 81).[31] In the aftermath of the bomb, Inspector Heat recovers a piece of cloth from Stevie's overcoat. This cloth identifies Stevie as both the executor and the victim of the bomb. What remains of Stevie in the novel is only that "piece of cloth" that emerges out of "a heap of things that seemed to have been collected in shambles and rag shops" (164). His body is reduced to parts that no longer cohere and that cannot be reassembled but that strangely bring the characters in the novel together to consider themselves in relation to Stevie's mangled remains.[32]

The physical violence of this scene is doubled by the rupture it produces in the narrative: the text refuses to reveal Stevie's moment of death as it is happening and instead delivers the story to its readers in fragments scattered throughout the rest of the novel. This disruptive narrative strategy gives way to a series of disconnects in the text as time moves out of joint, producing what Chief Inspector Heat describes as "sudden holes in space and time" (*SA* 79). The bomb was designed by the Professor to deliver a "sharp shock"—and so, the Professor explains with a smirk, "the system's worked perfectly" (*SA* 73). Mr. Verloc, in turn, is struck from the narrative in a prolonged absence that further increases the anxiety produced by the explosion, decentering the text and moving it underground to encounter the Professor. But before concluding my discussion with a reading of the Professor and his multiple machines, I want to elaborate on Agent Verloc's role in the novel in relation to Stevie and to the social machanism at large.

Verloc takes on a slightly different role from Stevie in his relation to the machine as he functions as the switchboard or handyman of the novel: Verloc's mission is "the protection of the social mechanism" and his investment in humanity is privileged over scientific progress and technological development (30). Verloc's movement between competing social networks (the government Embassy, the police, and the anarchists) allows him to make "connections that associate [him] with different flows," "waver[ing] between several functions" (Deleuze and Guattari *AO* 38). But the value that Verloc places on the human over the machine reflects Stevie's investment in humanity and thus proves fatal.

Like Stevie, there is something about Verloc as *human* that the novel cannot contain and he is therefore violently expelled from it at the hands of his wife, Winnie. The death of Agent Verloc produces a second reading of the relationship between man and machine in *The Secret Agent*: it articulates man's loss of control in the presence of the machine. But it also simultaneously suggests a mutual dependency between man and machine that cannot be comfortably resolved.

Chapter Eleven of *The Secret Agent* concludes with the murder of Verloc at the hands of his wife. The stoic Winnie Verloc, upon learning of her husband's part in Stevie's death, stabs him to death with the kitchen knife. After releasing her hold on the weapon, Winnie sits calm and motionless, "almost in the manner of a corpse," paralyzed by the impact of her impulsive and violent act (Conrad, *SA* 204). As she contemplates the dead body of her husband resting on the sofa before her, she suddenly becomes conscious of a noise in the house, a rhythmic tick in the air that appears foreign and out of place in the midst of a penetrating silence. Winnie's searching eyes scour the room and eventually come to rest on the wall clock:

> Nothing moved in the parlour till Mrs. Verloc raised her head slowly and looked at the clock with inquiring mistrust. She had become aware of a ticking sound in the room. It grew upon her ear, while she remembered clearly that the clock on the wall was silent, had no audible tick. What did it mean by beginning to tick so loudly all of a sudden? Its face indicated ten minutes to nine. Mrs. Verloc cared nothing for the time, and the ticking went on. She

> concluded that it could not be the clock, and her sullen gaze moved along the walls, wavered, and became vague, while she strained her hearing to locate the sound. Tic, tic, tic. (204)

The *tick* of what is assumed to be the mechanical work of the clock is transformed into another kind of *tic* as Winnie's gaze returns to her husband's dead body. She imagines for a moment that he is not dead but asleep, resting comfortably on the sofa with "an attitude of repose" that is uncannily "home-like and familiar" (204). The *tic*king persists as Winnie's eyes shift to "a flat object of bone which protruded a little beyond the edge of the sofa. It was the handle of the domestic carving knife with nothing strange about it but its position at right angles to Mr. Verloc's waistcoat and the fact that something dripped from it" (204). The knife, with its bone-like structure, becomes *mis*recognized as part of the body itself, a misplaced or ill-formed appendage that leaks.

While Verloc's body clock has stopped ticking, something continues to drip, producing a ceaseless, repetitive *tic, tic, tic* that holds Winnie—and the reader—in anxious suspense. As she attempts to normalize the scene before her, to escape the reality of the thing she has created through merging the knife with the body, Winnie becomes aware that the ticking has grown "fast and furious like the pulse of an insane clock. At its highest speed this ticking changed into a continuous sound of *trickling*. [..]. It was a trickle, dark, swift, thin…Blood!" (*my emphasis*, 204). The transformation of the pulsing tick to a more fluid and continuous trickle of blood threatens to initiate "a destroying flood" that sends Winnie reeling towards the door in horror (205). What is at stake for Winnie in

her confrontation with the tic-turned-trickle of the Verloc-machine is the encounter with both the thing that she has become—a murderer—and the thing that she has made. But what is that *thing*? What has been produced out of this scene of mechanization, of the body-becoming-machine?

Verloc's investment in "the protection of the social mechanism" is reflected in his moment of death, when he is returned to the status of an object that performs a social function. Deleuze and Guattari position the clock as an example of a machine that occupies both a technical and a social space: it is a technical machine in its ability to mark time and social in its metaphoric sense of "assuring order in the city" (*AO* 141). In this way, Verloc's ticking corpse literalizes the extent to which the machine feeds off of the human, coming into being by draining the blood out of the body and reincorporating it into a new system of production, marking time but also serving to remind Winnie that her time is almost up. So what is finally produced out of the trickle of blood that flows from Verloc's dead body onto the floor is another form of death sentence:

> Mrs. Verloc, who always refrained from looking deep into things, was compelled to look into the very bottom of this thing. She saw there no haunting face, no reproachful shade, no vision of remorse, no sort of ideal conception. She saw there an object. That object was the gallows. (Conrad, *SA* 207)

The invocation of the gallows returns us to a Dickensian vision of the machine as object or apparatus of death. Winnie's image of the gallows haunts her as she loses control of her body in a fit of madness: "Her throat became convulsed in

waves to resist strangulation; and the apprehension of the jerk was so vivid that she seized her head in both hands as if to save it from being torn off her shoulders" (207). Winnie's convulsing form resonates as another *tic* in the machinery of the text itself and simultaneously recalls the fatal tick of the bomb that initiated her call to action. The murder of her husband and the haunting image of the gallows send her reeling into a fit of "madness and despair" as she comes to embody "death itself—the companion of life" (234; 223). Iain Hamilton Grant writes, with regard to the Deleuzean machine: "This is what the politics of becoming amounts to: teach the machines to *die*" (104). But the death of the Verloc-machine with Winnie's suicide simultaneously allows for another machine to come to life. Unable to accommodate Stevie's and Verloc's devotion to the human and to the social order respectively, *The Secret Agent* delivers another character for our consideration: The Professor.

Emerging out of the gaps produced first by the death of Stevie and again through the expulsion of the Verlocs from the text, the Professor offers a final model of the machine, one that proves most threatening to the social network in its indifference to human progress and development. The Professor's investment in his machines over and above mankind exceeds his own capacity to be human and invites a reading of the machine as a mobilizing and deadly force. While the bomb is the tangible source of anxiety in the novel, the physical source of that threat is trumped by the more psychological threat of the anarchist assumed responsible for the explosion. Described repeatedly within the text as pure force, the Professor is marked as a no*body* whose presence in the novel induces panic

and anxiety. With his black-rimmed spectacles and wandering eyes, he takes on the role of the Deleuzean nomad, "a strange subject […] with no fixed identity" who "distributes people […] in an open space, one that is indefinite and noncommunicating" (*AO* 16; *ATP* 380). And it is this unknowable figure that wanders through the streets "unsuspected and deadly" that I now want to position as the source of modernism's anxiety about the machine (Conrad, *SA* 237).

### *The Technician of Terror*[33]

I have the means to make myself deadly, but that by
itself, you understand, is absolutely nothing in the
way of protection. What is effective is the belief
those people have in my will to use the means.
That's their impression. It is absolute. Therefore I
am deadly.[34]

The Professor of *The Secret Agent* moves silently and efficiently through the crowded streets of the novel's London landscape, his finger poised above a tiny detonator that he carries in his pocket, ready to exterminate anyone who stands in his way. While his physical stature is unintimidating—he is described throughout the text as "frail," "undersized," "unwholesome-looking," and "insignificant"—the Professor's attachment to the bomb turns him into a deadly force to be reckoned with, a portrait of the anarchist *par excellence* (*SA* 85, 77, 78, 237). In the epigraph that opens this section, the Professor describes the destabilizing effect that his presence produces in the novel: inextricably bound to

his destructive apparatus, his repeated displays of indifference to human life make him a source of profound anxiety for those who encounter him. His power is predicated on the belief that he is capable of annihilating himself and the world around him at a moment's notice, making him into an "object" to be feared, a designation that aligns him *not* with mankind but with its machines (85).

Arriving out of nowhere, the Professor orchestrates the movement of the text and its characters. He works independently against the masses and threatens to undo the established social order of the text. He triggers bombs and crosses wires, programming the text by penetrating the networks that operate within it. But the Professor always returns to a world outside and beyond the crowd, retreating to the isolated space of his room, "the hermitage of the perfect anarchist" (Conrad, *SA* 77). While the Professor operates alone, he remains tethered to the city and its inhabitants, lurking in the shadows and among the crowds. He declares himself deadly because he makes others believe that he is deadly and privileges the tactics of fear over drastic action. In this way, he becomes the embodiment of Deleuze and Guattari's nomadic war machine, functioning above and beyond the limits of the State apparatus in a realm all his own.

Deleuze and Guattari explain that what is "proper to the war machine" is its insistence on "learning to undo things, and to undo oneself" (*ATP* 400). But the war machine also "*make[s] war only on the condition that [it] simultaneously create[s] something else*" (423). The Professor's presence in *The Secret Agent* articulates a desire to create "something else" (in this case, his "perfect

detonator") while simultaneously positing that something as a threat or destructive force in the novel. Berthoud argues that the Professor, by maintaining his position outside the social order "sever[s] all links with what is not the self; […] and [ends] up existing only as an unending effort of renunciation" (116). In the wake of the bomb that kills Stevie, many of the characters are forced to consider themselves in relation to the Professor. Their attempts to differentiate themselves from his anarchic activities and "abstract individualism" prove futile as they begin to lose sight of their own sense of self (116). For example, as the Assistant Commissioner sits in the underground establishment frequented by the Professor he begins to feel "unplaced" and "[seems] to lose more of his identity" (123-24). Similarly, Comrade Ossipon finds it difficult to communicate with the Professor whose "large round spectacles…confronted [him] like sleepless unwinking orbs flashing a cold fire" (65). Ossipon cries out to the Professor in a moment of frustration: "How am I to express myself? One must use the current words" (70). Both the Assistant Commissioner and Ossipon find themselves unable to locate or to communicate with the Professor on their terms, marking him as something outside or beyond them, something inaccessible and bordering on inhuman. In this way, the Professor's relationship to the machine becomes inaccessible and too-close-for-comfort, as he offers Ossipon "a glimpse of an india-ruber tube, resembling a slender brown worm, issuing from the armhole of his waistcoat and plunging into the inner breast pocket of his jacket" (66). The Professor's obsession with developing an "intelligent detonator" that is "partly mechanical, partly chemical" articulates his insistence on merging his body with the machine

(67). The detonator becomes an extension of the Professor himself, a strange appendage that is hooked up to the body and ready to blow, making the body into the bomb. It is this image of the Professor that positions him as an ultimate and unstoppable threat to the human and to the world as we know it.

The Professor's pseudonym also positions him in close relation to knowledge and cultural production. But while the Professor is assumed to be "in the know," he does not communicate his knowledge to others. When Comrade Ossipon stumbles upon the Professor after hearing the shocking news of the explosion near Greenwich Park Station, he attempts to get information out of him. Ossipon says: "Unless I am very much mistaken, you are the man who would know the inside of this confounded affair" (63). The Professor replies: "In principle what one of us may or may not know as to any given fact can't be a matter of inquiry to the others" (63). Ossipon suddenly has a vision of the "round black-rimmed spectacles [of the Professor] progressing along the streets on top of an omnibus…of people running for life at the sight of those spectacles. If they had only known! What a panic!" (64). As the *subject supposed to know*, the Professor induces panic as he sets his gaze for destruction and insists upon the perpetual reconfiguration of the network of the text through his looming and watchful presence.[35] As he moves through the streets of London undetected by the masses with his trigger finger on his detonator, the Professor applies a steady pressure that threatens the stability of the world around him. Frances Mulhern argues: "if there is something fetishistic in the Professor's technical obsession, there is something the same in his place in the novel, which is disproportionate to his

limited narrative function—making the bomb. Underemployed and abstract, he appears at once marginal and central, a figure whose purpose is simply to be present" (801). Mulhern's assessment of the Professor's narrative function speaks to his position in the novel as Deleuzean nomad, a figure that "consumes and consummates each of the states through which it passes […] continuously emerging from them as a part made up of parts" (*AO* 41). The Professor's parts are his little machines: his spectacles both shield him from view with their "self-confident glitter" and act as "searchlights," inducing panic in those who fall into their trap (Conrad, *SA* 233; 72). The Professor's detonator, in turn, assures his protection from the masses as it threatens to undo them: his mission to "exterminate! exterminate!" is "the only way of progress" that he can imagine (77; 232). In this way, we read the Professor both as a body-becoming-machine and as a manifestation of the death drive itself, the embodiment of that "constant force" of man's inevitable self-destruction.[36]

The Professor's cameo appearance in Conrad's short story "The Informer" (1906) predicts the future for the technician of terror that *The Secret Agent* refuses. His role in this story is, again, a marginalized one, as he is confronted by the narrator only on one occasion, in a laboratory located on the top floor of a building that serves as a secret hideout for anarchists. The narrator explains:

> The top floor caused considerable anxiety to Horne and myself. There, surrounded by tins of Stone's Dried Soup, a comrade, nick-named the Professor (he was an ex-science student) was engaged in perfecting some new detonators. He was an abstracted, self-

> confident, sallow little man, armed with large round spectacles, and we were afraid that under a mistaken impression he would blow himself up and wreck the house about our ears. […] His was the true spirit of a revolutionist. Explosives were his faith, his hope, his weapon, and his shield. He perished a couple of years afterwards in a secret laboratory through the premature explosion of one of his improved detonators. (Conrad, "The Informer" 88)

This scene is of interest for two reasons. First, it establishes the Professor as a figure that produces anxiety in the very thought of his presence: "armed" with his little machines—his spectacles and detonators become weapons through the language Conrad chooses to describe them—the Professor induces panic just by being there. But, perhaps more significantly, the passage also reveals the fate of the Professor as the result of a technical malfunction, a "premature explosion" that echoes Stevie's tragic accident in *The Secret Agent* but that also maintains our reading of the Professor as a (self-)destructive force. His explosive death is precisely what he prescribes for himself in his movement towards becoming machine.

The Professor's insistence on merging his body with the machine sets him apart from Stevie and Verloc: the machine becomes the thing that he cannot escape, and so he binds himself inextricably to it. The act of becoming machine offered by the Professor thus invites a new reading of the machine for modernism as the Professor articulates the threat of knowledge and innovation—the threat of the creation of new and potentially explosive technologies. Dissociating himself

from the other agents of the text and, by extension, from the whole of mankind. The Professor states:

> Their character is built upon conventional morality. It leans on the social order. Mine stands free from everything artificial. They are bound in all sorts of conventions. They depend on life, which, in this connection, is a historical fact surrounded by all sorts of restraints and considerations, a complex, organized fact open to attack at every point; whereas I depend on death, which knows no restraint and cannot be attacked. My superiority is evident. (Conrad, *SA* 68)

In this moment, Conrad imagines that the future is no longer in the hands of the human, but at the mercy of the machine. With his anarchic finger hovering over his detonator, The Professor is the "supreme technician of terror," eliciting a fear that persists beyond the novel's uncertain end (Mulhern 797). In the final scene of the novel, Ossipon asks the Professor "what remains" after his plan to exterminate the masses is put into action. The Professor replies: "I remain—if I am strong enough" (Conrad, *SA* 232). But what does it say for the future of mankind if the Professor and his machine are what remains at the conclusion of Conrad's novel?

As the Professor walks alone down a darkened street in the final moments of the novel, the narrator observes that: "He had no future. He disdained it. He was a force. His thoughts caressed the images of ruin and destruction. He walked frail, insignificant, shabby, miserable—and terrible in the simplicity of his idea calling madness and despair to the regeneration of the world" (*SA* 237). In this

moment, Conrad posits the possibility that the Professor remains out there in full force, moving "unsuspected and deadly, like a pest in the street full of men," and headed right for us (237). This final image of the Professor is the moment of irresolvable tension in Conrad's text. It marks a potential crisis for the modern subject who must confront the idea that this explosive force of the man-turned-machine is all that remains for the future of mankind. But it simultaneously paves the way for "regeneration," positing the possibility for another machine to emerge out of the unknown, inviting another yarn to be spun.

***Conclusion: What Remains***

The conclusion of Conrad's *The Secret Agent* offers no future for the Professor amidst the "odious multitude" of the London crowd (*SA* 237). But his terrorizing presence is felt beyond the boundaries of both time and text as he is periodically resurrected in the press and public media. Since his emergence on the literary scene, the figure of the Professor has been invoked in moments of political crisis, as representative of violent and irrational behavior or as a reflection on acts both inconceivable and unexplainable.[37] The most notable of his appearances—and perhaps, for those unfamiliar with his multiple cameos, the least surprising—occurs in the wake of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. This is, of course, a defining event, an event whose ruptures are still being felt and whose residual effects will be explored and theorized for centuries to come. One could say that the explosion and subsequent renegotiation of political and cultural boundaries following the September 11$^{th}$ attacks register on a more

global scale than those articulated by Conrad's cast of characters in the more localized London scene of *The Secret Agent*. But Edward Said offers a reading of Conrad in relation to this turn-of-the-twenty-first-century event that is most productive for maintaining the openness that I suggest Conrad's novel finally demands.

In his article "The Clash of Ignorance" published in *The Nation* on October 22, 2001, Said invokes Conrad not to demonstrate why we should fear the terrorist—as those who want to reclaim the novel for a twenty-first century audience so often do[38]—but rather to articulate how this cataclysmic act of violence introduces spaces in which to interrogate the assumptions, contradictions, and complexities of our myriad social, cultural, and political systems that are exposed in its wake. Said writes:

> How finally inadequate are the labels, generalizations and cultural assertions. At some level, for instance, primitive passions and sophisticated know-how converge in ways that give the lie to a fortified boundary not only between "West" and "Islam" but also between past and present, us and them, to say nothing of the very concepts of identity and nationality about which there is unending disagreement and debate. (12)

Said insists that drawing boundaries only serves to close down the potentially productive conversations that emerge between dividing lines and out of competing passions, an insistence that is anticipated over a century earlier by Joseph Conrad. "It was Conrad," Said continues, "who understood that the

distinctions between civilized London and ‘the heart of darkness’ quickly collapsed in extreme situations, and that the heights of European civilization could instantaneously fall into the most barbarous practices without preparation or transition. And it was Conrad also, in *The Secret Agent* (1907), who described terrorism’s affinity for abstractions like ‘pure science’ (and by extension for ‘Islam’ or ‘the West’), as well as the terrorist’s ultimate moral degradation” (13). Rather than simply resurrecting the Professor as the force against whom to measure our fear, Said privileges the work that Conrad and his Professor do to challenge what we think we know about ourselves in relation to the world around us. Conrad and his multiple machines are crucial forces not only for the understanding of modernism as a movement marked by difficulties that invite a remanufacturing and renegotiating of identity categories, but also for the production of new theories of relation that challenge our ideological assumptions and invite the possibility of regeneration.

# Chapter Two

## The Perversion of Playback

I asked her to look at me and after a few moments—[pause]—
after a few moments she did, but the eyes just slits, because of the glare.
I bent over to get them in the shadow and they opened. [Pause. Low.]
Let me in.

Samuel Beckett, *Krapp's Last Tape*

I was doing this slow dance, my eyes closed, singing along softly each time those lines came around again:

"Oh baby, *baby*, never let me go…"

Kazuo Ishiguro, *Never Let Me Go*

If modernism supports a humanist ideology that positions the self as a unique, fully-articulated, and knowable subject, it simultaneously introduces a non-human other by which that subject comes into being: "I am *not that*, therefore *I am*!" But while modernism insists on constructing this opposition in order to maintain the privileged status of the human as an authentic being over and against the inauthenticity of the machine, it simultaneously interrogates the instability of that binary through moments of difficulty, slippage, and failure, moments where that boundary becomes unreadable. As the previous chapter argues, the tension that haunts *The Secret Agent* beyond its conclusion is *not* produced out of the unanswerable question of whether or not the Professor will succeed in his mission to exterminate himself and the world around him. Rather, it is maintained through the Professor's strange intimacy with his "intelligent" machine: the "partly mechanical, partly chemical" detonator that he affixes to his body (Conrad *SA* 67). This chapter considers a different construction of the intimacy between man

and the machine as it explores the relationship between the human voice and its mechanical other.

In *Speaking into the Air,* John Durham Peters rehearses an argument pioneered by Jacques Derrida in "Plato's Pharmacy." Peters maintains that the very notion of communication is dependent upon mediated experience: that is, communication comes to be defined through people's relationships with machines (6). Peters explains:

> Communication as a person-to-person activity became thinkable only in the shadow of mediated communication. […]. Already in what is perhaps the first, and certainly the most articulate, account of communication as an ideal of interpersonal understanding—Plato's *Phaedrus*—communication is defined in contrast to its perversion (by manipulation, rhetoric, and writing). Communication is a homeopathic remedy: the disease and the cure are in cahoots. It is a compensatory ideal whose force depends on its contrast with failure and breakdown. Miscommunication is the scandal that motivates the very concept of communication in the first place. (6)

In Peters' historical account, communication is structured by both intimacy (the "person-to-person" relationship) and perversion (the distortion, malfunction, or failure within that exchange). Perversion in this context emerges as an effect of the externalization of something more commonly understood to be internal and therefore uniquely attached to the subject: for example, a person's thoughts or

memories. Peters invites us to think about how archival media[39]—more specifically, media such as the gramophone, the tape recorder, photography, and film—serve as storage devices to record and preserve voices, images, and events over time. This process of recording allows for "the externalization of the fragile and flickering stuff of subjectivity and memory into a permanent form that can be played back at will" (164). But the act of playing back the recorded voice produces a "copy" with an often uncanny likeness to its original.

Walter Benjamin's "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" introduces the copy as a figure that allows for the mobilization of the work of art. With the rise of mechanical reproduction in the twentieth century, the possibilities for public access to works of art originally conceived to be situated within a particular historical or cultural context—consider, for example, art objects such as sculptures—are dramatically increased. Benjamin writes: "the technique of reproduction detaches the reproduced object from the domain of tradition. By making many reproductions it substitutes a plurality of copies for a unique existence. And in permitting the reproduction to meet the beholder or listener in his own particular situation, it reactivates the object reproduced" (221). But in the case of the reproduction of the human voice in voice recording or on screen, this distancing from the original can lead to a "shattering" of subjectivity as it threatens the authenticity—or what Benjamin refers to as the "aura"—of the original.

While Benjamin celebrates the age of mechanical reproduction for its liberation of the copy from its original, many artists and writers of the modernist

period found the very premise of reproduction to be troubling not only for their art, but for the maintenance of the ideology of the human as unique and original: untethered to the body, the image (both aural and visual) threatens to take on a life of its own. This chapter, then, examines the effects of the process of "playback" as it is mobilized through different acts of recording in Samuel Beckett's play *Krapp's Last Tape* and Kazuo Ishiguro's novel *Never Let Me Go*. In Beckett's play, Krapp uses a tape recorder to play back a series of memories recorded in his youth. Ishiguro's Kathy H. engages a more traditional form of playback as she narrates scenes of her childhood in the fashion of a memoir. In both play and novel the process of playback operates by way of a series of returns to the past. These returns disrupt the temporal continuity of each narrative by producing audible gaps in space and time, producing a time loop that functions as a road block for the subject. As Mladen Dolar argues in his reading of Beckett's endlessly waiting figures: "they reach a rock, not the firm rock of cogito but rather a being on the verge of nothing" (60). Dolar positions this nothing-space as a place of potential salvation for Beckett's characters as it keeps them "going on"—but it is also a space that exists "on the edge of a black hole" (60). The gap that emerges out of the process of playback both in Beckett's play and Ishiguro's novel registers an anxiety about recording technologies that arises alongside modernism. While not distinctly modernist in the historical sense of the term[40], these texts share modernism's concerns about the possibilities and potential consequences of the twentieth-century turn towards what theorists such as Walter

Benjamin, Theodor Adorno and Jean Baudrillard have characterized as the "culture of the copy."[41]

Any reading of the voice and its incessant return necessarily demands an invocation of Jacques Derrida. Derrida's deconstruction of the hierarchical relationship between speech and writing in *Of Grammatology* as well as his reading of the call-and-return of the postal exchange in *The Post-Card*, will offer an apt theoretical lens through which to position the concept of playback. In *Of Grammatology*, Derrida examines the relationship between speech and writing as explored through the Western metaphysical tradition. Derrida argues that, within this historical tradition, speech is privileged over writing as intimately linked to the concept of being.[42] "The voice *is heard* (understood)," he explains, "closest to the self as the absolute effacement of the signifier: pure auto-affection that necessarily has the form of time and which does not borrow from outside of itself […] any substance of expression foreign to its own spontaneity" (*OG* 20). The voice is read here as an authentic substance, a pure presence that excludes any influence from the outside. Writing, on the other hand, is figured against the voice as its inauthentic, mechanical other that attempts to mask the *absence* of presence; it is therefore characterized within this particular tradition as "a garment of perversion and debauchery, a dress of corruption and disguise" (35). Positioned as a threat in its articulation of an inherent lack of being, writing exposes an emptiness or absence of meaning that "signifies forgetfulness" and therefore posits a loss of origin or authenticity in the history of Western metaphysics (34). But in breaking down the binary between speech and writing, Derrida positions

them alongside one another as forms of representation that utilize the same system of signs. Derrida writes: "representation mingles with what it represents, to the point where one speaks as one writes, one thinks as if the represented were nothing more than the shadow or reflection of the representer" (36). Considering speech as an instance of writing[43] and, in turn, understanding technology as derivative of writing, Derrida collapses the hierarchies that have been historically determined and invites us to read the process of recording as an act that allows for the suspension of the humanist fantasy that modernism attempts to sustain. What Derrida finally exposes in *Of Grammatology* through his undoing of the opposition between speech and writing is that the construction of the human voice as intimately linked to authenticity—to being in the presence of presence itself—over and against its mechanical reproduction (whether that reproduction be spoken/heard or written/read) is always already an illusion.

Distinct in their approaches to and representations of the voice and its mechanical other, Beckett and Ishiguro explore the limits of archival technology—specifically tapes and their recorders—as a means to remember, to construct, and to hold onto a "truth" or origin of the self through the voices of Krapp and Kathy respectively, whose repeated attempts to recover or (re)construct their own subjectivities by way of the playback apparatus mobilize a potential crisis for the subject-who-speaks. But before moving forward with this argument, I want to situate more firmly Beckett's play in relation to Ishiguro's novel through an introduction of each text and its stakes.

***Let me in…Never Let Me Go***

Krapp is the ornery, constipated, sixty-nine year old protagonist and failed artist of *Krapp's Last Tape* whose life's work is stored in the "number of cardboard boxes containing reels of recorded tapes" that sits beside the tape recorder on a desk at center stage. Over the course of Beckett's play, Krapp engages his machine by playing back fragments of the recordings that he made in his youth, listening and responding to narratives that he locates by the phrases assigned to them in an accompanying ledger: "mother at rest at last…memorable equinox…farewell to love" (223). The play between Krapp and his tape recorder becomes increasingly intimate over the course of the performance. At first, Krapp talks back to the machine, sometimes swearing or scoffing, other times switching the tape off in frustration, then rewinding or fast-forwarding, before turning the machine back on to listen again to his recorded voice. In the midst of this seemingly haphazard scene of playback, Krapp suddenly pauses on a moment that renders him motionless and that draws him in closer to the machine. As Krapp listens to the story that serves as the first epigraph to this chapter, retold by the mechanized voice of his thirty-nine-year-old self, he assumes a posture that mimics the plea of the voice in the machine: *let me in*.

Krapp's desire to return to this moment—to "be again, be again" with his nameless lover—is articulated through his body language: he embraces and caresses the machine as if trying to get inside of it, to penetrate it and recover the physical intimacy of that moment once again (229). But this intimacy is ultimately refused Krapp as he is repeatedly silenced by his machine. Listening to

the recorded narrative for the last time, "Krapp's lips move. No sound" (229). The voice on tape narrates: "Perhaps the best years are gone. When there was a chance of happiness. But I wouldn't want them back. Not with the fire in me now. No, I wouldn't want them back" (230). While it is clear that the older Krapp *does* want them back, in the end Krapp is denied access to his archive as "the tape runs on in silence" (230). The living Krapp stares out into the darkness of the theater, rendered expressionless and motionless by the machine that holds the spotlight until the curtain closes.

Throughout *Krapp's Last Tape* Krapp attempts to attach himself to some form of reality or "truth" of experience through the archive that he keeps. But by the end of the play the audience bears witness to an emptying out of the subject: the tape recorder comes to supplant Krapp as the play's privileged voice. Krapp's body, in turn, becomes nothing more than a "receptacle," "an artifact of his own tape recorder" or, as Beckett's Clov would have it, "corpsed"[44] (Maude 19; Albright 93; Beckett, *Endgame* 30). Displaced by the voice in the machine, Krapp (as subject) becomes disembodied, dislocated from time and space.[45] Mladen Dolar observes in his reading of Beckett's literary oeuvre that "the voice in Beckett implies a body, a bodily point of emission and a bodily point of reception, but its location is uncertain" (56). This uncertainty is maintained in *Krapp's Last Tape* through the withholding or suspension of knowledge that occurs when the playback apparatus is engaged: at the conclusion of the play the audience, like Krapp, has not been *let in* but is rather *let go* into the darkness of a future

unknown. This strategy of deferral is used to instantiate a similar crisis in Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go.*

*Never Let Me Go* is a novel that unapologetically resists "the consolations of authenticity, transparency, and originality" through the figure of Kathy H., the narrator who we discover half-way through the novel is a human clone being raised as an organ donor (Fluet, "Antisocial Goods" 208). Kathy-as-clone is a Beckettian figure caught in rewind, trapped in an endless cycle of returns and waiting for her inevitable and tragic end. But unlike Beckett's Krapp, the protagonist of *Never Let Me Go* is fixated on a voice and a history that is not her own. The voice on tape emerges in this novel as that of fictitious American cocktail-lounge singer Judy Bridgewater crooning "Never Let Me Go," a song that Kathy deliberately misreads to create a story of her own. As she dances to the song in her room at Hailsham, Kathy clutches a pillow to her chest and imagines herself as "a woman who'd been told she couldn't have babies, who'd really, really wanted them all her life. Then there's a sort of miracle and she has a baby, and she holds this baby very close to her and walks around singing: 'Baby, never let me go…'" (70). Kathy's impulse to listen to this song "again and again" echoes Krapp's incessant returns to the story of the girl in the punt. But while Krapp's tape brings him back to a particular moment in his own personal history, Kathy's tape offers her nothing but a fictionalized one. Kathy's deliberate misreading of the song's lyrics—"even at the time," she confesses, "I realized this [reading] couldn't be right"—is an act of "infidelity" that, according to Derrida,

marks any scene of return as an instance of playback[46] (*NLMG* 70; *OG* 39). And playback, Derrida insists, "will come to hover between us" (*Post-Card* 120).

Kathy H.'s refusal to remain faithful to the song's lyrics can be reflected back on Krapp, whose physical manipulation of the tape on stage allows for a similar infidelity to the authenticity of the narrative he offers to his audience, rendering the very concept of narrative truth illusory. Rather than the gradual emptying out of the subject that Beckett invites us to witness in *Krapp's Last Tape*, Ishiguro's novel suggests that, through the eyes of her human counterparts, Kathy H. is always already empty. But Kathy—and by extension, the novel itself—works against this position from the very start. Kathy argues that she is "not a machine" and attempts to forge an intimate connection with her readers by conjuring nostalgia for a "shared" experience, returning to moments from her past that will register as familiar "to anyone who ever kept a teenage diary" (Ishiguro 4; Atwood). The refrain of the song on Kathy's tape—*never let me go*—echoes within the novel as a sobering plea for remembrance. The insistence on memory allows us to read Kathy alongside Krapp as a producer of playback whose attempts to recuperate a unique personal history ultimately prove impossible. Rather than understanding Kathy as a unique individual, her experience comes to be read as generic and familiar: it could be a story about anyone, anywhere.

The competing appeals recounted in the epigraphs that open this chapter—for Krapp, *let me in*, and for Kathy, *never let me go*—expose what Jacques Derrida reads as "the perversion of playback" that structures each narrative as it expresses a desire for access, remembrance, intimacy, and connection that is

perpetually deferred and ultimately denied them (*The Post-Card* 120). I now want to stage a brief return of my own to reconsider how the moment of playback produces that perversion.

***The Perversion of Playback***

The word "perversion" is most often used to describe acts or preferences that are considered "different from the norm" and therefore "unacceptable" or "socially threatening" to a general public (*OED*). But Derrida's use of the term in *The Post-Card* mobilizes it in a different context that proves more useful for our discussion. Derrida's scenario of the post, which he offers to his readers as fragments of letters exchanged between lovers, posits the consummation of the postal relationship as contingent upon an exchange that is structured by a return. The moment of return authenticates the subject as a being in the world. But it simultaneously requires another return (and another, and another, *ad infinitum*) in order to sustain that intimate connection. The return can therefore be said to instantiate a back-and-forth movement that generates a playback effect: the repetition of the call-and-answer sequence allows for a sense of stability or grounding of the subject in time and space. But Derrida's text goes on to argue that this stability is always already an illusion as it marks the period of suspension between posts as burdened by the fear of loss and abandonment—a fear that Ishiguro's Kathy also expresses as she cradles her imaginary baby in her arms, holding tight for fear that "the baby [would] get ill or be taken away from her" (Ishiguro 70). In *The Post Card*, Derrida's sender writes to his lover: "you

abandon me to the perversion of playback, to all perfidies, the worst ones, to all perjuries, you set all my letters on the wrong path, you permit infidelity right at this second" (120). Through moments in which the subject articulates a feeling of coming unbound waiting for the return (and there are countless examples of this suspension in Derrida's text), *The Post Card* reads perversion as a breach of trust, a betrayal, an act of unfaithfulness.

Taking Derrida's invocation of perversion one step further, I want to consider a second and lesser-known meaning of perversion as "the formation of a mirror image of a figure or object" (*OED*). The use of this term is limited to the scientific fields and is now considered rare, but it is useful to this discussion as both Beckett's and Ishiguro's texts present moments of mirroring that crucially challenge the construction of identity as they give way to a loss of an original subject. In *Krapp's Last Tape*, for example, Krapp talks back to the recording in an act of mimicry that produces a doubling effect. Krapp's mirroring of his own voice is reflected in his listening posture, which, we recall, mimics that of the machine: while the tape plays, Krapp cups his hand over his ear and leans in close, taking on the mechanical appearance of a phonograph. In *Never Let Me Go*, this concept of mirroring is experienced slightly differently, but produces the same effect for the reader. In her position as clone, Kathy comes to be read by others in the novel as a "creature" that is, as Miss Emily suggests, "less than human" (263). But Kathy's insistence on bringing her own experiences to bear on those of her readers produces a mirroring effect that establishes a common ground, inviting us to read her world as a reflection of our own. Shameem Black

argues persuasively that as Kathy comes to be read as *just like us* so readers are forced to "[recognize] what in ourselves is mechanical, manufactured, and replicated—in a traditional sense, not fully human" (786). In both Beckett's play and Ishiguro's novel, then, the boundaries between self and other, human and "machine," are deconstructed by way of a playback apparatus that forces us to acknowledge the play between them.

Claiming a strange sameness or intimacy about itself in relation to the subject it reflects, the mirror image maintains the integrity of the original form but registers a subtle difference that, when recognized, provokes a crisis for the subject. The recognition of mirroring or "perverting effects" has serious consequences. Derrida argues in *Of Grammatology* that "in this play of representation, the point of origin becomes ungraspable. There are things like reflecting pools, and images, an infinite reference from one to the other, but no longer a source, a spring. There is no longer a simple origin" (36). With this in mind, I now want to consider how these concepts of origin and of authenticity are complicated and renegotiated in *Krapp's Last Tape* and *Never Let Me Go* through their engagement with playback.

***Beckett's Tape: When Playback becomes Play***

Beckett's body of work engages technology as a means to deconstruct traditionally held assumptions about the epistemology of the subject and the making of the work of art. Any reader or spectator of Beckett's work is familiar with his oeuvre's pervasive sense of detachment, estrangement, and isolation from

the outside world, a feeling that is heightened by Beckett's engagement with the machine in his later works. BBC correspondent Donald McWhinnie recalls that "when Sam [Beckett] wrote *Krapp's Last Tape*, I don't think he knew for a minute how the mechanics of the thing worked. In fact, when we came to do it, even then we had to say 'how are we going to operate this device?'" (qtd. in Knowlson 47). As McWhinnie points out, Beckett was often unfamiliar with the technology that he incorporated into his work, which led to difficult beginnings as his crew members, actors, and directors struggled along with him to figure out how to make it work in production. As I will demonstrate in my reading of Beckett's experimental short *Film* in Chapter Four such difficulties often led to the failure of the work in its original conception. This failure sometimes proved productive as it lead to further experimentation and a return to the work from a different angle. In an extended reading of what they refer to as Beckett's "impoverished" art, Leo Bersani and Ulysse Dutoit argue that "impotence, incompetence, and failure…do not lead to the end of art; they are instead the necessary conditions for what Beckett describes as a break with the compromises of art in the past. They are, in other words, formulas for starting again" (17). *Krapp's Last Tape* incorporates all of the conditions outlined by Bersani and Dutoit as necessary to the making of art as it makes the incessant return to the past a quintessential part of the experience of the play.

Roy Walker observes that with *Krapp's Last Tape*, Beckett "[transforms] playback into a play" (qtd. in Knowlson 49). Walker's reading of Beckett's play as playback emphasizes the reversal of agency that occurs between Krapp and his

tape recorder over the course of the performance. In an interview with actor Patrick Magee, who portrayed Krapp in the 1958 Royal Court Theatre premiere in London, James Knowlson asks whether the relationship between Krapp and his machine was "stressed at all" in the performance (44). Magee explains: "It's unavoidable, if you are doing it at all properly. For after all there he is, riveted to the thing. And the closer the physical relationship between Krapp and the recorder, the better it works for the spectators. […]. That's where the drama lies—between the two characters, himself physically there and himself on tape" (qtd. in Knowlson 44-45). The space between Krapp and his voice on tape is where the tension of the play is located: in the moment of playback, Krapp finds himself "stuck with" his machine, clinging to it in order to get closer to the voice inside it as it promises to return his memories to him along with his sense of self (44). But just as the recorded voice threatens to supplant the living Krapp as the privileged speaker of his re-manufactured narrative, it also makes visible the importance of the playback apparatus to the anatomy of the play itself: to its make-up and articulation as a work of art.

At the time of Beckett's staging of *Krapp's Last Tape*, tape recording was a relatively new technology. Part of the challenge of the performance was determining how the prerecorded tapes would play on stage. In an interview following the 1960 American premiere in New York, director Alan Schneider explained that actor Donald Davis prerecorded 90 versions of the tape in an effort to "get [the voice] right" (Schneider qtd. in Knowlson 54). Schneider recalls that "we were trying to capture the character, timbre, and tempo of the voice of a

thirty-nine year old man as it would resemble and differ from the voice of the same man at seventy. So we had Davis read the lines over and over, with varying pitches and inflections" (54). Schneider's characterization of the voice on tape as requiring both the semblance of the actor's voice and a readable *difference* recalls the way in which the recorded voice registers as a perversion of the original subject-who-speaks, producing the tension between body and voice that structures the play as a whole. What is striking about the recording process articulated by Schneider is how much manipulation the performance tape required. Unlike Krapp, whose tapes are recorded pedestrian-style in a single take, the actor playing Krapp utilized multiple takes, producing a potentially-endless proliferation of recordings before getting it right. Beckett's desire to transform the actor into the operator of the machine literally cast the mechanics of the play usually reserved for backstage into the spotlight. In doing so, the machine became not only a voice within the play, but its surrogate director, mobilizing the action both on stage and behind the scenes. So what happens behind the scenes of the performance is suddenly reflected back onto the stage in raw form: in Krapp's repeat performance, playback becomes play.

In *Beckett and Aesthetics* Daniel Albright argues: "a recording could behave as a fixed icon of performance: its unyielding self-insistence tends to reduce everything around it to something lax and impromptu; its rigor of being is a reproach to the incoherent and *evanishing* human subject who hears it" [*sic*] (82). Albright suggests that Beckett's use of recording technology on stage privileges the "rigor of being" of the mechanical voice over the aging human

body of Krapp, who struggles to maintain a hold on the voice throughout the play. Krapp's sudden outbursts during the playing of his tapes—he curses, talks back, laughs, and coughs alongside (and along with) the recorded voice—disrupt the narrative that Krapp is attempting to reconstruct through his act of playback. These vocal interruptions anticipate Krapp's loss of control over his own voice as he gives himself over to the voice in the machine. So let us now turn back to the play itself to think more about how the playback apparatus is engaged on stage and to determine the effects of playback on the subject, Krapp.

***Let Me In…***

As Beckett's first stage direction indicates, *Krapp's Last Tape* opens on "a late evening in the future." The displacement of the scene from a knowable time or place into the ambiguous and unstable space of "the future" creates tension from the very beginning of the play as the future setting is juxtaposed with Krapp's insistence on the "presence-ing" of his past, a gesture articulated by the positioning of the tape-recorder and his tapes in the spotlight at center stage. Krapp's tapes are remnants, artifacts of a world that Krapp no longer physically inhabits and yet continues to return to through the act of playback. Physically, Krapp represents the artifactual state of the tapes: he is described as "wearish" and disheveled; his "rusty" clothes do not fit him properly; his hair is "disordered" and "grey" and his voice is "cracked" despite its "distinctive intonation" (221). Krapp's "impoverished"[47] state is enhanced by his "laborious walk," his near-sightedness (and the absence of spectacles to correct it), and his

hearing impairment is also reflected in the environment he keeps. Krapp's den is stark and undecorated, save for his table and "tape-recorder with microphone and…reels of recorded tapes" (221). With the exception of a single spotlight, the stage is immersed in darkness.

In the first few minutes of the play, Krapp paces back and forth across the stage. He juggles his keys, fidgets inside his drawers, and eats one-and-a-half bananas before sitting down at his table with his ledger and his tapes. "Ah!" Krapp shouts as he turns the pages of his ledger to locate the scene that he wishes to hear: "Box…three…spool five" (222). After loading the spool onto the machine, Krapp assumes what Beckett refers to as his "*listening posture, i.e. leaning forward, elbows on table, hand cupping ear towards machine, face front*" (223). The intimacy between Krapp and his machine is articulated through this pose as Krapp leans into his tape-recorder; the hand that cups his ear acts as the channel through which Krapp receives the voice. The voice-on-tape is that of Krapp at the age of thirty-nine, recalling how he celebrated his birthday alone and has just returned to his den to record his memories from the past year. In the midst of this moment of playback, the voice takes note of its surroundings:

> The new light above my table is a great improvement. With all this darkness round me I feel less alone. [*Pause*]. In a way. [*Pause*]. I love to get up and move about in it, then back here to [*hesitates*]…me. [*Pause*]. Krapp." (223)

N. Katherine Hayles points out that from the moment the recorded voice speaks there are two presences on stage, "a voice situated in a human body, the other a

voice situated in a machine. The machine-voice echoes the body-voice but also differs from it, not only because of the medium that produces it but also because of the temporality registered within it" (83). The doubling effect of this first moment of playback is echoed by Krapp's naming of himself on tape—"me. [*Pause*.] Krapp"—as well as in his description of the scene as it reflects what the audience sees on stage: like his younger self, the "live" Krapp is alone surrounded by darkness, illuminated only by the light above the table that the voice has just recalled.

As the play reels along, Krapp's position in relation to his tape begins to change and we witness the slow dissolve of the subject into the body of the machine. Krapp becomes the shell of his former self, a body emptied of its movement, its energy, and most importantly, its voice. In one of several moments in the play in which Krapp pauses the tape to "brood" over the fragment he has just heard, he is suddenly struck by his use of the word "viduity" in reference to his dying mother. His attention to the word reflects his own state of being in relation to his tape. The scene plays out as follows:

> TAPE: --back on the year that is gone, with what I hope is perhaps a glint of the old eye to come, there is of course the house on the canal where mother lay a-dying, in the late autumn, after her long viduity [*Krapp gives a start*] and the—[*Krapp switches off, winds back tape a little, bends his ear closer to machine, switches on*]—a-dying, in the late autumn, after her long viduity, and the—[*Krapp switches off, raises his head, stares blankly before him. His*

> *lips move in the syllables of "viduity." No sound. He gets up, goes backstage into darkness, comes back with an enormous dictionary, lays it on table, sits down and looks up the word.*]
>
> KRAPP: [*reading from dictionary*] State—or condition—of being—or remaining—a widow—or widower. [*Looks up. Puzzled*.] Being—or remaining? (225)

The question that puzzles Krapp—that of "being—or remaining?"—prompts another interrogation of Krapp's subject position. There is no *being* in this scene, no present to speak of, only the past and its future. Mouthing the words of his younger self, Krapp becomes visible as an after-effect of the voice on tape: his state of remaining in playback evacuates any semblance of being that was once articulated through his living voice. The sense of Krapp as a remainder is made even more apparent in the final moments of the play when his agency is finally transferred to the machine.

Krapp's collapse into the machine at the end of the play instantiates a crisis of subjectivity for both Krapp and for his audience. What is ultimately at stake in playback then is a reassessment of the limits of the voice to confirm the truth, reliability, and authenticity of its subject. In other words, the machine manufactures a relationship between the "living" voice of the subject and its mechanical other that is always already structured by an epistemological failure. In *Krapp's Last Tape*, this crisis is a symptom of Krapp's self-archiving process, a process by which Krapp's memories are exhumed from his body and stored inside the machine as a pre-recorded history. This process entails a kind of

memory loss that is acknowledged by the voice on tape in a pivotal moment of the play. The younger Krapp speaks:

> TAPE: Spiritually a year of profound gloom and indigence until that memorable night in March, at the end of the jetty, in the howling wind, never to be forgotten, when suddenly I saw the whole thing. The vision at last. This I fancy is what I have chiefly to record this evening, against the day when my work will be done and perhaps no place left in my memory… (226).

Friedrich Kittler argues that "storage facilities shatter the very concept of memory" as they produce a manufactured narrative in its place (qtd. in Gane 28-29). Krapp's machine does the memory-work for him, playing back his memories in a mediated, fragmented form. Krapp's dependence on the tapes to call him back to life—to remember "the fire that set it alight" is his only motivating force to go on. But in classic Beckettian fashion, this force does not produce a forward motion. Rather, it perpetuates a receding back into the past in a series of returns that mimic Krapp's recital of his life as an endless cycle of repeat performances: "be again in the dingle on a Christmas Eve," Krapp speaks into his machine during the recording of his final tape, "be again on Croghen on a Sunday morning, in the haze, with the bitch, stop and listen to the bells. [*Pause.*] And so on. [*Pause.*] Be again, be again. [*Pause.*] All that old misery. [*Pause.*] Once wasn't enough for you" (229). Despite his "live" performance—this is the only time in the play where Krapp assumes the active role of recorder rather than listener of the tape—Krapp's voice takes on a mechanical tone. The repetition of "be again"

is imitative of the *chuff chuff chuff* of Virginia Woolf's gramophone in *Between the Acts*.[48] Feeling the weight of his imminent failure, Krapp loses control of himself and his narrative voice and violently abandons the live recording in favor of a return to the past, to that intimate moment with the girl in the punt. Beckett's stage directions read: "*Long pause. [Krapp] suddenly bends over machine, switches off, wrenches off tape, throws it away, puts on the other, winds it forward to the passage he wants, switches on, listens staring front*" (229). As Krapp listens to his story for the second time that night, he enters a trance-like state from which he will never return. Krapp hovers silently over the machine as if his lips might touch it, to *be again* in memory: *lips move. No sound* (229). The tape plays on in the spotlight as Krapp begins a motionless retreat into the darkness of the stage. The voice in the machine declares: "Here I end this reel" (230). But this end symptomatically brings us back to the beginning as the voice on tape repeats Krapp's very first utterance on stage: "Box – [*pause*]—three, spool—[*pause*] five" (230).

Alain Badiou argues that in *Krapp's Last Tape* "memory is not a saving function" (70). In the final moments of the play, the voice on tape repudiates the past and the memories it keeps through its final assertion that "I wouldn't want them back" (230). Despite the living Krapp's repeated attempts to get them back and to enter completely into that fantasy of return that the machine invites, he will never be let back in. Rather, he will remain forever on the outside of memory, unable to go on recording because there is nothing left within him to record. The desire to "go on" is never fulfilled. Like his wandering predecessors Vladimir and

Estragon in Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, Krapp does not move but rather remains on stage a mere shadow of his former self, abandoned in the darkness without the hope of recovery. Derrida argues: "What writing itself, in its nonphonetic moment, betrays, is life. It menaces at once the breath, the spirit, and history as the spirit's relationship with itself. It is their end, their finitude, their paralysis" (*OG* 25). Beckett's Krapp has become—like his tape—a remnant of something lost. A corpse. Corpsed.

While Beckett's Krapp struggles to maintain an intimate connection to the world through his play with the machine, he eventually falls victim to the perversion of playback. His call—an imperative: *let me in!*—receives no answer. The voice inside of the machine produces nothing more than a ceaseless repetition which turns into an empty mechanical chuffing, severing the intimate bond that the archival process purports to sustain between the subject and its voice. The tape is all that remains of Krapp at the end of the performance.

***Never Let Me Go***

Louis Menand recognizes something distinctly Beckettian in Ishiguro's novels. Specifically, he observes a strange affective resemblance to Beckett's characters in Kathy H., whose story is "literal, thorough, determined to leave nothing out. But it has a vaguely irreal[49] effect" ("Something about Kathy" 2). Menand's attention to the particularity of Kathy's subject position as clone is situated in his reading of Ishiguro's narrative style: "though Ishiguro's characters seem so earnestly respectable, they have the same mad, compulsive, quasi-

mechanical qualities that Beckett's do. There is something animatronic about them. They are simulators of humanness, figures engineered to pass as 'real.' What it means to be really human is always a problem for them" (2). The question of what makes someone "properly human" governs Ishiguro's novel from the very start as the proliferation of copies—one of whom is the narrator herself—is privileged over and against any articulation of an original object or subject (263). As such, *Never Let Me Go* articulates what Derrida refers to as "problems of definitions and beginning" (*OG* 28). De-privileging the "uniqueness" of the human subject as well as human experience, Kathy H. becomes a figure who challenges the human/machine binary by occupying a space in between, forcing a renegotiation of the category of the human that modernism, as a movement intent on promoting a humanist ideology (despite its perpetual undoing of that ideology), strives to uphold.

Critics of *Never Let Me Go* are quick to point out that Kathy H. lacks the qualities, emotions, and originality that one expects from a literary heroine: her prose is "stilted and banal"; her voice is "ordinary"; and her narrative leaves many of her readers cold.[50] Alan Taylor, for example, calls Kathy "a speaking clock," illustrating the mechanically abrasive tick of her narrative voice and adding that "it took me three false starts to get beyond the first few pages and then only with perseverance" (29). Rebecca Walkowitz's attention to Ishiguro's language and style more broadly in his "floating world narratives" articulates the "particularized strangeness" and tendency towards cliché as part of a "condition of narrative" that she later argues Kathy H. engages through her "unoriginal expression"

("Ishiguro's Floating Worlds" 1053, 1056; "Unimaginable Largeness" 9). In the very first sentence of the novel, for example, Kathy introduces herself to her readers in a rehearsed and methodical tone: "My name is Kathy H. I'm thirty-one years old, and I've been a carer now for over eleven years" (*NLMG* 3). What is significant about these introductory remarks is not what they tell us about who Kathy *is* but rather for what they hold back: that Kathy is a human clone who is being bred to donate her vital organs for the betterment of society. The static delivery of her introduction—Kathy states her name, age, and occupation as if filling out a form—engages what James Woods reads as a characteristic of Ishiguro's narrators as they participate in a kind of "ventriloquism" of "English voices," performing an act that requires a likeness of voice similar to that of the voice on tape ("The Human Diffference"). Reading Kathy's voice as another instance of reproduction, rather than as a voice distinctly her own, further substantiates the narrative as an instance of playback as it produces the tension that structures the novel as a whole.

Ishiguro's Kathy H. assumes the role of the recorder in the novel, but her recordings lack the grounding that one expects of an historical account or personal memoir. The reader might know approximately where Kathy's memories fit into the general trajectory of her life story—her childhood at Hailsham, followed by her young adult life at the Cottages, followed by her current position as a carer who moves from county to county—but there is no specific point of origin from which to begin constructing her timeline, no map on which to chart her location through the course of the narrative. The epigraph tells us that the novel opens in

"England, late 1990s" but that narrative shifts quickly between past and present, liberating us from the fact of time. With the exception of Hailsham, a school that Kathy tells us in the early pages of the novel has all but disappeared—she explains that "I might pass the corner of a misty field, or see part of a large house in the distance…and I'll think 'Maybe that's it! I've found it! This actually is Hailsham!' Then I see it's impossible and I go on driving"—the only place that Kathy highlights as playing a pivotal role in the shaping of her story is a county called Norfolk, which is described by Miss Emily as "something of a lost corner" of England, a black hole that is "not on the way to anywhere" (6; 65). Kathy and her friends latch on to the "mystique" of Norfolk as it represents a "gap" in their knowledge that they conspire to fill up: they map their fantasies onto this space, constructing a world of possibilities where people go to recover the things they've lost (65). Kathy's narrative inhabits the spaces of these lost corners, which leads readers and critics to locate it in an alternate place and time. James Wood argues that "although the novel is set in the late 1990s, it inhabits a world somewhat adjacent to the one we know" ("The Human Difference)" and Margaret Atwood suggests that the novel is set "not in a Britain-yet-to-come, but in a Britain-off-to-the-side" ("Brave New World"). These readings hold Kathy's world at a distance from the world of the reader: in their formulations, Kathy's narrative exists somewhere on the outside of or adjacent to our experience, creating a distancing effect between them.

While Kathy's narrative does not immediately engage the physical machinery of playback as Krapp's does, Kathy's mechanical fits and starts—

evoked by phrases such as "I want to move on now…," "but I've gone off a bit," and "I'll first have to go back a bit, to give you the background"—mimic Krapp's erratic manipulation of his tape as he searches for the right moment on which to pause and reflect on what he has just heard (*NLMG* 77; 87; 138). These forward-and-back movements also call the reliability of her narrative into question as Kathy struggles to maintain the coherence of her narrative in its fractured, non-linear form. Like the audience of *Krapp's Last Tape*, the reader of *Never Let Me Go* is offered only glimpses of Kathy's past experiences told through the lens of her memory, a memory that slowly appears to be failing her. Kathy's self-proclaimed uncertainty about the facts of her story and of her identity—she admits early on that "this was all a long time ago so I might have some of it wrong"—repeatedly challenges the authenticity of her narrative as it debates the "truth" of her recorded experience (13). Unlike Krapp, who never appears to question the voice of his former self but instead mocks the "stupid bastard that [he] took [himself] for thirty years ago," all the while maintaining his relation with that voice as distinctly his and his alone, Kathy H.'s narrative obsessively points to the "unoriginality" of both her voice and her experiences (Beckett 228).[51] As Shameem Black persuasively suggests: "Kathy […] creates memories as a repetition, or clone, of experience, and then copies them for others [...]." As a result, "the clone comes to supplant the original through the gesture of memory" (800).

Kathy's employment of playback as a narrative strategy is also an attempt to claim an intimate relation to that world that cannot be severed or let go (*NLMG*

83). Kathy's repeated attempts to establish an intimate connection with the "normal people outside" through her appeals to the similarities of their childhood experiences, a sameness that is offered through phrases such as "I'm sure somewhere in your childhood, you too had an experience like ours…," echoes Krapp's plea to *let me in* (36). But while Krapp's motivation is tethered to his own personal history and guided by what Svetlana Boym characterizes as a "restorative nostalgia" that attempts to "patch up the memory gaps" (Krapp wants to return to a past that he has lived and lost), Kathy H. longs to be part of a collective history and therefore asks to be remembered (Boym 41). The novel's archival status as a memoir preserves and privileges the artifacts of experience—of things left behind—and Kathy's own acknowledgement of herself as one of those artifacts, almost all of which are copies, is what allows her a place from which to speak. Among these copies are the "picture calendars" that Miss Emily shows the Hailsham students of the English counties and that, in Kathy's adulthood, serve as frames of reference for her travels ("even now," Kathy recalls "the extent to which my idea of the various counties is still set by these pictures"); the "porn mags" that Kathy scours in search of the "possible" from whom she was modeled; and perhaps most significantly, the cassette tape that contains the song that belongs not only to Kathy but also to the novel and its readers: "Never Let Me Go" (64-65; 133). As a mass-produced object, Kathy's tape perpetuates the insistence of the copy as the privileged figure in the novel. But that privileged status is complicated by its position as "trash," a word used by Kathy's friend Ruth to describe her own theory of the clones' origins. "We all know it," Ruth

screams in one of the only emotional outbursts of the novel, "we're modeled from trash. […] If you want to look for possibles, if you want to do it properly, then you look in the gutter. You look in rubbish bins. Look down the toilet, that's where you'll find where we all came from" (166). The tape comes to be read as trash in the novel as it surfaces within places that sell used goods: Kathy buys her first copy at one of Hailsham's Sales and, after the mysterious loss of that tape, Kathy and Tommy recover another copy in a cardboard box in a vintage shop. Kathy's relation to both the copy and the mechanism of playback is therefore reinforced by her association with the cassette tape.[52] And it is this relation between Kathy and the copy that makes her narrative so difficult for the reader to relate to as it threatens to expose our own associations with the machine.

As Margaret Atwood suggests in her review of *Never Let Me Go*, the thing that makes Ishiguro's novel so difficult for many of its readers to digest is that the novel challenges the reader to engage the figure of the clone not as a reproduction or mechanical other of the human but as an image of "ourselves, seen through a glass darkly" ("Brave New World"). This reading, of course, reinforces our understanding of perversion as a mirroring effect. Despite her presumed "non-human" status, Ishiguro stakes a claim in Kathy's humanity that necessitates a reevaluation of the category of the human as it has come to be understood over and against the figure of the clone or copy. Bruce Robbins argues that Kathy's role as a carer for others of her "kind" maps the quintessentially human characteristic of caring onto the clone (Robbins 199). Robbins goes on to explain that this mapping of the human onto the non-human "exudes a slight chill…[and

that chill] is what the novel is most obviously about" (199). The "chill" that Robbins articulates as an after-effect of the realization that Kathy has the potential to be more human than *not* is made visible within the novel through the character of Madame.

Madame is the headmaster at Hailsham whose visits to the school are shrouded in mystery and who, Kathy observes, always maintains a distance from the students through "her chilly look" (32). When Kathy and her friends begin to suspect that Madame is afraid of them, they decide to test their theory by "swarming" her to see how she handles the confrontation. Kathy recalls Madame's response to this encounter as follows: "she just froze and waited for us to pass by. […] As she came to a halt, I glanced quickly at her face—as did the others I'm sure. And I can still see it now, the shudder she seemed to be suppressing, the real dread that one of us would accidentally brush against her" (35). Madame's shudder articulates what Miss Emily later explains as the "revulsion" she feels in contemplating the existence of the clones in their likeness to "actual" human beings (269). Whether Kathy is understood as a "machine" or a "poor creature" (a phrase Madame uses in an attempt to console Kathy and Tommy at the end of the novel) is beside the point: in the headmaster's eyes—and the eyes of many others in the novel—Kathy exists outside the realm of the human, a perversion or *other* that haunts them[53] (254).

Just as Madame suppresses a shudder at the thought of a likeness between the human and the clone, Kathy experiences a similar sensation as she reads Madame's response to the encounter as a confirmation of her difference. Inviting

the reader into this moment of recognition, Kathy articulates how she has come to understand who she is in relation to those "properly human" figures (263). Kathy explains:

> So you're waiting…for the moment when you realize that you really are different to them; that there are people out there, like Madame, who don't hate you or wish you any harm, but who nevertheless shudder at the very thought of you—of how you were brought into this world and why—and who dread the idea of your hand brushing against theirs. The first time you glimpse yourself through the eyes of a person like that, it's a cold moment. It's like walking past a mirror you've walked past every day of your life, and suddenly it shows you something else, something troubling and strange. (36)

Kathy's evocation of the mirror again returns us to that second definition of perversion as it underscores the tension produced by the proximity of the copy to its original (*OED*). As Theodor Adorno has suggested "a copy can possess a weird sort of authenticity only if it frankly confesses its status as a copy. The truth of a copy lies in the word COPY stamped on every surface" (qtd. in Albright 86).[54] This moment from Kathy's narrative is the moment in which the word COPY gets stamped onto the surface of the novel, a moment that invites us to consider the world of *Never Let Me Go* as a world without an original, authentic subject to speak of. In *Never Let Me Go*, then, Kathy H. exposes the fantasy of a world in which origins are both fixed and knowable, allowing us to glimpse

ourselves through the mirrored lens that positions us alongside the copy, collapsing, in Derridean fashion, the boundaries between man and the machine.

Earlier in this chapter I invoked Mladen Dolar's reading of Beckett's oeuvre as perpetuating a series of time-loops. I'd like to return to that reading as a point of conclusion in order to position Beckett's "heroes" alongside Kathy H. as they demonstrate the consequences of that incessant return to the past. This return, of course, is what marks both *Krapp's Last Tape* and *Never Let Me Go* as instances of playback. Dolar writes:

> Beckett's 'heroes' are always and increasingly on the brink of death, […] they are all 'heroes who have come to an end of their journey, who have exhausted the possible, and yet they cannot die. […] it seems that death would rescue them and that this is all they wish for, but in the space of the withdrawing end there is a time-loop: they are caught in a loop which is at the same time an opening of a space, of a sense without any meaning. […] The reduction of words, meanings, bodies, their utter fragmentation leads to a nothing, but 'nothing' is but a loop which keeps them going on. (60)

I argue that Dolar's reading of "the end" in Beckett is strikingly mirrored at the end of *Never Let Me Go*. As Kathy H. stands alone at the shoreline amidst a sea of "strange rubbish, feeling the wind coming across those empty fields" she imagines that "everything I'd ever lost since my childhood had washed up, and I was now standing here in front of it" (287-88). What remains for Kathy is nothing

but trash: artifacts filling up an empty field. Unlike Beckett's Krapp, whose archive is composed of his own "junk," Kathy's is filled with other people's stuff, a sea of trash in which one person's story becomes indistinguishable from the other's. While different in their articulations of playback, what remains at the end of both Krapp's and Kathy's narrative produces the same effect. In the final moment of the novel, Kathy gets in her car "to drive off to wherever it was I was supposed to be" (288). The ambiguity of this ending reflects both the timelessness and the tragedy of Kathy H.'s narrative: her road, winding without end but also without future, like the spools of Krapp's tape, leads to nowhere.

# Chapter Three

## Call and Answer: Muriel Spark and the Mediated Life

Arriving late sometimes, and never
Quite expected, still they come,
Bringing a folded meaning home
Between the lines, inside the letter.
As a scarecrow in the harvest
Turns an innocent field to grief,
These tattered hints are dumb and deaf
But bring the matter to a crisis.
They are the Messengers who run
Onstage to us who try to doubt them,
Fetching our fate to hand; without them
What would Sophocles have done?

Muriel Spark, "The Messengers"

In her 1975 essay "The First Year of My Life" Muriel Spark re-imagines scenes from her infancy in Edinburgh against the backdrop of the First World War.[55] "My autobiography," she remarks, "started in the very worst year that the world had ever seen so far." Proclaiming "the authenticity of [her] remembrances of things past" Spark recalls, in her signature comic style, the frustration of being "bedridden and toothless, unable to […] utter anything but farmyard squawks or police-siren wails" in response to the "curious behavior" of the "two-legged mammals" who cared for her, whose relentless attempts to make her smile consistently failed to amuse and prompted her to divert her attention elsewhere. The "elsewhere" to which Spark retreats is the seemingly boundless space of her wireless, whose transmissions reflect the violence that marked 1918 as a tumultuous and unstable period in the history of the world.

The myriad voices and images that Spark engages through the wireless mingle with the more familiar sights and sounds of her sheltered environment, creating a kaleidoscopic lens through which her identity begins to take shape, an identity informed by the play between the local and the global that structures the essay itself. Commander-in-Chief Marshal Foch's offensive declamation—*Tout le monde a la bataille!*—echoes over her gassed uncle's deep cough, a haunting reminder of the costly effects of the war. Gunshots serve as background noise for the doctor's positive diagnosis of Spark's progress: *a fine healthy baby*, he reports—and then, *crack, crack went the guns; screams, and blood all over the place*. The wireless also gives Spark access to the voices of modern writers, war poets, musicians, and local residents from across the world, keeping her up to date on the emerging cultural and political movements of the period. She recalls: "I woke and tuned in to Bernard Shaw, who was telling someone to shut up. I switched over to Joseph Conrad, who, strangely enough, was saying precisely the same thing. […]. I got on to Turkey. Women draped in black huddled and chattered in their harems. Yak-yak-yak." In the midst of all of this chatter, Spark finds herself returning to the violent scenes of the battlefield. "I preferred the Western Front," she confesses, "where one got the true state of affairs. It was essential to know the worst, blood and explosions and all, for one had to be prepared, as the Boy Scouts said." Spark's narrative of the first year of her life is punctured by these flickers of "truth" which deliver the experience of war in bursts of sound and image, allowing for a mediated encounter with the outside world. As a product of the multiple realities and technological influences of the

Machine Age, Spark positions herself in "The First Year of My Life" as a child born into and out of modernism, subject to the frequent and flickering intrusions of the wireless that reconfigure her relation to the world at large. Technology broadly—and the wireless in particular—comes to influence Spark's own relationship to history as it helps her to generate this origin story of global proportions, casting her in an in-between space: an artist in a floating world.[56]

As an inhabitant of the indeterminate space of the wireless transmission, Spark positions herself as a receptor or *medium* through which information is both received and transmitted: a living example of the phenomenon of what Mark Goble calls "the mediated life."[57] In an interview with Frank Kermode after the publication of her third novel *The Girls of Slender Means*, Muriel Spark discusses her sense of the writer as medium, framing her own art as a form of mediated communication: "I don't mean," she explains, "that one is that recording instrument that Blake thought of himself, just a kind of medium between the angel and the creatures, but I do know events occur in my mind and I record them" ("Muriel Spark's House of Fiction" 31). I should note here that Spark was no stranger to hearing voices: in the late 1950s her addiction to Dexadrine, a drug prescribed to treat what her doctor diagnosed as anxiety neurosis, resulted in her experiencing hallucinations and paranoid delusions. Among these delusions was the insistence that T.S. Eliot was sending her "threatening messages" through his play manuscripts. During this trying period of her life, Spark was consumed and almost overcome by the voices in her head but she finally found comfort in the voice of God and decided to convert to Catholicism in the months leading up to

her recovery.[58] But Spark's conversion did not provide her with the stable sense of identity that one might expect. Rather, it fed into the consciousness of exile that Spark invokes and celebrates throughout her life and in her work as her primary "calling" ("Edinburgh-born" 21).[59] As Martin Stannard reveals in his 2009 biography of Spark, "cultural dislocation was not a mournful condition [for Spark]. She nurtured it, walking out of one existence, closing the door, and into another" (179). Spark's construction of herself as a transient or "wandering" figure[60], untethered to a particular geographical or cultural space, allows us to consider her conversion as part of the experience of the mediated life.

In *Beautiful Circuits: Modernism and the Mediated Life*, Mark Goble defines the mediated life as "a historical phenomenon, as central to the early twentieth century as to a later culture of new media" (11). More specifically he is interested in how "modernist expression wants to wire bodies into circuits with all manner of machines" (12). Goble's reading of the mediated life takes seriously the increasing ubiquity of technology in the twentieth century that prompts the intimate relationship between bodies and machines that I discussed in the previous chapter. This reading also recalls Heidegger's assessment in *The Question Concerning Technology* that the human is inextricably bound to the machine or, emerging out of that argument, Avital Ronell's suggestion in *The Telephone Book* that "there is no off switch to the technological" ("A User's Manual"). Both Heidegger and Ronell consider the haunting effects of technology as it gives rise to twentieth century anxieties, arguing that the mediated life is one of perpetual disconnection, subject to "a toxic invasion of the Other" (Ronell 7).

But Goble's message about technology's hold on us seems less menacing than either Heidegger or Ronell have suggested and, I would add, much closer to Spark's own depiction of the mediated life in her work. For Spark, the mediated life involves a recognition of both the cultural anxieties produced out of our encounters with the technological world that lead us to read technology as a threat to our very existence *and* an acknowledgement of the potential freedom of the disembodied or dislocated subject that such mediated experiences allow. Goble's invitation to think more about our "love" of media and the "relationships made possible *by* technology," then, informs our understanding of ourselves as mediated subjects by asking us to see "the complex ways technologies seem to vanish as they become more incorporated into our lives and as we come to assume their inevitable presence" (13).[61] I see Spark participating in the perpetuation of this phenomenon through her repeated engagement with technologies designed to foster communities and maintain communication across time and space, particularly in her attention to the "acoustic technologies"[62] of the wireless and the telephone. These media play leading roles in Spark's work as they offer ways to think about how local and global communities are both constituted and deconstructed by the technologies we keep.

In "The First Year of My Life," Spark asks us to witness the mediated process of community-formation firsthand: the wireless shapes the infant's experience of the world by allowing her to engage a community beyond the domestic spaces of home and nation, to become part of a virtual network bound by the shared experience of listening in, rather than tethered to a particular

geographical time or place. This experience, of course, is subject to what Avital Ronell calls "scrambling effects." Spark's acknowledgement of the "static and interference" of her wireless network—to "the switching on and off of interjected voices"—deconstructs and reconfigures her experience of the world with every turn of the dial, which simultaneously threatens the safety of her subject position and opens up spaces for her to explore ("A User's Manual"). The concepts of safety and security in the mediated world of the twentieth century will be crucial to my reading of Spark's work, and specifically to the work she produces in the early postwar period, as these novels engage systems of communication that constantly *mis*communicate, or that simply refuse to communicate at all. Spark suggests that the failure of the messenger to deliver the message is inherent in all forms of communication—most notably in the technologies that purport to facilitate communication across time and space (the wireless, the telegraph, the telephone) and whose persistent intrusions in the narratives she produces force her characters to renegotiate their sense of time and place and to reevaluate their positions in the worlds they inhabit.

This chapter argues that through her interrogation of media and mediated spaces, Spark challenges the way we think about history, community, and meaning-making, blurring the boundaries between self and other, space and time, truth and fiction. While Spark in many ways embraces the mediated life she also recognizes the way in which it troubles the "truth" of our experiences, perhaps because she herself participated in the manipulation of truth during the Second World War. In the spring of 1944, Spark moved to London to "experience the

war" (*CV* 143). After several months of searching, she accepted a job as a secretary in the Newsroom of the Political Intelligence department of the Foreign Office. One of her responsibilities was to sit at a "green-painted telephone" called the "scrambler" to record "secure" information about bombing locations from crews of Allied bombers (*CV* 143; 152). Spark recounts this experience in her autobiography *Curriculum Vitae*, recalling that "a continual jangling noise made interception difficult. One learned to listen 'through' the jangle" (152-53). The details Spark picked up amidst the noise of the scrambled lines were used to construct and disseminate anti-Nazi propaganda over the wireless to unsuspecting German audiences. Spark describes these reports as designed to offer "detailed truth with believable lies," a characterization that rhymes with Spark's notion of her own work as "fiction, out of which a kind of truth emerges…an imaginative extension of the truth" (CV 148; Spark qtd. in Kermode, "Muriel Spark's House of Fiction" 30). This characterization also speaks to the effects of technology in her novels.

In "Muriel Spark and the Meaning of Treason," Marina MacKay argues persuasively that themes of betrayal and surveillance, or what she calls "illegitimate inquiries," that enter the localized communities of Spark's fiction allow us to read Spark's oeuvre through an historical lens, rather than with the more common "theological and ethical preoccupations" that guided her modernist critics (508; 506). In his reading of *The Girls of Slender Means*, for example, Frank Kermode calls Spark "an unremittingly Catholic novelist committed to immutable truths" (174). Like the many scholars who follow in his footsteps,

Kermode reads Spark's oeuvre as tethered to the religious ideologies that governed her conversion. Along similar lines, Joseph Hynes confesses that "I find it impossible to read Spark without some elementary attention to Catholicism's role in her writing; religion is for her not a narrowing parochial concern but rather a means of dealing with what I have called her reality principle—her concept of all that is" (36). I am not looking to abandon this principle all together but rather, in line with MacKay, to shift the focus away from the narrow lens of her "Catholic writing" towards an engagement with the broader historical and cultural contexts in which Spark's work is embedded.

MacKay suggests that reading Spark's work as a product of its historical moment—that is, as a reflection of the postwar climate out of which it emerges—invites us to think about how the intimate and "self-contained" spaces of Spark's novels "intersect with and model the wider community of the nation-state" (512). While MacKay focuses primarily on the treasonous acts of Spark's characters as they expose a world vulnerable to "betrayal from within,"[63] I want to extend this reading to include the technologies that serve as accomplices to—or, in some cases, that perform their own—acts of violence within Spark's texts (512). Most significantly, Spark's insistence on the telephone as an antagonistic medium for gossip and surveillance articulates the instability of the networks that inform her novels, which favor dissonance over coherence and closure, blurring the boundaries between truth and fiction, inside and outside, caller and being-called. I argue that in both *Memento Mori* (1959) and *The Girls of Slender Means* (1963) the ring of the telephone institutes a rupture that simultaneously disrupts and

mobilizes the narrative, marking its cultural and political climates as always already unstable.

In *Memento Mori*, the call produces an epistemological crisis as the characters attempt to trace the disembodied voice of a serial caller. In *The Girls of Slender Means*, the call also creates a disturbance, but this time the rupture is a temporal one: the call interrupts the linear narrative and splits it in two, forcing the reader to negotiate between two different narrative spaces, the first taking place in 1945 and the second occurring in the ambiguous space of a future-to-come. Adding to the discomfort of this temporal divide is the static that accompanies the caller's message: all of the calls in *Girls* announce the death of Nicholas Farringdon, the anarchist-turned-missionary who occupies the position of the foreign Other in the text.[64] The particular circumstances of Nicholas's death are refused by the narrative and marked as inaccessible, inviting us to consider the call as a destabilizing trope that echoes the instability of the world beyond the text. Through the proliferation of calls that yield few answers, the telephonic networks of these two novels prescribe an unstable and potentially fatal future for the modern subject in the wake of world war, a future anticipated by the play between call and answer that destabilizes both the narratives and the reader's experience of them.

***Death is on the Telephone: Spark's Memento Mori***

In the beginning was the telephone, yes, in the beginning a telephone call.

Jacques Derrida, "*Ulysses* Gramophone"

Do you know what I did last night? I took the telephone to bed with me. […] because
we are, after all, connected by the telephone. […] I knew you would give me a ring.
But it became a different and dangerous kind of ring.
The ring of the neck that strangles you. […] The boxing ring I couldn't get out of.
The bell rang, you hit me, and I was counted out. […].

Jean Cocteau, *The Human Voice* (*La voix humaine*)[65]

"What did he say?"
"The same thing. And quite matter-of-fact, not really threatening.
Of course the man's mad. I don't know what the police are thinking
of, they must be sleeping. It's been going on for six weeks now."
"Just those words?"
"Just the same words—'*Remember you must die'*—nothing more."
"He must be a maniac," said Godfrey.

Muriel Spark, *Memento Mori*

It should come as no surprise that Muriel Spark was an admirer of the work of the French artist, poet, and playwright Jean Cocteau. Like Spark, Cocteau's engagement with media from newspapers and "glossies" to the telephone and the cinema articulates an awareness of the influence of media on human experience, positioning these technologies as inextricable from the experience of modernity as such.[66] In "*Ulysses* Gramophone" Jacques Derrida privileges the telephone as the instrument through which to understand the

Heideggarian notion of *Dasein* as he argues that the telephone bears within itself a presence, a coming-into-being marked by the anticipation of the call and answer:

> We hear the telephone constantly ringing, this *coup de téléphone* plays on apparently random figures, but about which there is so much to say; we hear it resonate unceasingly. And it incorporates within itself this *yes* toward which we slowly, moving in circles around it, return. There are several modalities or tonalities of the telephonic *yes*, but one of them, without saying anything else, returns to mock, simply, that we are *here*, present, listening, on the other end of the line, ready to answer but not for the moment responding to anything other than the preparation to answer (hello, yes: I'm listening, I can hear that you are there, ready to speak just when I am ready to speak to you). (38-39)

For Derrida, all states of being are reflected in being-on-the-phone; that is, the position of being "hooked up to a multiplicity of voices and answering machines" (40). Maintaining the connection requires that we remain in a state of suspense, waiting for the call to come and then, to come again. Without this insistence on connection we are as good as dead, a theory that gets reinforced by Derrida in a moment from *The Post Card*. In a letter to his distant lover, Derrida confesses that "between two 'addresses,' when no wire or wireless links me to anything, to you, I die of anxiety" (28). The telephone's hold on us is clear: its lines are the ties that bind us to one another and that secure our place in the world.

Putting Derrida's voice on hold (or placing it temporarily in remission), I want to turn briefly to the other two epigraphs that open this section, bringing Cocteau's 1930 play *The Human Voice (La voix humaine)* into conversation with Muriel Spark's *Memento Mori*. *The Human Voice* establishes the groundwork for my reading of Spark's employment of the telephone in the novel as an antagonistic medium of surveillance and betrayal, whose ring contains both the possibility of intimacy and connection and the threat of disconnection. Cocteau's play, of course, is not the only example of a work in which the voice over the telephone articulates a threat: the telephone continues to circulate today as a popular trope in detective fiction and cinematic thrillers.[67] But the nature of the call in *The Human Voice* finally exposes the fantasy of intimacy that the telephone purports to facilitate and invites us to see how quickly the telephone can turn on us. While, on the one hand, the telephonic exchange in *The Human Voice* stages the modern "love affair" with technology that Mark Goble privileges in *Beautiful Circuits*, the failure of the device to maintain the connection destroys the illusion by exposing an irreconcilable gap between caller and being-called.[68]

Positioning disconnection as a kind of death, Cocteau's protagonist desperately clings to her telephone in anticipation of a call from her ex-lover who has recently cut her off and abandoned her. "If you hadn't phoned I would have died," she breathes into the receiver. Then, as if to anticipate Derrida's sense of anxiety at being stranded on the wire: "this thin wire is the last thing that links us." The details of the woman's affair and the subsequent break up with her lover are muddled as the audience is only offered access to the woman's side of the

conversation (it is clear, however, that the departure was sudden and reeks of betrayal in the form of another much younger woman caller). The calls themselves are constantly interrupted by a series of bad connections, crossed wires, and operator interference. The woman despairs as she is repeatedly cut off from her lover; the silence broken only by a ticking clock that reminds us that her time is running out. Towards the end of the play, the woman recounts a dream in which the telephone, now lying beside her in her bed, finally betrays her. "I knew you would give me a ring," she says, "But it became a different kind of ring. The ring of the neck that strangles you." As she slowly winds the telephone cord around her neck, the telephone comes to be seen as an imposter, a strange bedfellow that has become "a terrifying weapon—noiseless and leaving no trace" (*The Human Voice*).

The frequent calls placed between the ex-lovers over the course of *The Human Voice* open up temporary lifelines for the woman who engages them, allowing her to hold onto a fantasy of connection that finally proves impossible. The play ends with a dropped call as the receiver falls to the floor and the woman's words—*je t'aime…je t'aime…je t'aime*—fall on deaf ears. As Steven Connor argues, the telephone is historically figured as a "deaf" instrument, a medium "insensible of the messages it [carries]" and therefore without any agency of its own (358). But Cocteau's protagonist continuously grants agency to the telephone as it allows her to perpetuate her love affair and drive the "plot" of her narrative forward. In *Memento Mori*, the telephone is also used as a plot device and the threat of death is always on the line.

***Remember You Must Die***

Set in London in the late 1950s, Spark's novel follows the lives of a group of elderly people who are stalked by an anonymous caller whose message imparts the promise of death. The novel opens in the home of Dame Lettie Colston, who is seated at her writing desk catching up on her correspondence when she receives the mysterious call. Before she has the chance to speak, her caller imparts the following message: *Remember you must die* (9).This sentence has a "familiar" ring to it: Dame Lettie has received this call before. In fact, she has received the call on "eight previous occasions," which has prompted her to involve the police in hopes of tracing the call and determining the identity of the caller (9). Ringing up the Assistant Inspector, Dame Lettie informs him that "it has occurred again." The repetition of the call is significant here as it invokes a Derridean reading of the call as interference, but Dame Lettie reads it as "merely a disturbance," attempting to ignore the potential threat inherent in the encounter (11). This disturbance, however, quickly turns "sinister": the caller follows Dame Lettie around town, locating her in the homes of her family and friends. Derrida writes: "this essential repetition lets itself be haunted by an intrinsic threat, by an internal telephone which interferes (*parasiter*)[69] with it like a mimetic, menacing double, like its incessant parody" (43). Parody, of course, is one of Spark's strong suits and what she establishes from the outset of this novel is a play on the *whodunit?*—with a disembodied voice at its center. Allan Pero writes: "[Memento Mori] emerges as an entrancing, significant break from the traditional detective

story or the hardboiled detective novel through its meditation on the voice without object" (559). The insistence of the call is precisely what invites Dame Lettie to view the caller as a threat: anticipating that the caller will not stop pursuing her unless he is caught, she declares her case *open*.

After reporting the recurrence of the call at the beginning of the novel, the Inspector asks Dame Lettie if she "[noticed] the time" (9). Time in *Memento Mori* is of the essence, particularly since almost all of the characters in the novel are over seventy years of age. This fact, of course, is also why the message strikes such a "distressing" chord with Lettie, for what the telephone repeatedly calls for in this novel is the acknowledgement of one's own mortality, which requires an acute awareness of the self in a state of emergency, as a being-towards-death (38). This state also reflects the state of the nation in the period in which the novel is set. Nicholas Royle argues that "the history of the novel is inseparable from that of teleculture and telecommunications" (202). In his reading of the opening scene of *Memento Mori*, for example, Royle articulates how Spark's novel is informed by the play of media in its introduction of "a scene of writing that has already begun caught up in the scene of another telemedium" (190). The already mediated lives of Spark's characters, Royle argues, come under surveillance by way of a telephonic interruption that initiates a series of others as wires are tapped and calls are screened. But despite this flood of media activity, Spark's serial caller remains very much at large.

The characters' fixation on answering the unanswerable question—*who's there?*[70]—that haunts *Memento Mori* from the start through the intrusion of the

"unremitting" call obscures their consideration of the message it delivers (Ronell "A User's Manual"). Of course, this is not the only question that remains unanswerable in *Memento Mori*. The anonymity of the caller prompts the reader, along with the characters, to wonder what is motivating the call and, in turn, to attempt to determine what his or her message means. But the insistence on solving the mystery is misleading, if not beside the point. Allan Pero argues that the gap produced by the voice is what Spark invites us to think about as "this gap forms the very substance of the novel's mystery. The necessity of the memento mori lurks precisely in the impossibility of its verification; that is, one must remember in advance to die in order for it to be accomplished. Like the voice, death exceeds our ability to fashion meaning out of it as an event" (561). In the attempt to close the case by locating the source of the voice, the characters in *Memento Mori* expose a desire for knowledge that the voice—in its dislocated presence over the telephone lines—acknowledges as always already impossible.

Ruth Whittaker argues: "most of the people telephoned [in *Memento Mori*] are practiced at blotting out the thought of death" and do not wish to "remember" it (110). Dame Lettie's refusal to take seriously the caller's message—"I do not wish to be advised how to think," she argues in response to Jean Taylor's suggestion that "you might, perhaps, try to remember that you must die"—is a refusal to come to terms with the conditions of the space she inhabits, a community bound together by the very fact that (let's face it) they're all going to die (*Memento Mori* 39). As Marilyn Reizbaum suggests, this "fact" is reinforced by the "matter-of-factness" of Spark's narrative voice. Reizbaum argues: "there is

a seeming flatness to the style, […] which in *Memento Mori* mocks the deafness or the tone-deafness of its recipients who apprehend a threat in the provincial statement" ("The Stranger Spark"). Dame Lettie's insistence on finding the caller is an attempt to regain the *illusion* of control within a system that is always already beyond control, to proclaim a mastery over it. Associating Dame Lettie's behavior with that of an hysteric, Allan Pero argues that "although Dame Lettie is hysterically resisting the voice's claim to power, hectically and repeatedly pointing out his impertinence—she cannot simply ignore or even, as Mortimer suggests, find solace in the calls" (567). This epistemological failure on the part of Dame Lettie eventually leads to her death.

Avital Ronell's reading of the call in *The Telephone Book* helps to consider the effects of the circulation of calls within *Memento Mori* as an extension of the more intimate telephonic exchange in Cocteau's *The Human Voice*. Ronell performs a reading of the call as it is always already tethered to a death sentence. Contexualizing her theory of the call in history, Ronell recalls, for example, the telephone as a medium through which "calls for execution were made" (6). She writes: "hence the trait that continues to flash through every phone call in one form or another, possessing characteristics of that which comes to us with a receipt of acknowledgement or in the hidden agency of repression: the call as decisive, as verdict: the call as death sentence. One need only consult the literatures trying to contain the telephone in order to recognize the persistent trigger of the apocalyptic call. It turns on you: it's the gun pointed at your head" (6). Spark's Dame Lettie, like Cocteau's nameless protagonist, comes to view the

telephone as an enemy, the antagonist whose ring promises access to something (whether it be knowledge, history, or an Other at the end of the line) that it continuously withholds. As Jacques Derrida intuits in "*Ulysses* Gramophone", the telephone, with its affirming presence, demands to be granted a certain degree of agency: it is always ringing you up and demanding an answer.[71] The call, then, opens up the possibility for connection and coherence. But, as Ronell reminds us, the call also bears within it a trace of something lost, missing, or repressed: the ghosts of the past coming back to haunt us.

In *Dumbstruck—A Cultural History of Ventriloquism*, Steven Connor argues that "there is a [deep] relationship between the evolution of ghost phenomena and the developing logic of technological communications. For both involved the move from somatic to telematic processes of relay, as effects and manifestations that took place in or through the physical person of the medium—the easiest of these to produce being the production of the voice of the spirits by the medium's own vocal organs—were replaced by manifestations separated from the medium's body" (364). Connor's reading of the relationship between telephones and ghosts is useful for those readers of Spark's novel who insist on reading the call as a supernatural force. "We read Spark," Christopher MacLachlan suggests, "as we read Gothic, not to be convinced of metaphysical truths but for the frisson of terror that comes with the sensing of the possibility of inhuman forces" (128). That the telephone is haunted is, of course, a popular conclusion drawn by early readers of the text and many critics find themselves agreeing with Chief Inspector Mortimer's more theoretical assessment in the

novel that "the offender is Death himself" (144). But all of these critics are caught in the same web as Spark's characters as they struggle to achieve a sense of closure to the case, no matter how loosely bound. Such closure, Spark's novel assures us, is not possible. For one thing, the failure of the victims to produce a coherent description of the disembodied voice over the telephone (Dame Lettie identifies the voice as "quite cultured" while Godfrey insists that the caller is "a common chap" or "barrow boy" and the age of the caller ranges from "very young" to "middle-aged" to "elderly") thwarts the police investigation by offering them no significant leads or motives (110; 143). Martin Stannard argues that "towards the end [of the novel] we discover that there is no rational explanation for the telephone voices. They could represent a number of things" (207). Stannard's recognition that the myriad voices that speak through Spark's telephone do not coalesce into a single coherent meaning helps me to suggest that the caller's unknowability produces the technical difficulties that structures the novel as a whole.

The restless circulation of the message—*Remember you must die!*—produces a chain reaction that articulates the uncontainability of the voice on the end of the line, a voice that by the end of the novel has gone viral. In *A Voice and Nothing More* Mladen Dolar constructs a theory of the voice as object, which in turn insists on the separation of the voice from both the body and from any determinate system of meaning, positioning it as a medium alone, signifying nothing. Dolar insists that, in this reading, "the voice undermines any certainty and any establishment of a firm sense. The voice is boundless, warrantless […]"

in its detachment from the body (50-51). This boundlessness of which Dolar speaks is also articulated in the "instability" of Spark's narrative voice as "we often switch sharply from vignette to vignette…as though walking into the middle of a play, turning a radio dial, or tuning in successively to bugged rooms" (Stannard 206-07). And as the local newspaper reports in its on-going coverage of the "hoax caller" investigation in *Memento Mori*, we are never any closer to solving the mystery. In fact, Spark's anonymous reporter claims, "the net is spreading wider" (143).

In a 1949 article published in the hygiene section of *The Times* in London, the telephone is read as a potential threat to national health, perceived by the public as contributing to the spread of illness and infection. A sudden rise in reports of airborne illnesses (in particular, the common cold) prompted Londoners to look with paranoid eyes to the familiar spaces they inhabited in search of a culprit—or at the very least, a scapegoat. The telephone fit the bill. The report reads: "At a time when the public is informed of further attempts to 'isolate' the common cold, and when insistence on hygiene is apparent, the telephone is suspected by many people of being a carrier of infection. There has been publicity to improve behaviour in vehicles and shops, to reduce the risk, but no comparable advice, how to protect the public call-box" ("Telephone Hygiene" [*sic.*]). The call-box is a recognizable fixture in London's cosmopolitan landscape and its visibility is significant to my reading of *Memento Mori* as it brings the act of calling into public view while maintaining an illusion of privacy. In other words, the call-box allows for an intimate exchange to take place in a public space. But

public access to the telephone also opens up channels of communication to a wider community of callers and receivers that is difficult—if not impossible—to trace or contain. The messages transmitted through the call-box, like the callers who enter and exit as they please, can never be fully "protected"; identities cannot be confirmed or guaranteed. Recognizing the potential failure to determine who or what is entering the system at any given time introduces the threat of contamination within the system itself.[72]

In *Memento Mori*, the problem of security is a primary source of frustration and anxiety for the characters who receive the caller's message. Under the pretense of escaping the call, another victim, Charmian Colston checks herself into a nursing home, declaring "I must be protected from the sight of the telephone" (168). But once settled into her new home, Charmian reveals that she has not been able to free herself of the caller and imagines that he has taken up residence on her bedside table: "The civil young man had vaguely assumed in her mind the shape of a telephone receiver. At home he had been black; here he was white" (188). The embodiment of the caller in Charmian's telephone receiver anticipates the inescapability of the call by locating the caller in another time and place, both revealing the uncontainability of the call as it moves freely between receivers and reinforcing the instability of the network to which the characters are bound. Pero argues that "the telephonic voice functions as the constitutive element of surveillance that produces the communal identity of the characters" in *Memento Mori* (560). But just as the call delimits the community by drawing

(telephone) lines between them, those line are proven time and time again to be insecure.

We can now say with certainty that the community in *Memento Mori* is in critical condition, suffering from a radical exposure to the outside.[73] The novel attempts to protect itself from the outside by keeping its characters in, but such enclosure is made impossible by the open question of the call that continues to break into the narrative and shake the characters up.[74] Martin McQuillan argues in his Introduction to the anthology *Theorizing Muriel Spark* "the use of the insular community as a setting for the novel allows Spark to comment on the inadequacies of closure as a totalizing trope in literary and social narrative" (18). In *Memento Mori*, the movement outside of the local community inscribed by the call is literalized in a scene that is seemingly tangential to the novel's *whodunit* narrative but that proves crucial to understanding the novel in its global, postwar context. In this scene, the chairman of the management committee of the Maud Long Medical Ward, the home for the sick and the elderly where Jean Taylor resides, speaks of the recent changes being made within the organization as they reflect the changing state of the nation. "After the fifties are over," he declares, "everything will be easier. […] the old brigade don't like change. They don't like the loss of authority. By the middle sixties…we will have things in working order" (112). The chairman's articulation of the 1950s as a "transitional period" is echoed by the incessant ringing of the telephone, whose resistance to authority (marked by the inability of the police to trace the calls) disrupts the order that so many of Spark's characters desperately try to impose on it. The telephone calls

that haunt the novel beyond its end expose the vulnerability of both subjects and nations in the postwar period in which it is set. As Jean Taylor remarks, "all our friends are going or gone and we survive amongst the dead and the dying as on a battlefield" (37). Jean, of course, is one of the few characters in the novel that takes the caller's message seriously and if we accept her reading of the call as an imperative to take notice of the conditions in which we survive, the panic caused by the anonymous caller registers on a much larger scale. The message—*Remember you must die!*—thrusts the listener out of her safety net, forcing her to reflect on what is happening beyond the security of her home while simultaneously exposing any notion of security as an illusion. "In this sense," Martin Stannard argues "[*Memento Mori*] is a book about human vulnerability, a book of death, a remorseless stare into the chasm of what it is like to be *sans* everything" (206).The systematic failure or security breach that the call announces by way of its circulation finally reveals the glitch or breakdown that perpetuates what Alec Warner hypothesizes as "mass hysteria" or paranoia which, as I have argued in other chapters, is symptomatic of the modernist preoccupation with technology and its countless difficulties. These diagnoses of media and their subsequent effects on the public come to reflect the unstable climate of the postwar period in which Spark's novel is set. Dame Lettie finally emerges as the victim of that political and cultural angst, meeting her ruthless and violent end.

After confiding in Jean Taylor that the anonymous phone calls have caused her much distress, Dame Lettie acknowledges that she is nevertheless reluctant to stop answering the telephone, articulating a feeling of entrapment that

echoes the desperation of Cocteau's protagonist in *The Human Voice* when she confesses, towards the end of the play, that she is "holding onto [the line] for dear life." Dame Lettie explains: "My dear Taylor, one cannot be cut off perpetually. I still have my Homes to consider, I am not entirely a back number, Taylor. One must be on the phone" (38). Being on the phone allows Dame Lettie to maintain her status within the community, which presumably gives her life meaning. Her insistence on being on the phone despite her mysterious caller's persistence in ringing her up reveals a desire for connection and belonging that she suggests one cannot live without. In an article from *The Times*, published in the same year as *Memento Mori*, a correspondent reveals a similar understanding of the consequences of *not* being engaged on the telephone. She writes: "No-one seems to make an appointment nowadays except by telephone, and the query when I want to be kept in touch is not 'what's your address?' but 'what's your number?' It's humiliating, to say the least, to confess I haven't one […]" ("We Must Have a Telephone"). For both the anonymous columnist and Dame Lettie, *not* being on the telephone would be an act of social suicide. In this way the telephone comes to be read as the very system through which communities are fostered and sustained and by which an individual determines his or her status in the world.

Spark, as Martin Stannard recalls, expressed a strong dislike for the telephone and often preferred to keep hers disconnected (238). But, as *Memento Mori* suggests, such disconnection is impossible to maintain in a mediated world.[75] By the end of the novel Dame Lettie proves this to be true. Falling victim to paranoia, Lettie appears to have lost some control of her faculties and her

housekeeper Gwen feels obliged to abandon her on these grounds. Upon leaving, Gwen gossips with her boyfriend about "how the mad dame would go round the house, poking into all the cupboards and corners, and the garden…And she wouldn't let me tell the police…She doesn't trust the police" (179). Eventually, Dame Lettie is forced to cut herself off: she disconnects her phone services in an attempt to escape both the caller and his message. Allan Pero argues that "in removing the medium, Dame Lettie thinks she is cutting off the message's disturbing content. But the presence of the medium has already effected a change in the conditions that now absolutely shape her life" (567-68). In other words, despite being cut off from the telephone, Dame Lettie is not off the hook. Word gets around town that the wealthy woman has lost faith in the police and her house falls under surveillance by a group of local workers, dabbling in the pursuit of "information" (180-81). This game of telephone leads to the home invasion in which Dame Lettie meets her end. In the most violent scene in the novel, Lettie is beaten to death by a startled intruder with the blunt end of her walking stick. While the police find no connection between the murder and the anonymous phone calls Dame Lettie once received, the crime reinforces the inescapability of the caller's message: *Remember you must die*.

In a passage that follows her own invocation of Cocteau's *The Human Voice*, Avital Ronell argues that "the telephone…indicates more than a mere technological object. In our first listening, under the pressure of 'accepting a call,' the telephone will in fact emerge as a synecdoche of technology" (11). Ronell's reading of the telephone as "at once lesser and greater than itself" speaks to the

transformative power that the call in Spark's novel commands: the incessant ring of the telephone reminds us that there is something *out there* that demands our attention. Mark Goble reinforces Ronell's reading of the telephone in *Beautiful Circuits* when he suggests that "the telephone is a symbolic technology in several senses of the word, for it is not only a means of communication but also a metonymic figure for deeper historical and economic transformations" (114). Muriel Spark's 1963 novel *The Girls of Slender Means* takes seriously the symbolic potential of the telephone to mark a social and historical transition as it simultaneously considers the unknowability of the future-to-come.

***Long Ago in 1945…***

We should know ourselves better by now than to be under
the illusion that we are all essentially aspiring, affectionate, and loving creatures.
We do have these qualities, but we are aggressive too.

Muriel Spark, "The Desegregation of Art"

As they realized themselves in varying degrees, few people alive at the time
were more delightful, more movingly lovely, and, as it might happen, more
savage, than the girls of slender means.

Muriel Spark, *The Girls of Slender Means*

*The Girls of Slender Means* opens in London in the immediate wake of V-E Day in the year 1945. The narrator's introduction to the scene positions the novel in a kind of fairy-tale past, anticipating a tale that is ripe with remembrance and nostalgic for a time gone by. "Long ago in 1945," the narrator begins, "all the nice people in England were poor" (7). The novel's linear narrative follows a group of young women living inside The May of Teck Club, a communal space commissioned in the Edwardian period for "the Pecuniary Convenience and Social Protection of Ladies of Slender Means" (9). But *Girls* tells quite a different story than its opening lines suggest as the narrative is almost immediately interrupted by a telephone call from another time and place, a call that reconfigures the way we experience the narrative by splitting it in two. *I've got something to tell you*, Jane Wright cuts in, calling up the future narrative from within (9). The disruption of the telephone calls—and there are seven in all—forces readers to negotiate between two competing narratives: the first, grounded firmly in a particular political and historical space (London, between V-E Day

and V-J Day, 1945), and the other, unfixed and entering from a time unannounced, a future-to-come filled with static and interference. The call in *The Girls of Slender Means*, then, echoes the call of *Memento Mori* as it comes be read as a reflection of the chaos and instability of a postwar period. But I also want to suggest that the call and all that it comes to represent is more conflicted and more cunning than that of Spark's previous work.

In order to pursue this line of inquiry, I want to turn back to the novel's beginnings to consider Spark's depiction of London in the year 1945. The exterior landscape of the novel is composed of "bomb-sites piled with stony rubble, houses like giant teeth in which decay had been drilled out," and shattered glass (7). These remnants of war create a sobering landscape that is juxtaposed with the "eager-spirited" girls of The May of Teck Club, who spend their days musing on material matters, primping for gentlemen callers, and counting calories to maintain their delicate figures (8). The hostel[76] (and, as it turns out, hos*tile*) community of The May of Teck Club appears very much sheltered from the realities of the war: Spark's narrator wittily observes that the girls "were so far removed from the small fact of time as weightless occupants of a space-rocket" (118). But, as Spark simultaneously reminds us through her "devious" narrative style, things are not always as transparent as they seem for the girls of slender means (Kermode, "Girls" 175). While the girls stake a claim for their material and social "goods" (if you will), Patrick Parrinder argues that "value is not to be found in this world" (80). As the girls "glance out of the windows in the early mornings," their youthful eyes filled with expectation, they appear impervious to

the "brutal and disillusioning" space that surrounds them (9; Parrinder 80). But the subtle consciousness of the outside world comes to be felt in the perpetual intrusion of the telephone whose calls reveal the cracks in the Club's façade.

The windows of The May of Teck Club provide a lens through which to read the convergence between the public and private spaces of Spark's novel, a convergence marked by the call that articulates the tension between inside and outside, between the domestic and insular world of the Club and the war-torn landscape of the city in which it resides. This tension reigns over the novel as a whole, allowing us to consider (if only for a moment) the darker side of the Club's "delightful" inhabitants (9). Spark's narrator informs us that "windows were important in that final year of reckoning; they told at a glance whether a house was inhabited or not; and in the course of the past years they had accumulated much meaning, having been the main danger-zone between domestic life and the war going on outside" (8). Recall my earlier reading of the London call-box: windows provide boundaries between inside and outside (here, between the home and the streets below) and allow for the illusion of privacy and protection to be sustained by the insiders looking out. In "Muriel Spark's House of Fiction," Frank Kermode explains that Spark's own "house of fiction has many windows, but at any given period they may all be designed as variations on a few basic shapes. What you see from them varies more considerably within these limits: irreducibly complex personalities, a sadistic landscape, a gaunt country house full of secrets that cannot survive the preternatural explicitness of its inhabitants […]" (32). Many secrets can be found between the walls of The May

of Teck Club and the girls' attempts to contain those secrets in order to maintain their appearance of innocence can be read through the narrator's insistence, in the novel's opening pages, on the structural integrity of the building's façade. The narrator recalls that "The May of Teck Club had been three times window-shattered since 1940, but never directly hit"; following the bombings, "the shattered windows had been replaced with new glass rattling in loose frames" (8). The windows secure the fantasy of stability and coherence for the girls of slender means as they are continuously replaced with "new glass," which makes an argument for the Club's resilience in these times of crisis. But this resilience is eventually tested and proven to fail as the explosion of a rogue bomb—a remnant of an attack on the city dating back to 1942—finally reveals the "looseness" of the Club's foundations. As the building literally crumbles to the ground (with the cherished and "heroic" voice of the Club within it), the May of Teck Club becomes nothing more than "a high heap of rubble," fading into the "familiar ruins of the neighbourhood" [*sic*] (130; 137).[77] The physical collapse of the building's façade also signifies something remarkable about its insides; its collapse exposes the "savagery" of the girls within, a savagery revealed by Selina Redwood, who slips back into the building to rescue a vintage Schiaparelli dress only to immediately escape with it, leaving Joanna Childe behind to suffocate beneath its remains.

Marina MacKay positions Selina's act as an instance of betrayal that reflects the unstable political climate in which the novel is set: "*The Girls of Slender Means* concludes with a knife slipped into the back of a member of the

crowd gathered in London to celebrate the end of the war, a literalizing of the metaphor driving the novel's main story of a savage betrayal in a bombed hostel—a betrayal that derides any complacent belief in the moral righteousness of the war's British victors" (510). Christopher MacLachlan contributes to this reading by arguing that this moment of betrayal marks the climax of the novel as it exposes an *otherness* about Selina (and, by extension, about the May of Teck community as a whole) that leads the hero, Nicholas Farringdon, to see the world in a new—and less idyllic—light. MacLachlan suggests that "for a moment Nicholas sees an act of evaluation that challenges his superficial acceptance of human nature and this blinding sight of otherness makes him revise his whole understanding of himself and his life and leads to his martyrdom in Haiti" (139). With these two readings in mind, I want to consider how the intrusion of the telephone calls that split the 1945 narrative in two reflects the destabilizing consequences of the war that it establishes as its backdrop. Martin Stannard argues that Spark's oeuvre is plagued by "a sense of déjà-vu, of double time and split identity" (248). In *The Girls of Slender Means*, the telephone calls produce a double-narrative that is bound by the cast of characters that constitute its shared network, a network tethered to the May of Teck Club and its tragic history. The call therefore punctures what Avital Ronell refers to as the "normally functioning text" and turns it into a mediated one ("A User's Manual"). Critics who read the call as peripheral to the novel or who ignore the interruptions altogether—and there are many—lose sight of what Ronell would call the novel's very *Dasein.* [78]

*The Girls of Slender Means* is structured by the telephonic interruptions that, like the call in *Memento Mori*, invite their recipients to remember death. But unlike the call in *Memento Mori* that asks for a universal recognition of the "fact" of death, the call in *The Girls of Slender Means* is preoccupied with one death in particular: the death of Nicholas Farrington. The call registers on two levels here as we learn that Nicholas' death occurs while he is fulfilling a spiritual calling, a calling that is inextricably linked to the events of 1945. The call then also comes to be read, as Christopher MacLachlan's argument suggests, as a metaphor for transfiguration. Through his death and subsequent resurrection in the reports that circulate over the wires of the novel's telegraphic and telephonic networks, Nicholas emerges as one of three figures in the novel whose relation to the call helps us to think about its transformative potential, reinforcing our understanding of both the possibilities and the consequences of the mediated life. Along with Jane Wright and Joanna Childe—who respectively make up the brains and the beauty of the May of Teck Club—Nicholas occupies a privileged space in the text as a being-called. He is, as Jacques Derrida might suggest, bound to the telephone.[79]

Introduced as a man who is "not yet known or as yet at all likely to be," Nicholas's place in the 1945 narrative is that of the outsider (20). "He's a foreigner," Jane Wright tells the others at the Club, defending him to those who find his elusiveness peculiar if not suspicious, a characterization that simultaneously marks him as "the instrumental Other; as a hitch or scrambling device lodged within the Heideggarian calling apparatus" (*GOSM* 37; Ronell 50).

It follows that Nicholas's loyalties are also suspect: the narrator notes, for example, that "he was known only as a poet of small talent and an anarchist of dubious loyalty to that cause" (40). In a later scene, Rudi, Nicholas's friend and agent, informs Jane that "before the war [Nicholas] had been always undecided whether to live in England or France, and whether he preferred men or women, since he alternated between passionate intervals with both" (53). Nicholas's intrusion into the 1945 narrative as the Other who idealizes and eventually "infiltrates"[80] the May of Teck Club through his love affair with the villainous Selina is echoed by his position as a dead man in the future-narrative of the call.

As Avital Ronell argues, "the telephone connection houses the improper" and "reminds you to ask, 'Have I been understood?' […] Thus we are inclined to place the telephone not so much at the origin of some reflection but as a response, as that which is answering a call" (3). Selina's eventual betrayal of Nicholas and the girls of slender means is the thing that inspires him to follow his calling: her decision to save a Schiaparelli dress from the burning building while leaving Joanna for dead exposes the "savagery" that destroys Nicholas's "poetic image" of the Club, provoking him to "involuntarily [sign] himself with the cross" (126). But his conversion to Christianity finally proves to be his death sentence, linking the calling to the novel's counter-narrative of the call. As Bryan Cheyette points out, "the term 'convert' has an abundance of meanings and etymologies which Spark seems to be aware of. It ranges from the hardened conformities of religious conversion to a softer, more amorphous and troubling, form of exchange which includes the conversion of life into art or materiality into spirituality" (97).

Nicholas's textual reconfiguration as the ghost in the machine supports the "amorphous and troubling" reading of conversion that Cheyette acknowledges, a reading that will be revisited through the death of Joanna Childe at the end of the novel. Nicholas's death, as a symptom of the telephonic intrusion, thus produces the shock that jolts us out of the idealized world of the girls of slender means and forces us to confront the static and dissonance of the world outside their windows.

***Do You Remember Nicholas Farringdon?***

While Nicholas's death can be read as the only "known" future in *The Girls of Slender Means*, the particular circumstances surrounding his death remain unresolved at the novel's end, maintaining that "radical openness" that the call (vis-à-vis Ronell) inherently suspends (5). All of the calls that break into the 1945 narrative to report the news of Nicholas's death are met with difficulties that refuse the closure of his narrative: "rotten lines" and disconnections thwart the attempts of Jane Wright, a former May of Teck Club resident-turned-gossip columnist, to gather and disseminate the "facts" of Nicholas's case. As the novel's primary caller, Jane brings the future to bear on the past by circulating the call to members of her scattered community who were once acquainted, as she was, with the martyred man. Jane's question—"*Do you remember Nicholas Farringdon?*"—haunts the novel and subsequently prompts a look back to the 1945 narrative, a return that gives way to a sequence of calls and answers. In this way, Jane simultaneously produces the glitch in the novelistic machine and

becomes the machine itself, operating as the medium through which information is—or in most cases, is *not*—transmitted.

Of course, Jane is not completely to blame for the technical difficulties that intervene in her successful reporting of the news of Nicholas's death: other media sources play a part in this breakdown of communication as they also prove themselves to be unreliable, offering mere fragments of the story that are often met with resistance and fraught with speculation. Unlike the caller in *Memento Mori*, whose calls always issue the same message, Jane's calls are burdened by a mess of mixed signals and *mis*communication. For example, in the second exchange between Jane and Rudi on the subject of Nicholas's death, static on the line makes for a bad connection. Rudi's request to know precisely *how* Nicholas has died is perpetually refused. The conversation is recounted as follows:

> "How has he died, by the way?" said Rudi.
> "He was martyred, they say," said Jane.
> "In Haiti? How is this?"
> "I don't know much, except what I get from the news sources. Reuters says a local rising. Associated News has a bit that's just come in…I was thinking of that manuscript The Sabbath Notebooks."
> "I have it still. If he is famous by his death, I find it. How has he died…?"
> "I can't hear you, it's a rotten line…
> "I say I can't hear, Rudi…"
> "How has he died…By what means?"
> "It will be worth a lot of money Rudi."
> "I find it. This line is bad, by the way, can you hear me? How has he died…?"
> "…a hut…"
> "I can't hear…"
> "…in a valley…"
> "Speak loud."
> "…in a clump of palms…deserted…it was market day, everyone had gone to market."
> "I find it. There is maybe a market for this Sabbath book. They make a cult of him, by the way?"

> "He was trying to interfere with their superstitions, they said. They're getting rid of a lot of Catholic priests."
> "I can't hear a word. I ring you tonight, Jane. We meet later." (69)

Jane's initial answer to Rudi's question—that Nicholas was "martyred in Haiti" where he had gone to carry out missionary work—is not enough to satisfy her interlocutor. Rudi continues to press her on the issue by repeating the question: *How has he died…?* This repetition signals the breakdown in communication that is reinforced by the breaking up of the text, ruptures made visible through the proliferation of ellipses that stand in for the lost information. These holes in the narrative reflect the failure of the medium to deliver the message.[81]

The fractured conversation between Jane and Rudi confirms Nicholas's first impression of Jane in the 1945 narrative as "a speaking machine […] gone wrong" and simultaneously positions the telephone as "a dummy apparatus, that yields sounds without itself being able to hear, or hear itself" (Spark 41; Connor 361).[82] But Jane Wright is no dummy—or at least, *she* doesn't see it that way. As the self-proclaimed "smarty-pants" of the novel, Jane is constantly asking the other girls to tone down their voices or turn down the wireless so that she can commence her "brain-work" (35). Spark's narrator, however, paints quite a different picture of Jane as she projects a future for the young girl that suggests that her prowess as an intellectual with unique and important insights into the world's happenings is, perhaps, blindly misconstrued. The narrator states: "It was not till Jane had reached the apex of her career as a reporter and interviewer for the largest of women's journals that she found her right role in life, while still incorrectly subscribing to a belief that she was capable of thought" (72). Jane's

role as a gossip columnist might bind her to the world of information, but Jane's actual *work*—both in life and in the narrative system of *The Girls of Slender Means*—is not aligned with the "facts" but rather with fiction. Mark Goble's reading of Norman Rockwell's painting *The Gossips* is useful here as it considers the gossip chain (or "grapevine" as Dorothy Markham calls it in the novel) as "an image of pure communication—pure, that is, because it is completely uncompromised by reference and takes place nowhere in the real world" (124). Jane's calls in *Girls* can be said to capture, like Rockwell's painting, "a network of total publicity that is both intimate and empty, a circuit that finally closes around nothing at all" (124). In her role as a gossip, Jane becomes little more than a switchboard operator through which information passes from the inside to the outside, a channel that connects the past to the future-present. Following Ronell's theory of the call, we can say that Jane-as-switchboard acts as a mere agent of communication, delivering "a continuous current of electricity [that] also replicates the effects of scrambling" ("A User's Manual"). Jane's relation to the telephone, then, is strictly an operational one: she provides the support that keeps the system running.

Nicholas's image of Jane on the eve of V-J Day establishes her position as the structuring force of the novel that keeps the lines of communication between the past and the future open. "Nicholas marveled at [Jane's] stamina," the narrator observes, "recalling her in this image years later in the country of his death—how she stood, sturdy and bare-legged on the dark grass, occupied with her hair—as if this was an image of all the May of Teck establishment in its meek,

unselfconscious attitudes of poverty, long ago in 1945" (142). Amidst the "general pandemonium" of the novel's final scene, Jane emerges as a fixed presence, unaffected by the violence that surrounds her (140). Nicholas is struck by her immovability in the face of all of this chaos as he finds himself radically altered by this experience, anticipating his impending death in another transitional and foreign space: Haiti, a nation still plagued by violence and revolution.[83] Jane, as the unremitting caller of *The Girls of Slender Means* emerges here as the last woman standing; her "stamina" reflected by the insistence of her calls that haunt the narrative beyond its dystopian end. The final phrase of the novel—"long ago in 1945"—produces a feedback loop that mimics the perversion of playback discussed in the previous chapter: the call returns us to the beginning, to remember the good old times. But this backwards gesture only serves to solidify the gap between these two narrative spaces, making visible the penetrability of the May of Teck Club's façade in the shadow of Jane's sturdier form.

***Out of the Deep Have I Called***

The image of Jane Wright in what we might now call the novel's final moment of reckoning recalls that of another May of Teck Club member: the elocutionist Joanna Childe. Joanna's "immovable attitude" in the 1945 narrative positions her, like Jane, as a mediating presence in the novel (87). But unlike Jane, whose "calling" as a professional gossip produces interference rather than coherence, Joanna's voice insists on a formulaic clarity; her "calling" refuses the "radical openness" of the future unknown. Grounding herself firmly within a

Western literary tradition through recitations of biblical verses and Romantic poetry, Joanna becomes a spiritual and cultural medium for the girls of slender means. She channels voices from the past from the Book of Common Prayer to St. Paul, William Shakespeare to Gerard Manley Hopkins, Samuel Coleridge to Edgar Allen Poe in an effort to preserve the language of the past in the present. Joanna's powerful voice "[adds] tone and style to the establishment" and fashions her into an idol (11). For Nicholas, Joanna's presence maintains the "frozen image" of The May of Teck Club as she becomes "a proclaiming statue in his mind" (86-87).[84] Speaking of her status inside the Club, the narrator remarks that "the club was proud of Joanna Childe, not only because she […] recited poetry, but because she was so well built, fair and healthy looking, the poetic essence of tall, fair rectors' daughters who never used a scrap of make-up, […] and who never wept that anyone knew or could imagine, being stoical by nature" (22). Joanna's physical and mental strength therefore position her as a stable figure in the 1945 narrative whose purity of voice is a source of communal pride and collective agency. But as the ringing of Spark's telephone reminds us, Joanna's place within the novel is always already insecure: she is bound to a time and a tradition that cannot be sustained.

Over the course of the novel, Joanna comes to represent the failure of the May of Teck Club to maintain its relevance amidst the changing climate of a postwar world, a world that is becoming increasingly mediated. This failure is made visible towards the end of the novel as Joanna's living voice competes with that of its mechanical other: a voice over the wireless that exhibits a commanding

presence. The voice that intrudes upon this scene and interrupts Joanna's practiced elocution is that of Winston Churchill. Told from Nicholas's perspective, the scene unfolds as follows:

> Everyone was gathered somewhere else, in the drawing-room or in the bedrooms, sitting round wireless sets, turning in to some special programme. Then one wireless, and another, roared forth louder by far than usual from the upper floors; others turned in to the chorus, justified in the din by the voice of Winston Churchill. Joanna ceased. The wirelesses spoke forth their simultaneous Sinaitic predictions of what fate would befall the freedom-loving electorate should it vote for Labour in the forthcoming elections. The wirelesses suddenly started to reason humbly:
>
> We shall have Civil Servants…
>
> The wirelesses changed their tones, they roared:
>
> No longer civil…
>
> Then they were sad and slow:
>
> No longer…
>
> …servants.
>
> Nicholas imagined Joanna standing by her bed, put out of business as it were, but listening, drawing it into her bloodstream. As in a dream of his own that depicted a dream of hers, he thought of Joanna in this immovable attitude, given up to the cadences of the wireless as if it did not matter what was producing them, the politician or herself. (86-87)

As Marshall McLuhan argues, "radio provided the first massive experience of electronic implosion, that reversal of the entire direction and meaning of literate Western civilization. […] for those whose entire social existence is an extension of family life, radio will continue to be a violent experience" (300). The juxtaposition of Joanna Childe's "live" recitation lesson with Winston Churchill's famous anti-Labor Party speech before the 1945 Electoral vote reinstates the tension between the local and the global that the novel has thus far sustained through the call of the telephone. Churchill's sudden appearance in the narrative as a symbol of the changing state of the nation forces us to consider what is at

stake in this transitional period. As the girls listen in to the broadcast from different rooms of the house, Joanna's voice is temporarily silenced; the outside exerts its force from within. The wirelesses—in their united front—begin to take on human qualities: their shifting tones and humble reasoning seduce the community of listeners, and Joanna in particular, into a trancelike state. As Joanna gives herself up to the "cadences of the wireless," her voice becomes indistinguishable from that of the machine. The convergence of Joanna's living voice with Churchill's mechanical one marks a transition in the text as the mechanical outside begins to take control of its internal narrative. The consequences of war weigh heavily on the claustrophobic interior of The May of Teck Club and it eventually becomes clear that its resistance to the effects of the war is impossible. Joanna's death in the fire that destroys the Club and scatters its inhabitants across the world exposes the illusion of impenetrability that The May of Teck Club perpetually attempts to uphold.

At the end of the 1945 narrative, as the Club begins to crumble on top of her, Joanna's voice finally loses its fullness and become machine-like, channeling the play of call and answer executed by Jane in the future narrative by repeating the "responses and answers" of the evening psalter of Day 27 (126). As Joanna "[circles] round, vaguely wobbling, like a top near the end of its spin" she suddenly stops to cough, "her voice…weakened" by the smoke building up inside the Club. In this moment, Joanna comes to embody the machine, complete with its static and interference. As Lyndsey Stonebridge suggests, "there is…perhaps, nothing human…about the voices in *The Girls of Slender Means*" (458). The

transfiguration of Joanna's voice from human to machine is echoed by the industrial sounds of catastrophe—"of smouldering wood and plaster in the lower part of the house, and, above, the clamour and falling bricks of the rescue work"—that puncture her recitation until they eventually consume her, marking a violent end (130). Joanna's voice is the thing that cannot be recovered by the text and her presence is eventually erased from the narrative all together as Nicholas learns that the recording of her last performance, a recitation of Hopkins' "The Wreck of the Deutschland," has been unapologetically "wiped out" (132).

In both *Memento Mori* and *The Girls of Slender Means* communications media that perpetually fail to communicate issue in states of emergency for the characters who attempt to maintain a sense of stability in their ever-changing worlds. Through her insistence on narratives that refuse closure and coherence and that mark themselves as always already subject to interference, Muriel Spark's mediated worlds reflect the instability of the social and political climates that they reflect as they open up new spaces for critical engagement and communication. As Martin McQuillan argues "the history of Spark's writing is the history of post-war literature in English; it is indissociable from the history of post-war thought and the 'postmodern' opening" (7). The moments of opening up initiated by the acoustic technologies of the wireless and the telephone in Spark's essays and novels invite us to think about Muriel Spark as a writer informed by the machines of modernism but driven, always, to contemplate what is at stake in the radical openness of gaps produced by the mediated life.

# Chapter Four

## From *Film* to Archive: Beckett, Haneke, and the (Hidden) Camera

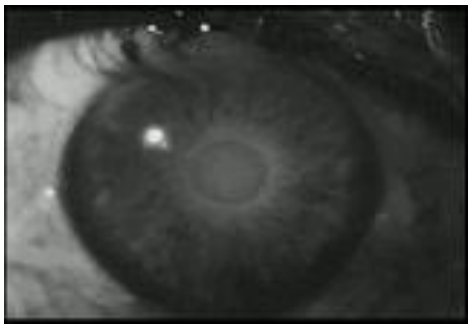

Fig. 1: *Film*, Samuel Beckett


Fig. 2: *Caché*, Michael Haneke

The eye becomes a troubling figure in the twentieth century as its human function gets tethered to the machine: vision is no longer limited to the eye of the beholder—often figured as that of the poet or artist—but rather extended to technologies of perception that both produce and record images for public consumption. What occurs simultaneously with the mechanization of the eye is a questioning of the relation between the self and the image in the field of representation.[85] Virginia Woolf argues that the "art of the cinema" poses problems for "the English unaesthetic eye" as it is bombarded with images that it cannot synthesize on its own. Woolf writes: "The eye licks it all up instantaneously […]. The eye is in difficulties. The eye wants help" (180). The crisis of the "ordinary" eye, as Woolf describes it, is instantiated by the arrival of its mechanical counterpart, the eye of the camera, a "parasitic" eye that threatens to undo modernist constructions of the subject as coherent and unified, positing something of the *other* about it (183). Samuel Beckett's *Film* (1965) and Michael

Haneke's *Caché* (2005) explore the crisis of perception that emerges out of an encounter with the cinematic eye. This crisis of the eye as it is crucially invoked in the images above is also a crisis for the subject. First, the "huge menacing close-up of an eye" that casts its claustrophobic gaze out over its audience in the framing shot of Beckett's *Film* (Fig.1), performs an act of perception that Beckett simultaneously engages and attempts to deconstruct (Schneider 85). Yoking the human eye to the eye of the camera, Beckett's *Film* delivers a distinctly modernist theory of perception as the thing one can never escape. Haneke's *Caché* also positions itself within this paranoid modernist discourse, but with a discernible difference. The scene of looking that opens Haneke's film (Fig. 2) engages an eye that is never given to be seen but that is rather hidden, whose perspective is complicated by the articulation of myriad points of view. *Caché* therefore interrogates the inevitable failure of perception to produce a single, coherent truth as it considers the consequences of that failure both for the modern subject *and* for the construction of human history.

The image of the eye that opens *Film* is "held as long as possible […], opening to reveal the pupil" before it shuts, blinking three times and then dissolving into the first scene of the film: a shot of a brick wall with a texture that rhymes with that of the wrinkled lid (Beckett 12). Beckett's accompanying manuscript to *Film*, which is offered as a supplement to the visual images on screen, tells us that "the first view of above is by E motionless and searching with his eyes for O" (12). And so we enter *Film* through the cinematic eye (delineated, in Beckett's notes to *Film*, as character "E") that both produces and records the

narrative, inducing a feeling of paranoia in the subject being seen (depicted, in the context of *Film*, as character "O"). This framing shot also invokes Beckett's original title for the work, "The Eye," tracing a metamorphic movement from the human realm of perception to a mechanical realm, bringing the medium of representation into critical focus. The camera in *Film* replaces the human eye as the privileged instrument of sight, but in its position *as* instrument, this *mechanical* eye does not see for itself: it operates as a recorder or consumer of images, rather than as a conscious observer of them.

*Film* was Beckett's first and only cinematic script. Shot in black-and-white and silent with the exception of an urgent "shhhhhhh…" that emerges from the lips of a woman on the street, the short runs for a little over 20 minutes. Beckett's linear narrative is divided into three scenes as it follows O, played by comic actor Buster Keaton, clad in his trademark Stetson hat and dark overcoat, as he runs down an urban street alongside a wall, into a nondescript building, and up the stairs to a private room, all the time hiding his face from view. Once inside the room, O locks the door and is suddenly assaulted by "a room full of eyes" that he hurriedly attempts to get rid of: he shuttles animals out of the room, tears down an image of God that is hanging by a nail on the wall, and closes the curtains to avoid being seen from outside (Gontarski 187). O then settles into his rocking chair to look through a set of pictures that depict him at various stages of his life. The final photograph of O shows him as a grown man, with a patch over one eye. After pausing on this image for a moment, O suddenly begins tearing the photographs to pieces, tossing the remains on the floor. Viewers of *Film* witness

all of O's actions from the point of view of the camera—which I will now refer to (as Beckett does) as E, positioned at a forty-five degree angle behind O so as never to reveal his face.[86] As O begins to rock himself to sleep, E starts to rotate his position around the room and eventually winds up facing O straight on. The encounter that follows articulates the theory of perception that Beckett explicitly outlines in his manuscript: *esse est percipi—to be is to be perceived* (Beckett 11).

In the last few minutes of *Film*, E is finally given to be seen from the point of view of O. Beckett's scene plays out as follows:

> Long image of O, full-face, against ground of headrest, sleeping. E's gaze pierces the sleep, O starts awake, stares up at E. Patch over O's left eye now seen for the first time. Rock revived by start, stilled at once by foot to ground. Hand clutches armrests. O half starts from chair, then stiffens, staring up at E. Gradually that look. Cut to E, of whom this very first image (face only, against ground of tattered wall). It is O's face (with patch) but with very different expression, impossible to describe, neither severity nor benignity, but rather acute intentedness. […] Long image of the unblinking gaze. Cut back to O, still have risen, staring up, with that look. O closes his eyes and falls back in the chair, starting off rock. He covers his face with his hands. (Beckett 41-48)

What O encounters in this moment is not the image of the camera, but an image of Buster Keaton. O's final moment of revelation is also ours as he is struck by the image of his own eye staring back at him, an eye that projects the

inescapability of *self*-perception and which, in turn, exposes the self-reflexivity of *Film* itself. At the conclusion of *Film*, the image of the human eye from the opening shot returns, but this time the texture of the lid rhymes with that of the wrinkled hands of O, who has just shielded his eyes from his uncanny encounter with E. The words "FILM: by Samuel Beckett" are written across the black hole of the eye that appears in the center of the screen, once again marking the human eye as part of the cinematic apparatus, now archived as the aesthetic object, *Film*, and signed by its author, Samuel Beckett. The credits roll over this image of the open eye until, finally, the eye closes and the screen turns black.

The human eye of Beckett's *Film* is visually mapped onto the body of the film itself in the final moment of signature, inviting a doubling of the system of perception that *Film* attempts to expose through its cinematic vernacular, a doubling that is made explicit by the two viewing positions within the film. Beckett explains the effect of this double system of reference as such: "In order to be figured in the situation the protagonist is sundered into object [O] and eye [E], the former in flight, the latter in pursuit. It will not be clear until the end of the film that pursuing perceiver is not extraneous, but self" (11). Beckett's refusal of an outside, or "extraneous," point of view confirms his insistence on preserving *Film* as a self-contained system: the camera functions as both the mechanical apparatus that produces the narrative for audience consumption *and* as an inextricable part of the narrative itself. As such, *Film* can also be marked as an aesthetic artifact whose "climate," Beckett tells us, should not be understood as *reality*, but rather as an "unreality" that is "comic and unreal" (12). The very fact

that Beckett must insistently disavow the "reality" of his film, however, suggests that the threat of an intrusion of the real is always already pressing down upon this cinematic system, structuring the anxiety it incites.

In *Sexuality in the Field of Vision*, Jacqueline Rose offers a reading of film as a textual system that helps to formulate what is at stake in *Film*'s visual game of pursuit. Rose writes: "In the analysis of film as a textual system…it is a particular logic of desire that is identified as produced and reproduced by the cinematic machine. A logic through which cinema as an apparatus tries to close itself off as a system of representation, but constantly comes up against a vanishing point of the system where it fails to integrate itself and then has to refuse that moment of difference or trouble by trying to run away from it or by binding it back into the logic and perfection of the film system itself" (219). The framing image of the eye maintains the fantasy of *Film*'s autonomy as it purports to protect the audience from what Beckett identifies as the "anguish of perceivedness" experienced by O in his confrontation with E (11). Beckett's *Film* thus offers a cure for this anguish even as it produces it. Like O, the audience believes it can safeguard itself from the penetrating gaze of the eye by closing its own eyes to it: in effect, blinding itself to the experience of being perceived. But *Film*'s subsequent return to the penetrating eye after the narrative has seemingly come to a close reveals this closure to be impossible and illusory. The vulnerability to the outside that is exposed by Beckett's cinematic eye is made even more explicit in Michael Haneke's *Caché*, a film whose roaming eye reveals

an irresolvable gap in the field of vision that Beckett continually attempts (yet ultimately fails) to cover up.

The opening sequence of Haneke's *Caché* (Fig. 2) establishes the first in a series of epistemological ruptures in the text through the (hidden) eye of the camera. Kalpana Rihita Seshadri remarks that what is important to note about *Caché* is "how the film addresses meaning and significance, how it wants us to look, what it makes us see and what it accomplishes as praxis in and as the act of filmmaking" (33). *Caché* tells the story of Georges and Anne Laurent, a Parisian couple who receive a series of anonymous deliveries in the form of videotapes and hand-drawn postcards. The videotapes show the outside of their home and record their comings and goings throughout the day. The images that often accompany the tapes are scrawled in a childlike hand and are violent in nature: the first postcard depicts a child with blood pouring out of his mouth; the second, a chicken with its head cut off, blood dripping from its severed neck. After viewing these drawings alongside a tape that shows the exterior of his childhood home, Georges begins to suspect that the anonymous sender is a man named Majid, an Algerian orphan who lived with Georges' family as a child but who was forced out of the home after Georges "told lies about him." The footage on the tape eventually leads Georges to Majid's apartment, where the two men have a series of conversations in which Majid denies any knowledge of the drawings or the tapes. Their final encounter ends with Majid's suicide: he slits his throat in front of Georges, stating simply, *I wanted you to be present*. This series of events is disrupted by scenes without origin or context—scenes that the film's critics have

described as flashbacks, dreams, and flash-forwards—that are never explained or resolved but that rather leave traces for the reader to follow through their echoes and repetitions throughout the film (*Caché*).

In place of a linear narrative, *Caché* offers its viewers a fragmented "non-narrative" that is motivated and suspended by the hidden camera whose eye pursues and antagonizes Georges and his family (Khanna 241). If *Caché* can be said to have a plot, then, that plot necessarily pivots on a missing link. The open question of who—or what—is behind the hidden camera is the foundation for what I am calling the crisis of *Caché*, a crisis that becomes crucial to the film's identity as it is continuously rewritten by the visual images it produces. In "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," Walter Benjamin asserts that "the formula in which the dialectical structure of film—film considered in its technological dimension—finds expression runs as follows. Discontinuous images replace one another in a continuous sequence" (340). This formula is useful in thinking about the way *Caché*'s structural integrity collapses through the intrusion of the hidden camera. While at first glance the film can be read as a detective story in which Georges, in the role of "private eye," resolves to uncover the identity of his mysterious caller, the film increasingly *dis*invests from solving that mystery as the seemingly conventional narrative of detection is disrupted by the cuts and playbacks in the body of the film itself (Sharrett 61). With this in mind, I return to the initial scene of looking—which is also a scene of detection—in order to explore how Haneke extends and challenges the cinematic vision at work in Beckett's *Film*.

In the opening sequence of the film, Georges Laurent looks down a Paris street outside his home (Fig 2). He has just watched a videotape that shows him leaving his home that morning and is attempting to locate the camera that captured him. Looking past Georges to the street sign in the upper right hand corner of the screen, one can see that the sign reads: *Rue des Iris*. While *Caché* does not engage the cinematic eye directly as *Film* does, its presence is marked by the word: *iris*. In *The Future of the Image*, Jacques Rancière discusses the relationship between sign and image as it emerges in art: "[…] signs are endowed with a presence and a familiarity that makes them more than tools at our disposal or a text subject to our decoding; they are inhabitants of our world […]." (35). The sign in this scene becomes a site of tension as it introduces the cinematic eye as an intruder. *Caché*'s hidden camera thus undoes the binary between perceiver and perceived that Beckett strictly enforces by introducing a third term into the equation, privileging an unstable viewing position.

*Caché*'s opening sequence establishes an immediate distrust of the cinematic eye as we, the viewers, recognize that our ability to see is being thwarted and that our perception of the scene—like Georges'—is always-already flawed. Ranjana Khanna writes of *Caché*: "Looking at looking, the camera on Rue des Iris scans the technology of looking itself. The different technologies of analysis and knowing reflect a different moment in the technology of Being and dwelling […]" (241). Khanna's attention to technology as the thing that incites a "different moment" of self-perception to emerge helps to articulate what is at stake for Georges in his failure to discover who is behind the tapes. What is most

troubling about the videotapes, of course, is that they have appeared out of nowhere: there is no*body* to take responsibility for the images they display. Jacques Lacan reminds us that: "In this matter of the visible, everything is a trap, and in a strange way—[…] *entrelacs* (interlacing, intertwining)" (93). The trap that *Caché* lures us into is both visual and psychological: the images that are offered as part of the narrative—or the so-called "reality" of the film—interact with scenes that seem to emerge out of Georges' unconscious. But the crisis that initially appears as a crisis of vision for Georges quickly becomes symptomatic of a larger national blindness that informs the film and that provides the political and historical subtext that is worth a second look.

The repressed event of *Caché* is the massacre that took place in Paris on October 17, 1961. This event took place during the Algerian war and began as a peaceful demonstration by supporters of the Algerian National Liberation Front. Under orders by Maurice Papon, the French police used physical force against the people, driving many of them to their deaths in the River Seine. The French government covered up police involvement in the event and the numbers of deaths suffered on that day remain undetermined. In her article on *Caché*, Martine Beugnet connects the suppression of this historical event by the French government to Haneke's technical employment of the hidden camera and the "blind spot"(s) it produces. Beugnet writes: " 'Blind spot': the expression aptly describes the treatment of the massacre of 1961—the event that brought the Algerian war to metropolitan France—and how, until recently, the circumstances of the death of over two hundred people, who had come to march peacefully in

Paris in support of the FLN…, have remained unspoken. Some of the bodies, thrown into the Seine, were never found. The expression also applies to the apparatus devised by Haneke to probe the covert effect of the silence and guilt generated, beyond the official censorship, by a nation's collective and individual amnesia" (228-29). In "From Rue Morgue to Rue des Iris," Ranjana Khanna also recognizes the relationship forged between France's colonial history and technology. Khanna writes: "*Caché* is ultimately about anxiety in relation to a history of colonial violence and the technology associated with it." But Khanna also argues that "the larger implication of France's relation to Algeria and its continued violence against Franco-Algerians is left unaddressed, as Majid's and his son's own roles are entirely defined once again by the strength of the inhuman anxiety of Georges and the French spectators" (243). Paul Gilroy agrees with Khanna's reading of *Caché*'s political investments. In his article "Shooting Crabs in a barrel," Gilroy argues that: "the unmourned and unremembered real event does a lot of narrative work for Haneke. Many people involved in building a habitable multicultural Europe will feel that there are pressing issues of morality and responsibility involved in raising that history only to reduce it to nothing more than a piece of tragic machinery in the fatal antagonism that undoes *Caché*'s protagonists. The dead deserve better than that" (233). While this subtext cannot be ignored as it articulates a version of the past that figures prominently in Georges' unconscious (as well as, one could argue, the unconscious of the film), it cannot account for all that is given to be seen. The intrusion of the technological,

then, suggests that what is recorded as history is always brought to bear on the present—but that this record, this archive, is always already incomplete.

The biological structure of the iris as a protective shield or defense mechanism is significant to consider at this point. The function of the iris is most often understood in relation to that of the shutter of a camera as its muscles frame the pupil, or aperture (*opening*), in the center of the eye, and assist in the regulatory process of opening and shutting, protecting the eye against contaminants from the outside.[87] Considering the function of the iris in relation to its appearance in both *Film* and *Caché* helps us to understand the realm of perception as something that contains a threat within it, a threat that must be protected against. In "Freud and the Scene of Writing" Jacques Derrida links the protective function of the eye to that of a "celluloid sheet" which metonymically corresponds to the surface of film itself (*Writing and Difference* 224). Derrida writes: "There is no writing which does not devise some means of protection, *to protect against itself*, against the writing by which the 'subject' is himself threatened as he lets himself be written: *as he exposes himself*" (224). In other words, in the context of Beckett's *Film*, the very act of shielding himself from view, O exposes his own paranoid perception of the image that he sees and recognizes as his own. Similarly, in continuously declaring himself the innocent victim of a terrorist attack, Haneke's Georges stages his victimization and exposes his vulnerability. What Beckett and Haneke bring into focus in different ways is precisely how technologies of perception antagonize us into playing defense.

***The Anguish of Perceivedness***

Looking through the Beckettian eye as it conveys a modernist preoccupation with perception and representation establishes a framework for reading Haneke's *Caché*, which I have already suggested both engages with and challenges modernist theories of perception through its relation to visual technology. In *Senses of Modernism*, Sara Danius writes: "As visual perception is increasingly divorced from knowing, unexplored paths open up; and in the artistic and cultural realm, the inherent value of perception exercised for perception's sake…gains so much ground as to become something like a modernist imperative" (20). It is this imperative that Beckett embraces in *Film*. Distinctly modern in its assertion that *to be is to be perceived—esse est percipi—Film* interrogates the limits of perception and the effects of those limits on the construction of the modern (paranoid) subject. In *Film*, Beckett's O demonstrates his paranoia through continued attempts to hide himself from view, maintaining the imposed "angle of immunity" between himself and the camera (E). This angle and its offer of immunity to the subject who stays within its limited range positions E as a contaminant in the system. In a pre-production discussion with director Alan Schneider, Beckett described the "space" of *Film* as a "function of two perceptions, both of which are diseased…[which] enable one to deform normal vision" (qtd. in Gontarski 187). As such, *Film* can be said to be produced out of and structured by a deformity or debilitating *infection* given to be seen by the split produced within this double system of reference: between O and E. The attempt on the part of O to avoid contact will eventually prove impossible as it

becomes clear that Beckett's protagonist is always-already captured by the I/eye of self-perception.

The "angle of immunity" between E and O is a space within the text that cannot be resolved or sutured and that therefore poses a technical difficulty that *Film* both creates and struggles to overcome. Beckett acknowledges this tension in his notes when he introduces O's realm of perception into the script. Beckett writes: "In the third part there is O's perception of room and contents and at the same time E's continued perception of O. This poses a problem of images which I cannot solve without technical help" (11-12). Beckett's attention to the "problem of images" also posits the epistemological crisis of the film, which is reflected in an earlier assertion in the manuscript that "no truth value attaches to above, regarded as of merely structural and dramatic convenience" (11). Even as *Film* lays claim to a theory of perception that situates the viewer/reader on stable ground, it simultaneously calls that theory into question by refusing to affirm it as truth. Beckett categorizes this tension within *Film* in his pre-production notes to the text: "we're trying to find the technical equivalent, a visual, technical, cinematic equivalent for visual appetite and visual distaste. A reluctant, a disgusted vision, and a ferociously voracious one" (Beckett qtd. in Gontarski 192). Beckett's language echoes that of his contemporary Virginia Woolf as he presents the cinematic apparatus as an aggressive consumer of images, whose presence elicits disgust and hesitation in the Other caught in its gaze.

Vacillating between these binary positions of consumer and consumed, between seeing and being-seen, *Film* refuses to anchor its audience in a single

realm of perception but rather insists on shifting perspectives between these two points without hesitation, forcing the viewer to experience what Beckett calls the "anguish of perceivedness" along with O (11). In the final scene of *Film*, Beckett identifies the moment of self-perception as a shocking and violent event, one that threatens to undo the subject-being-seen. Lacan describes the moment of *seeing oneself seeing oneself* as an avoidance of the function of the gaze, an effect of the narcissism constitutive of the subject. While the subject unconsciously knows that he is always in the position of being seen, he must not be shown or made aware of this position. Lacan writes: "The world is all seeing, but it is not exhibitionistic—it does not provoke our gaze. […] What does this mean, if not that, in the so called waking state, there is an elision of the gaze, and an elision of the fact that not only does it look, it also *shows*" (75, *my emphasis*). Throughout Beckett's short, O anxiously checks his pulse, a move that suggests that his time is running out, that there is something inherently threatening in this game of pursuit. Inviting the audience to participate in the game through the double realm of perception, Beckett "exploits the potential of his medium, using the camera as a relentless, omnipresent perceiver" (Gontarski 110).

While Beckett interrogates film as a medium that has the capacity to undo the subject who sees himself being seen but that simultaneously allows for the fantasy of escape or the elision of that gaze, Haneke's *Caché* refuses to articulate any stable viewing position, leaving open the gap in perception as the structuring principle of the film itself. Haneke insists that there cannot be a clear distinction between inside and outside: his multiple viewing positions create a layering of

impressions that resist the possibility of closure. This distinction becomes clear when considering the conclusion of both films in relation to one another. If Beckett's *Film* closes itself off from the possibility of a future to come by (literally) closing its eye(s) on the viewer, *Caché* presents a more complicated and open-ended conclusion as its "images 'refuse' to comply: behind the closing credits, the questioning gaze not only persists but affirms its capacity to reinvent itself" (Beugnet 230). If Beckett's *Film*, as aesthetic object, asks to be read as complete, the intrusion of the "extraneous" eye that operates beyond the narrative makes its apparent autonomy suspect. Haneke's film, on the other hand, explicitly rejects the position of aesthetic object in favor of producing something out of that aesthetic, an excess or remnant that allows for a change of course, for a shift in perspective without bounds. But while Georges, like O, closes himself off from the realm of perception by closing himself in at the end of *Caché* (he takes two pills, draws the curtains and gets under the bedcovers after removing his clothing in an act that is suggestive of either a return to the womb or to death) the film does not conclude with this image. Instead, the viewer is offered two more scenes that both produce a return to the past and articulate the promise of a future.

The first of the two concluding scenes return to Georges' childhood home. Filmed from a fixed point of view, the camera shows us the moment of Majid's forced departure from the Laurent's estate, a moment that the film references several times before its arrival on screen. A car drives up to the front door and a woman emerges from the passenger side to enter the house. The driver of the car gets out and lingers until the woman returns, carrying a suitcase, with the young

Majid. Majid attempts to flee from the scene, running and screaming "I don't want to go!" as the driver chases him down and pulls him into the car. As the car drives away, we hear the muffled cries of the boy pleading to be released from his prison. Throughout this scene the camera remains fixed and immobile, lingering on the Laurent estate for approximately ten seconds after the car has gone before cutting to the final scene.

The final shot of the film shows the exterior of a school from a fixed position on the street. This return—for we have seen this shot before—is *not* situated in time as either memory or present: rather, this scene contains within it a moment of inaccessibility that produces (and maintains) an irresolvable gap or *openness* in the text. As the students file out, Georges's son Pierrot is approached by Majid's son. The two walk down the stairs together, Majid's son's hand on Pierrot's shoulder. Majid's son does most of the talking as Pierrot stands still and listens, occasionally nodding his head. Their conversation is otherwise unreadable. At the end of the conversation, the boys part company: Pierrot returns to his friends on the stairs, and Majid walks out of the shot, alone. Once both sons have disappeared from view, the credits scroll over the scene as it continues to play out. Other students meet and depart while cars pass by on the street. The scene eventually fades to black.

Many modernist-minded critics attempt to use this final exchange between sons to create closure in the narrative, suggesting that the interaction identifies the two boys as co-conspirators in the sending of the tapes: mystery solved. Other critics like Robin Wood, however, argue that this final long shot produces "a

revelation…that actually reveals very little" (36). I argue that the ambiguity of the scene suggests that there is something that cannot be contained within the space of the film itself, an excess that, in its very exposure as such, maintains the epistemological gap that *Caché* is structured upon, a gap that reflects modernist anxieties about the field of perception that we see arise through Beckett's *Film*, but whose exposure simultaneously requires a future to come in order to stabilize it. But what *is* this future to come? Is it bleak, blind, and hopeless, as Georges' final moments on screen suggest? Or does this final scene expose what Paul Gilroy interprets as "a small fragment of liberating hope" in what Wood finally posits as "the possibility of collaboration, revolution, and renewal within a younger generation" (Gilroy 235; Wood 40)? In order to consider these questions, we must revisit Haneke's oeuvre and look at it from another angle.

***Michael Haneke is Watching You: Caché and the Paranoia of the Perception***

As a whole, Michael Haneke's cinema is preoccupied with the representation of events in the media and with the technologies of perception that inform and motivate this representation. Newsfeeds relating images of war and other acts of violence invade the domestic spaces of Haneke's films. Radio transmissions and television programs often serve as background noise to the scenes taking place, calling attention to the indifference with which such images are often received by the public.[88] Haneke's work responds to this indifference in multiple ways. *Benny's Video* explores the dangerous effect of our continuous exposure to acts of violence on screen through a boy's ambivalence towards his

own act of violence, an act that he records and plays back through a hand-held camera, reconfiguring the event as media spectacle. *Funny Games* turns this exploration into a public accusation, emphasizing the problem of the passive viewer who sees on-screen violence as entertainment, forcing its audience to take responsibility for the torturous acts performed before their eyes by making them participants in the event as it unfolds.[89] But perhaps the most direct articulation of the force behind Haneke's interrogation of the image *vis-à-vis* the event it represents is located in an early scene from *Code Unknown* in which actress Anne Laurent (Juliette Binoche) is auditioning for a role in a thriller. As she stares pale-faced into the camera during her screen shot, she asks her fictional captor: "What do you want?" (a question that will be echoed throughout Haneke's *Caché*). The reply, delivered in a monotonous tone from behind the camera, is simply: "I want to see your true face. Not your lies nor your tricks. A true expression. Be spontaneous. React to what's happening" (*Code Unknown*). This imperative to *react to what's happening* is what drives Haneke's oeuvre.[90] But it also anticipates the central crisis of his work, articulated through Anne's desperate response to her captor: *How?* This impossible question of *how to react to what's happening* is precisely the question that motivates Haneke's *Caché*. As an apparatus of surveillance and *archivization*—a term Jacques Derrida uses to identify a vertiginous process of excavation and suppression of information which becomes part of the structural apparatus of *Caché*—Haneke's camera and the visual record that it keeps mobilize a pervasive feeling of paranoia that exceeds the parameters of the film itself, destabilizing the boundaries by which Georges,

as the modern (paranoid) subject, constructs identity and understands his place in the world.

Paranoia emerges as a modernist phenomenon through cultural and theoretical engagements with technologies of perception—devices such as the telephone, tape recorder, and video camera—that have the capacity to record and transmit images across time and space. But the image is always already unstable in that it stands in for something other than itself. As such, the image not only invites the recognition of a *resemblance* between itself and the thing it represents but also, perhaps more importantly, it exposes a *difference* within the realm of perception in which it functions. This complexity of the image is articulated by Jacques Rancière, who describes images in art as "*operations* that produce a discrepancy, a dissemblance" (7 *my emphasis*). Reading the image as an operation that produces a *dissemblance* or an *othering* of what we perceive to be reality, rather than as an object that confers a stable meaning or reference upon it, Rancière offers a useful diagnosis of the crisis of perception that informs Haneke's *Caché*. What is given to be seen in *Caché* are images that fail to produce or sustain a coherent narrative, operating in between the world of reality and the world of fiction, exposing a gap between what we see and what we think we know, refusing a singular reading of the event or the reality that it claims to represent.

Haneke's cinema continuously exposes itself as a manipulative force that blurs the boundaries between reality and a kind of "unreality" through the destabilization of the image. An example of this occurs at the end of Haneke's

*Funny Games*, when Paul grabs the remote control from the table and rewinds the scene that the audience has just witnessed, only to play it back with a different result. This moment of rewind will return with a difference in Haneke's *Caché*. But it is also a moment of self-reference where the image on screen reveals itself as part of the cinematic apparatus and therefore asserts its function outside the realm of reality as such, articulating the perversion of playback discussed in Chapter Two. Paul's final assertion that "the fiction is real" or, rather, that it is "just as real as the reality which you see likewise" articulates the crisis that the cinematic image presents for its viewer (*Funny Games*). Haneke's refusal of the image to produce something *knowable*, to ground its reader in a comfortable or familiar space, challenges its viewer to look awry.[91]

Let us return, then, as the film symptomatically does, to the opening sequence of *Caché* in order to see how the camera maintains its encounter with the gap that structures the film as a whole. The scene opens with a long shot of the exterior of the Laurents' house, filmed from a fixed position on a narrow street. The camera remains stable for approximately two minutes as the opening credits roll over the image. During this time, very little out of the ordinary occurs on screen: men and women pass by the house on their way to work, cars and bicyclists move in and out of the frame.[92] But after the opening credits have faded from view, an exchange of voices is heard over the shot, disrupting the passive experience of surveillance taking place. "Well?" Georges' voice asks. "Nothing," replies Anne. The image that we see suddenly becomes something other than originally perceived: the audience comes to realize that what they are watching is

*not* simply the establishing shot of the film but rather footage from a videotape being screened—and subsequently rewound and fast-forwarded—by the characters within the film itself. As Georges fast-forwards through what we now understand to be footage from a hidden camera (presumably meant, as Georges later explains to his friends, "to show us we're under surveillance") he suddenly pauses the tape on an image of himself leaving the house and walking into the path of the camera. Georges asks: "How come I didn't see him? It will remain a mystery." Turning off the tape, Georges states: "It's dumb. I don't know what to say" (*Caché*). Georges does not have the language to articulate what he has just seen: he is dumbstruck by the event of seeing himself caught on tape.

What is at stake for Georges in this moment of seeing himself being seen is an uninvited confrontation with something outside his realm of perception that subsequently poses a threat to his subjectivity. It is in this moment, Jacques Lacan reminds us, that "the process of this meditation, of this reflecting reflection, goes so far as to reduce the subject…to a power of annihilation" (81). Georges' crisis is thus induced by the paranoid confirmation that his vision of himself is not his own. His position as subject/perceiver has been usurped by a mysterious eye that reconfigures his place as object of an inapprehensible gaze. If Haneke's cinema is not dependent on the subject-supposed-to know, that in fact refuses a stable subject position by constantly threatening to annihilate it, then the camera is the site of a collapse of the subject into object or what Giorgio Agamben, following Foucault, calls "pure function or pure position" (140-41). In *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive*, Agamben asks his reader to weigh the

consequences of this non-position: "what does it mean to be subject to desubjectification? How can a subject give an account of its own ruin?" (142). This is also a question that haunts *Caché*. Seeing himself being seen, Georges begins to come undone: he is struck dumb, unable to speak, caught in the impossible gaze of a hidden camera. In every failed attempt on the part of Georges to solve the mystery of the tapes and their sender, Haneke tells us: *there is no there there*. The film relies on this indiscernability, embracing what Jacqueline Rose calls its "vanishing point" and causing the boundaries that we see so clearly enforced in Beckett's *Film*—boundaries between surface and depth, inside and outside, self and other—to break down (219).

Georges' reaction to the hidden camera is further complicated by his role as host and editor of his own television program. As a celebrated television personality, Georges is accustomed to seeing himself on screen. But there is a difference between his televised persona and what is offered up as the "real" Georges Laurent, the unscripted and raw image of himself that is revealed by the hidden camera. Laurent, in his role as celebrity, is hidden behind the camera, protected and sheltered by the constructed personality he performs. As editor, Georges is able to control the image of himself that others see. In a scene that takes place in the editing room at his studio, for example, Georges watches a tape of a recent show that he has just finished recording. Georges stops the tape short, claiming that the discussion is becoming "too theoretical" for the viewing audience and suggests that they cut to a more accessible portion of the conversation (*Caché*). At this point, it is clear that Georges knows how to

manipulate film, how to change the narrative taking place through the act of cutting. Ranjana Khanna argues that "Georges is the only figure who can manipulate or cut and splice images. His dreams, his video-lined lounge, his career which is both to host and to edit programmes and the world in which he lives, show him to possess the power of cutting (whether film, a throat, or a spectacle) more than anyone else in the film" (243). But in his own life, Georges is unable to control the eyes that watch him. Caught on tape, Georges is taken out of his element and forced to see himself in a world of someone else's making. So in the very first minutes of *Caché*, before the audience has even *laid eyes* on Georges Laurent, his protective screen is torn down, his safety net pulled out from under him, and he is faced with an irreconcilable gap in his frame of reference.

Georges' refusal of the theoretical in favor of a more surface or accessible discussion in the scene at his editing desk is tethered to his attempts to solve the mystery, to make it fit, and to shut it down, which he finally does in his confrontation with Majid's son, a scene that also takes place in his studio office. Refusing to listen to what the boy has to say, Georges tells him: "The police corroborated my statement. It was suicide. Now get out of my face" (*Caché*). This moment demonstrates Georges ability to play defense: he "make[s] the final cut and write[s] Majid's suicide into the script as if it were Majid's refusal of Georges and a threat to him once again" (Khanna 243-44). In Georges' moments of cutting, the film calls attention to its own manipulation, or, to what I will finally posit vis-à-vis Derrida, its own *archival* strategies. Derrida suggests that what is "proper to the archive" is not "so-called live and spontaneous memory, but rather

a certain hypomnesic and prosthetic experience of the technical substrate" (25). In other words, while Georges wants to control the images that are being produced through the hidden camera—to become the *maker* of his own archive—this act is refused by the film's own process of archivization, a process which insists on merging the past with the present, the image on tape with the "live" performance. What is produced out of this merger is not an aesthetic *object* but an aesthetic *process*: *Caché*, as archiving archive, produces a multi-layered and tangled web of images that resist the possibility of closure. Michael Rothberg states: "Haneke's approach here is not subtle but suggestive. Through mise-en-scene, he foregrounds framing and, especially, the interpenetration of different frames of reference. […]: the concatenation of media forms embodies both the specificity and the interference of different histories as well as the vexed relationship between public and private space and between everyday life and extreme violence" (182). Through its articulation of multiple histories and interpenetration of multiple frames of reference, *Caché* continually makes, unmakes, and remakes itself through its leaps across time and space, bringing the past to bear upon the present. The possibility of perception explored in Beckett's *Film*—the possibility of occupying two separate viewing positions at once—is multiplied in *Caché* through this process, turning film into archive.

### *The Past Becoming Present Becoming Future: Caché and the Archive*

Giorgio Agamben reads the archive as a "system of relations between the said and the unsaid" (145). In *Archive Fever*, Jacques Derrida complicates this

reading as he argues that the systemization of the archive simultaneously insists on an outside that structures the archive as a whole: "*There is no archive without a place of consignation, without a technique of repetition, and without a certain exteriority. No archive without outside*" (11). Taking these two notions of the archive to bear on *Caché*, we can begin to see the ways in which Haneke positions his film as a visual archive. The hidden camera functions as the figure of exteriority that both informs and structures the film: its roaming eye reframes, resconstructs, and recontextualizes the narrative through an almost obsessive series of repetitions and returns. The film's opening image of the exterior of the Laurent's house becomes the location out of which the archive makes its appearance—the address to which archival objects (postcards, videotapes) are sent. It is also the image to which the film symptomatically returns.

Jacques Derrida asserts that "the archive takes place at the place of originary and structural breakdown […]. [It] always works, and *a priori*, against itself" (11-12). Working against itself, *Caché* comments on the boundaries of vision and its consequences by projecting images—conscious and unconscious, fixed and mobile—that disrupt the film's sense of time and place as logical or coherent. The Laurent's house can be understood as a site of archivization within the film when considered alongside Derrida's etymological discussion of archive as *arkhe*: "initially a house, a domicile, an address[93] […]. [It is] in this domiciliation, in this house arrest, that archives take place. This dwelling, this place where they dwell permanently, marks this institutional passage from the private to the public, which does not always mean from the secret to the

nonsecret" (2-3). The interior of the Laurent's home is a claustrophobic, windowless space containing the stuff that archives are made of: books clutter shelves that stretch all the way up to the ceiling; a television occupies a central place in the living room; papers and parcels collect in piles by the front door. The private space of the Laurent's home is therefore marked as archive by the impressions it receives from the outside world.[94] These impressions are not limited to material possessions, but extend to memories produced out of the strange deliveries that arrive on the doorstep, memories that *Caché* reproduces alongside footage from the mysterious videotapes.

Merging media and memory, Haneke's camera participates in an on-going process that refuses narrative coherence, offering instead "an insistent impression through the unstable feeling of a shifting figure, of a schema, or of an in-finite or indefinite process" (Derrida 29). The series of images that recall Georges' repressed memories of his antagonistic childhood behavior towards Majid register throughout the film in different forms, bringing us deeper and deeper into its labyrinth in a "disjointedness that has a necessary relationship with the structure of archivization" (Derrida 29). For example, the image of a child with blood pouring from his mouth accompanies several of the mysterious videotapes and rhymes with a moving shot of a young boy coughing up blood, a shot that seemingly emerges out of nowhere, spliced in between static shots of the Laurent's house at night.[95] The origin of this scene is never explained, but it produces a nightmare image of Majid as a figure against which Georges positions himself. This image is inextricably tethered to the Derridean archive as it

obsessively generates repetitions and returns and produces an excess that refuses its totalization.

Derrida explains that "the conditions of archivization implicate all the tensions…notably those which make it into a movement…the concept of the archive must inevitably carry in itself…an unknowable weight" (29-30). Georges' repeated attempts to figure out what his mysterious caller wants from him are indications of the effect of this "unknowable weight." In his first confrontation with Majid, whom he assumes is responsible for sending the tapes, Georges aggressively asks: "What do you want from me? It's a game, is that it? I don't want to play" (*Caché*). This scene is delivered to us twice: once in "real time" and once in playback as we watch the event unfold through the lens of the hidden camera in the room, a repetition that again reveals the process of archivization that structures the film. Georges Laurent is the camera's supposed victim, but there are signs within the film's repetition of the scene that suggest otherwise. As Georges sees himself on the videotape, it suddenly becomes clear that *he* is the threat, that *he* is the aggressor and not the victim in this game. This moment of self-perception initiates a series of events that eventually lead to Georges' defeat. Recognizing that he will never see what's hidden, that he will never arrive at the truth behind this game of visual pursuit, Georges attempts to escape the realm of perception by blinding himself to it.[96] But despite his efforts, something remains. That remainder is articulated through the figure of the witness.

The central act of witnessing that takes place in *Caché* occurs with the event of Majid's suicide. Majid marks Georges as witness when he phones in a

request for Georges to be present at his apartment, a request that Georges fulfills. Upon arriving at the apartment, Georges asks Majid why he was invited there, a question that echoes Georges' previous interrogation of Majid: *what do you want from me?* The answer that emerges from Majid's lips is a statement—*I wanted you to be present*—followed by a cut as Majid slits his own throat and ends his life. This scene is shown only once in the film, through a fixed camera positioned to face the door of the apartment, the same position from which the earlier playback of Georges' first confrontation with Majid was shot. Georges, as witness, recounts the event to Anne after returning home, producing its inevitable repetition. Shocked, Anne asks her husband: "what are you going to do?" Georges does not respond—he cannot seem to find the words.[97] Georges' subsequent lie to his wife about where he has been since the event took place (he says "nowhere" when, in fact, he has been to the cinema) is worth reflection. Acknowledging the gap in this testimony by showing us where Georges has been, the camera takes on the role of Agamben's complete witness: "the one we cannot see" (162). The thing that remains in *Caché*—the only thing that we can finally be sure of—is the camera's (hidden) presence, the eye that perpetuates the process of archivization as it opens up possibilities for either a repetition or a future to come.

So now we must ask: what kind of future does *Caché* offer its viewer? What is produced out of our encounter? Agamben suggests that the space of the remnant (which, I suggest, is taken up by the cinematic eye) is always a redemptive space: "the remnant appears as a redemptive machine allowing for the salvation of the very whole whose division and loss it had signified" (163). The

possibility of what Agamben articulates as redemption is certainly one way of reading *Caché*. But I would argue that the conclusion of the film is more Derridean in what it promises. "The archive," Derrida writes, "is not only the place for stocking and for conserving an archivable content of the past which would exist in any case, such as, without the archive, one still believes it was or will have been. No, the technical structure of the *archiving* archive also determines the structure of the *archivable* content even in its very coming into existence and in its relationship to the future. The archivization produces as much as it records the event" (16-17). Following Derrida, Haneke's film suggests that there *is* a future to be seen, but that future is always already *in the making*. *Caché*, as archiving archive, "produces more archive" and invites a reconsideration of the construction of individual and collective histories as they are informed by technologies of perception (Derrida 68). Finally, the film invites us to see how history and memory are inextricably bound to visual technologies and representations; to experience how these images interact with one another, to respond to a past that is not fixed in time but that moves steadily towards a future; and to understand how these technologies help to construct the archive(s) that is never complete but that nonetheless demands us to respond without telling us precisely how.

***Conclusion: Why Caché? Why Now?***

In an interview about the relationship between *Caché* and its historical underpinnings, Haneke states that "I don't want my film to be seen as specifically

a French problem. It seems to me that, in every country, there are dark corners—dark stains where questions of collective guilt become important. I'm sure […] there are other parallel examples of dark stains on the collective unconscious" (Porton 50). This statement echoes Agamben's haunting description of the archive as "the dark margin encircling and limiting every concrete act of speech. […] it is the fragment of memory that is always forgotten in the act of saying 'I'" (144). The epistemological crisis of modernity that has been explored throughout this dissertation finally manifests itself in *Caché*'s camera as archival device, extending the boundaries of our inquiry beyond modernism and beyond the twentieth century, making it heard across national, cultural and political spheres. As Michael Rothberg suggests: "This French film, made by an Austrian director born in Germany during World War II, also reveals how coming to terms with a particular past inevitably takes place within the new multidirectional networks of the present" (181). How does *Caché* engage with this ever-changing network? Have we come anywhere after modernism—or are the preoccupations and anxieties around technologies that gnawed at the modernists still consuming us today? The final chapter will interrogate the concept of the network in an effort to answer these questions.

# Chapter Five

## Modernism's *Wake:* James Joyce and the worldwide connection

End here. Us then. Finn, again! Take. Bussoftlhee, mememormee!
Till thousendsthee. Lps. The keys to. Given! A way a lone a last a
loved a long the

James Joyce, *Finnegans Wake*

This passage marks the end of James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*. This ending, however, does not provide the comfort, satisfaction, or sense of accomplishment that one expects to feel upon reading the last words of one of the greatest literary works of all time: a novel that critics have called the "book of all books," but also "a book about a book, about Joyce's books, and about the nature and construction of books themselves" (Derrida "UG" 58; Theall 7). There is something missing here at the end that troubles the diligent reader. For despite its imperative to "end here" (full stop) the book does not end there. These are not its last words. Rather the book continues on to "us then" and demands that its reader "mememormee."

Rather than staging a quiet rebellion against this demand, closing the book and forever severing herself from the text, Joyce's diligent reader leaves the book open on her desk and stares at the page in front of her. Its final word—"the"—lingers there as if to taunt her. There is no subject, no punctuation (no stop) to follow. Only white space. The reader has worked hard to get to this point, but suddenly, at what should be the end of her journey, she is thrust out into the

openness of that blank page, abandoned by the text, left dangling in mid-sentence. What is she to do with this open work?

In *The Open Work* Umberto Eco cites *Finnegans Wake* as an example of a book that engages a "startling process of 'openness'" through the open sentence that marks both its beginning and its end, paradoxically framing the text within it (10). Eco articulates the tension produced by the open work as such: "the work is *finite* in one sense, but in another sense it is *unlimited*. Each occurrence, each word stands in a series of possible relations with all others in the text. […]. Ambitiously, the author intends his book to imply the totality of space and time, of all spaces and all times that are possible" (10). Similarly, Jacques Derrida, in a reading of Joyce's *Ulysses* as "an immense postcard," comments on the openness of that work as he argues that "any public piece of writing, any open text, is also offered like the exhibited surface, in no way private, of an open letter […]" ("UG" 30). Confronted with this openness, the diligent reader turns back to the beginning of the *Wake* in an effort to regain her ground. Here, she recovers the subject of the final sentence. She reads: "riverrun, past Eve and Adam's, from swerve of shore to bend of bay, brings us by a commodious vicus of recirculation back to Howth Castle and Environs" (*FW* 3). This moment of return provides temporary comfort for the reader of the *Wake*. But the desire for closure that prompted the return to the beginning is immediately refused the reader as the text initiates a "bend" that forces her into a "recirculation" of the work: "thithaways end to end and turning, turning and end to end hithaways" (*FW* 114). Umberto Eco articulates the vertiginous effect of this gesture as such: "the book is molded into a curve that

bends back on itself, like the Einsteinian universe" (10). Speaking more broadly about the process of re-reading Joyce to an audience of Joyce scholars at the 1984 International James Joyce Symposium in Frankfurt, Derrida acknowledges a similar sense of vertigo about the experience: "you go round in circles like hallucinators in a nightmare" ("UG" 50). And so, as our diligent reader discovers, the return to the beginning of the *Wake* does not offer the security of a tightly-knit conclusion (that *a-ha!* moment produced by the mystery-novel detective who cracks the code and closes the case) nor does it invite a peaceful escape into the tranquility of knowledge gained (*"I have read, therefore, I have learned!"*). Rather, the return takes the reader captive as it induces a shattering fall back into the text:

"bababadalgharaghtakamminarronnkonnbronntonnerronntuonnthunntrovarrhouna wnskawntoohoohoordenenthurnuk!"[98]

There is no end in sight for the falling reader. Or, perhaps, as Joyce's voices tell us: "no *one* end is known" (*FW* 48, *my emphasis*). The reader is caught in the *Wake* from which she cannot sleep: she lies awake, trapped in the Joycean net, going over and over the lines that hold her "captive in a language, writing, knowledge, and *even narration* network" (Derrida "UG" 48). But this trap also offers the reader another turn of the text, a recirculation that allows a second look, inviting a re-visioning of the text from another vantage point. The scene of reading staged here does not purport to offer an account of the universal experience of reading Joyce. Rather, it is a particular instance of reading meant to articulate how Joyce's literary and critical oeuvre functions like a network.

This chapter reads the network in Joyce to invite a broader consideration of modernism's role in the shaping of network culture. I argue that Joyce fashions his "Industry" as a system of communication founded on relations and connectivity, which anticipates the development of digital communities and social networking sites that embrace openness and multiplicity and privilege collective experience over the unique experience of the individual. *Finnegans Wake* is a paradigmatic site for this particular "exagmination"[99] of the concept of the network and emerging network culture as it offers a seemingly endless collection of letters, signs, and fragments and engages myriad cultures and traditions in anticipation of new modes of reading, writing, and sharing (ideas, knowledge, experience) in our contemporary age [100] (*FW* 497). The narrator of Finnegans Wake asks its reader: "Can you rede…its world?" In response to its own question, Joyce's text replies: "It is the same told of all. Many." (18). The difficulties encountered in *rede-ing* the *Wake* are effects of the text's insistence on and interaction with the many, an engagement with a network of disparate voices extending across time and space that resist being read as one ("for if the hand was one, the minds of active and agitated were more than so") and that sprout what Deleuze and Guattari identify as "multiple roots…shatter[ing] the linear unity of the word, even of language" (*FW* 114; *ATP* 6). This refusal of linearity in favor of an engagement with the multiple is crucial to the experience of the network that motivates my current investigation.

My reading of Joyce as a paradigmatic model for network-thinking gives us new purchase on the contemporary turn towards global modes of reading in the

field of modernist studies. Jacques Derrida claims that "Joyce laid stakes on the modern university, but he challenges it to reconstitute itself after him. At any rate he marks the essential limits" ("UG" 49). In recent years, increased scholarly attention to both the limits and the sustainability of modernism in a global context has given way to new waves of criticism and innovative critical and pedagogical approaches to modernist studies that explore concepts of expansion, plurality, intertextuality, globalization, cosmopolitanism, and "planetarity"[101]. While Joyce's engagement with notions of multiplicity and multi-directionality at the height of modernist experimentation and revolution is certainly nothing new, my argument for Joyce and his self-proclaimed "Industry" as an exemplary model for considering how forms of network-thinking were already at work within the historical period of modernism opens up possibilities for the creation of new networks within the field. As Derek Attridge suggests "there is a sense…that with each successive work Joyce increased the openness of his writing, until he created in *Finnegans Wake* a richness of texture and reference that allows any reader to recognize familiar items and begin to construct a narrative chain or a thematic network out of them" (32). My focus on the network as an extension of modernism's engagement with machines, explored throughout the preceding chapters in various forms and figurations, resonates with renewed force today as modernist scholars promise to reenergize the field through the revision, recovery, and exchange of literary and critical works from across the world, works that are made even more accessible through digital lines of communication.[102] Taking up Joyce's challenge to confront the multiple and the indeterminate, to lose ourselves

(if only temporarily) in the complexity and ambiguity of the open sentence, and to reconfigure our relation to both the literary text and to the political, cultural, and commercial systems in which it circulates, this chapter positions modernism both during and after Joyce as itself a generative and evolving network, a machine of machines that motivates and mobilizes what Derrida calls the "in-finite and indefinite process" of a rich and productive archive in the making.[103]

***Net Work: Part One***

To engage the network we must first be willing to become part of its machinery, to fall, to fail, and to run into ourselves as we move "furrowards bagawards" through time and space (*FW* 18). But before looking at specific examples from Joyce's oeuvre that demonstrate how it functions like a network, we must first understand both the structure and the properties of the network that Joyce and, by extension, modernism engages. Of course, one cannot expect to represent all of the possibilities opened up by the network in a simple definition. As Susan Stanford Friedman asserts: "definitions spawn plurality in the very act of attempting to herd meaning inside consensual boundaries. Definitions mean to fence in, to fix, and to stabilize. But they often end up being fluid, in a destabilized state of ongoing formation, deformation, and reformation that serves the changing needs of the moment" ("Definitional Excursions" 497). I want to offer then, as a starting point, a preliminary set of definitions for our consideration with the caveat that these definitions will be complicated, reconsidered and potentially prove insufficient as our reading develops.

This section—*Net Work*—borrows its title from Mark C. Taylor's reading of Frank Gehry's Guggenheim Museum Bilbao in *The Moment of Complexity*.[104] Taylor's work considers complexity as crucial to the formation and understanding of network culture. In this particular section, Taylor describes how the construction of Gehry's Guggenheim Museum Bilbao in Spain takes the structure of the grid characteristic of modernist architecture and re-imagines it as a network composed of "forms that are dynamic rather than rigid, organic rather than mechanical, complex rather than simple" (41). Taylor describes the effect of entering into this dynamic, organic, and complex network by offering an account of the visitor's experience in the museum. Taylor writes:

> Descending the sloping stairs, one enters a space that is futuristic yet strangely familiar. The exterior steel and glass as well as the rich beige limestone are repeated inside, thereby creating an interplay of interiority and exteriority that simultaneously dissolves and maintains the walls. The resulting forms range from the rectilinear to the curvilinear as well as from the small and intimate to the vast and overwhelming. Though clearly distinct, these forms remain intricately interconnected; indeed, it is precisely their complicated relations that articulate their distinguishing differences. The complex structure of the museum is not quite in equilibrium and keeps everyone who roams through it slightly off balance. Since the forms are irregular and their relation

> unpredictable, the possibility of surprise lurks around every corner. (43-44)

This description articulates specific qualities of the network that this chapter will address. For example, the network can take on multiple forms: its irregularities and complex curves keep the visitor in this particular example in a perpetual state of imbalance. Since the museum is first and foremost an architectural structure (a container or storage space for works of art), what we expect to experience upon entering the museum is a sense of stability—we think we know what we're getting into. But the architectural design of this particular museum invites a renegotiation of space that allows for the more abstract experience of being in the network. The experience of being in the network is both an interactive and an unstable one: it has the potential to change with every movement or step. In this respect, the network carries within itself the element of surprise. The shock of the transformative potential of the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao's interior space is what makes the experience walking through it both stimulating and overwhelming. What I want to take out of Taylor's reading of the Guggenheim, then, is his sense of the museum as an "emergent and transient" space, a network that reinforces the play between openness and closure encountered by the reader of *Finnegans Wake*.

The *Oxford English Dictionary* offers a more definitive reading of the network and its properties:

> **network (*n*):** a (1) set or assemblage of things connected, associated, or interdependent, so as to form a complex unity; a

> whole composed of parts in orderly arrangement according to some scheme or plan; rarely applied to a simple or small assemblage of things; (2) The whole scheme of created things, the universe; (3) The prevailing political, economic, or social order, esp. regarded as oppressive; the Establishment.

This set of definitions reinforces some of the properties of the network from our previous example of the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao as it articulates several additional features for our consideration. First, the network is large in scope. Like the universe (recall Eco's reading of the *Wake* here), it contains "a whole scheme of created things." It is orderly and schematic, yet complex. Its complexity emerges in the arrangement of its parts, which are generative and linked to one another by association. One might read this associative property as a metonymic chain: one word leads to another which leads to another in a series of on-going relations without hierarchal distinction. As a whole composed of parts, the network can be read as a machine of machines that perpetuates its own generation and sustainability. But within this seemingly endless space of possibilities, the network maintains an insistence on unity that affirms its relation to institutionalized structures of power. Considering the network as a dominant force or power structure, I now want to think about the oppressive nature of the network as it produces a sense of entrapment. Thinking about the play between openness and entrapment returns us to our reading of Joyce.

The feeling of entrapment—of being caught in the "net" of the network—is the very foundation on which Joyce constructs his legacy as the master of his

art. It is also what breeds "admiring resentment" among critics who are unable to declare with confidence that they have "read Joyce" but who must instead "stay on the edge of reading" him, forever stranded "on the brink of another possible immersion," at risk of falling back into the text (Derrida "TW" 148). Upon his first reading of *Ulysses*, T.S. Eliot famously remarked: "I hold this book to be the most important expression which the present age has found; it is a book to which we are all indebted and from which none of us can escape" ("*Ulysses*, Order and Myth" 221). Eliot declares us forever "indebted" to Joyce, marking him with the celebrity status that endures today.[105] Crucial to point out, however, is that Eliot's articulation of the inescapability of the book and the debt that Joyce's text commands only reinforces the feeling of entrapment that results in what Derrida calls resentment and what other critics have classified as anxiety, frustration, jealousy, and even hatred.[106] But regardless of how we *feel* about Joyce, the general consensus among readers is that there is something about his work that continues to pull us in and make us want to read and write more, to read past the end, and to begin again. This tension of the push and pull—a pushing away from the text in resentment or frustration at what we do not know or cannot understand within it and the simultaneous pull of the text that feeds our desires to keep reading in order to master it—is the very essence of Joyce's difficulty.

### *Thread, Stitch and Weave: The Network in the Making*

In "Hating Joyce Properly" Sean Latham argues that in order to think about how to read Joyce in the twenty-first century, we must reconsider his place

in modernist studies. Latham writes: "Joyce must become for us less the singular artificer whose pared nails we carefully gather, than one interlocutor among many in a much larger cultural and historical conversation" (122). Latham's imperative to make Joyce "one among many" ushers us out of the self-enclosed Industry that Joyce and his critics instantiate and towards the foundation of a more expansive modernist network: a productive, non-hierarchical, and ever-evolving space of critical inquiry founded on a system of relations for building new cultural and political communities of thought. But before we can make Joyce "one of us" and explore the possibilities offered by a modernist network in which Joyce is positioned alongside—rather than above—his contemporaries and critics, I want to think about how the mechanics of that network are already employed in the construction of the Joyce Industry. This strategy necessarily entails keeping Joyce on his pedestal for a little while longer in order to examine how his Industry comes into being.

Joyce scholarship is saturated with references to the machine.[107] Scholars of the *Wake* in particular expose the text for its operation as a self-referential system of communication, "an engine or machine of eternal return—'the seim anew'—grounded in the body of the imaginary dreamer(s), which is itself machinic" (Theall 9). According to Derrida, Joyce's text has the generative power of a "1000th generational computer…beside which the current technology of our computers and our micro-computerified archives and our translating machines remains a *bricolage* of a prehistoric child's toys" ("TW" 147). There seems to be nothing new to add to this endless stream of machine-based metaphors that

Joyce's work elicits. But pushing the metaphor of the machine a bit further, Jean-Michel Rabaté argues that with Joyce "the metaphor of the machine describes not only the book's theoretical functioning, but also the labour which has constructed it" (81). The recurring references to the material of this labor—to scraps and yarns, or what Rabaté calls "thread, stitches and weave"—to describe both Joyce's texts and the experience of reading in and around them begin to imagine the structure of the network emerging out of the textual machine. Emphasizing the labor—or work—that the construction of the network demands, Rabaté makes the reader part of its production, adding another part to the whole.

As Sean Latham explains: "the labor of actually reading a text such as *Ulysses* or *Finnegans Wake* pales…in comparison to what has become the real task of the Joyce critic: sorting through the monographs, biographies, letters, notebooks, journal articles, and conference proceedings that constitute [the Industry's] ever-expanding output" (120). The "Joyce Industry" as it has been figured by Joyce and his critics as an impenetrable archive, houses not only Joyce's texts but also the texts about those texts, and the texts about *those* texts, *ad infinitum*. The sense of boundlessness that Latham attributes to the Joycean critic, who must wade through mounds of information on her quest for knowledge, is one of the qualities of the network that Joyce's Industry embraces. Insofar as it is perpetually in-the-making, the Joyce Industry has the potential to grow and change, to reconstitute itself by opening up, inviting new ideas, new readings, and new channels of communication to take form in and around it. The generative potential of this Industry gives way to the all-too-familiar crisis of

identity inherent in modernism. But for Joyce's readers and critics this crisis is multiplied to the nth degree. As one of Joyce's many voices states in *Finnegans Wake*: "now let the centuple celves of my egourge…of all of whose I in my hereinafter of course by recourse demission me—by the coincidence of their contraries reamalgamerge in that indentity of undiscernibles" (49-50). Joyce's engagement with the "indentity of undiscerniles" suggests that, in the *Wake*, identity as not definitive or singular but infinitely transformative. The scope of this identity crisis is not simply a modernist concern but also a global one.

So how does reading Joyce anticipate an expansion of the modernist machine into a modernist network?

As a way in to this question, I turn to the "Proteus" episode of Joyce's *Ulysses*. Walking along the shore at Sandymount Strand, Stephen Dedalus finds himself struggling to negotiate between the physical limits of his body, his senses, and the potential expanse of his imagination. He wonders: "Am I walking into eternity along Sandymount strand?" (*U* 3.18; 31). Stephen has just been cast out of his home and he wanders somewhat aimlessly in this scene, musing about his place in the world that surrounds him. The tension produced throughout this episode between his body and his mind—the materiality of the physical world and the possible transcendence of that materiality—echoes the push and pull sensation experienced by the reader of *Finnegans Wake*, a movement driven by the play between the finite, closed, and determinate space of the bounded text and the infinite play of meaning that marks its openness. Confronted by the vastness of eternity and unable to gain a steady ground for himself in that space, Stephen

finds himself returning to the "ineluctability" of his physical world (U 3.1; 31). He imagines himself being pulled down into the landscape that surrounds him:

> The grainy sand had gone from under his feet. His boots trod again a damp crackling mast, razorshells, squeaking pebbles, that on the unnumbered pebbles beats, wood sieved by the shipworm, lost Armada. Unwholesome sand flats waited to suck his treading soles, breathing upward sewage breath, a pocket of seaweed smouldered in seafire under a midden of man's ashes. He coasted them, walking warily. A porterbottle stood up, togged to its waist, in the cakey sand dough. A sentinel: isle of dreadful thirst. Broken hoops on the shore; at the land a maze of dark cunning nets; farther away chalkscrawled backdoors and on the higher beach a dryingline with two crucified shirts. Ringsend: wigwams of brown steersmen and master mariners. Human shells. (*U* 3. 147-57; 34)

The displacement of the "grainy sand" by the cluttered mess of washed-up fragments that crack beneath Stephen's feet signals a loss of stable ground. The broken bits of pebble mixed with wood and razorshells are imagined as remnants of an ambiguous past to which Stephen suddenly finds himself tethered. Stephen imagines himself being "sucked" into this scene of wreckage and ruin by a deadly wake: he breathes in air contaminated with decay as he intuits the ashen remains of the dead smoldering down below where he stands. In this moment, there is a sense that Stephen is connected to something bigger than himself. It is this idea

that haunts him throughout the episode as the "maze of dark cunning nets" threaten to engulf him.[108]

Joyce's net is a structure founded on a relation between closure and openness. The construction of the net requires work that is often monotonous because it involves weaving a potentially limitless number of threads together into one continuous—yet penetrable—structure. The process of net-work proves deadly when the net becomes a trap: think, for example, about a spider's web or the fishing net designed to ensnare prey who attempt to pass through the spaces between threads. What makes the net a tool is the gap that appears to be a mode of passage or "hole." This gap, however, is tethered to the totalized structure of the net where escape is always already a trap or an illusion. Stephen is in the position of the Joycean scholar who senses that he is losing control of his world with every step he takes, getting caught in the wake and in its imposing "nets". Sustaining the connection between Stephen and the Joycean scholar for just a moment longer, I argue that as Stephen gets closer and closer to the water's edge, he suddenly feels the urge to "turn back"—but his movement is thwarted as he begins to sink into the earth beneath his feet, making deep impressions in the sand. "Turning, [Stephen] scanned the shore south, his feet sinking again slowly in new sockets" (3.268-70; 37). Sensing the urgency of the tide's pull, Stephen acknowledges that "the flood is following me. I can watch it flow past from here. Get back then by the Poolbeg road to the strand there. […]. These heavy sands are language tide and wind have silted here" (3.282-89; 37). Language turns to "heavy sand" in this moment as Stephen imagines himself being trapped on the shore amidst the ruins

of a flood (of language, of time) threatening to pass over him (430). But this moment is also a transformative one as the sand beneath Stephen's feet creates "new sockets" with every step. With each turn back, Stephen makes a new impression on the ground beneath him. However, what is new does not always make for a smooth transition. In order to move forward, Stephen must take a radical step: he must alter the landscape to reframe his course.

Derrida's now-familiar image of the *Wake* as a web or net mediates between a reading of the book as a material object composed of "threads, stitches, and weave" and Joyce's own characterization of the book as an "endlessly-changing surface," an interface that allows for the generation and exchange of ideas, a network in which "everything is integrable" but nothing is ever stable (Rabaté 81; Joyce qtd in Rabaté 87; Derrida "UG" 50). The crucial question that the network raises, then, is this: how (and perhaps more importantly *where*) does one locate oneself in a space that demands to be understood as total or complete but that simultaneously refuses to cohere in order to become comprehensible and therefore (re)presentable? In order to answer this question, I position the concept of the network alongside Kant's notion of the sublime. As I make this turn, I acknowledge that my own scope is limited: while there is a vast and complex history of critical thinking about the sublime (as well as a wealth of philosophical interventions and critical literature dealing with the concept), I have confined my reading to Kant's *Critique of Judgement* and to readings of the Kantian sublime by Jean-François Lyotard and Paul de Man.[109] I have chosen these particular readings of the sublime because they emerge out of the historical moment of

modernism and consequently take a distinctly modernist approach to the sublime by reading it in relation to aesthetics. Lyotard argues that "the aesthetic of the sublime is where modern art (including literature) finds its impetus" (11).[110] If we continue to position the network as an abstract concept that is always already incomprehensible and therefore unpresentable, we can now consider the Joycean network as an instance of the Kantian sublime as they produce a similar set of effects.

***Sublime Encounters of the Network Kind***

Confronted by the vastness and complexity of the network as constituted by our working definitions, one should expect to experience agitation or frustration in the attempt to grasp it in its entirety. The natural response, articulated in Stephen Dedalus' experience on the shore of Sandymount Strand, is to turn back to avoid being overcome. This agitation and subsequent turn back can be construed as the shock of an encounter with the sublime. In *Aesthetic Ideology*, Paul de Man engages the notion of the sublime as it appears in Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Judgement* as a set of contradictions that invoke its complexity and scope. De Man writes:

> The complexity and possible incongruity of the notion of the sublime […] makes the section of the third Critique that deals with it one of the most difficult and unresolved passages in the entire corpus of Kant's work. […].

> Contrary to the beautiful, which at least appears to be all of a piece, the sublime is shot through with dialectical complication. It is…infinitely attractive but, at the same time, thoroughly repellent; it gives a peculiar kind of pleasure, yet it is also consistently painful; in less subjective, more structural terms, it is equally baffling: it knows of no limits or borders, yet it has to appear as a determined totality; in a philosophical sense, it is something of a monster or, rather, a ghost. (73-74)

De Man's reading of the Kantian sublime emphasizes its simultaneous insistence on and resistance to coherence in relation to knowledge, meaning-making, and mastery. The characterization of the sublime as monstrous[111] suggests an unwieldiness that challenges us to attempt to contain it, while its ghostliness suggests that there is nothing materially substantive to contain: rather, the sublime is elusive and therefore beyond our physical grasp (the ghost in the machine). De Man's description of the sublime reflects what I have already begun to define as properties related to the network. That push and pull sensation that our diligent reader endures when confronted with Joyce's work responds to the experience of what de Man calls the "infinitely attractive but, at the same time, thoroughly repellent" complexity of the sublime encounter. What's more, its "baffling" structure recalls the network's element of surprise; its changing landscape makes it difficult to locate oneself within it, to ground it within a particular time and space.

Finally, the simultaneous sense of the limitless of the sublime and its totality advance its relation to the network as I have so far constructed it. The sublime is to be found, according to Kant, in "an object even devoid of form, so far as it immediately involves, or else by presence produces, a representation of limitlessness yet with a super-added thought of its totality" (75). This description of the sublime in Kant is evocative of the radical openness that the Joycean text purports to uphold while still inviting us to read it as "a singular *event*" (Derrida "Two Words" 146). So we can now argue that the Joyce Industry, in functioning like a network, also positions the network as an instance of the modernist sublime. Acknowledging this series of relations between the network and the Kantian sublime, I want to think more about the difficulties that accompany de Man's reading of Kant which will, in turn, complicate my preliminary definitions of the network.

In his *Critique of Judgement*, Kant argues that an encounter with the sublime sets the mind in motion, producing a movement of the imagination that "may be compared with a shaking, i.e. with a rapidly alternating repulsion and attraction produced by one and the same object" (88). The shaking—or shock—of the sublime occurs as the imagination struggles to apprehend it as something tangible. But as an expansive notion whose representation remains, according to Jean-François Lyotard, *unpresentable*, the sublime produces nothing more than "an abyss in which [the imagination] fears to lose itself" (Lyotard "Answer" 11; Kant 88). As one might imagine, this experience is unsettling as it exposes the limits and potential failure of the imagination, engaging the sensation familiar to

readers of Joyce of being pulled "forrowards, bagawards" to the point of becoming destabilized or ungrounded (*FW* 18). This is what Lyotard calls the "drama" of the sublime: it occurs as the result of "a conflict between all of the faculties of the subject, between the faculty to conceive of something and the faculty to 'present' something" (*Lessons* 98; "Answer" 10). In Kant's formulation, the sublime comes into existence as a *representation* of limitlessness, assuming a totality that allows for its temporary realization. Considering the network vis-à-vis Kant's analytics of the sublime, then, it is apparent that the contradictions, ambiguities, complexities, and seemingly endless arrangements of moving parts inherent in its constitution make any full articulation or comprehension of the network in its totality suspect, if not impossible.

The difficulty of positioning the network as a stable—and therefore presentable—foundation out of which the Joycean Industry emerges has to do with the problem of *excess* and, in turn, of the refusal of *access* that the network carries with it. One cannot gain access to the network in its totality because it only exists as a hypothesis. The rationalist fantasy of the network is something that we cling to in order to articulate the possibilities that it opens up for our critical practice. Maintaining a hold on the network thus becomes particularly difficult for the modernist represented by our diligent reader of *Finnegans Wake*, who desires to make sense of its "babble," to "unfurl" the "meanderthalltale" in an effort to produce a coherent and singular reading of the work (*FW* 19). The potential boundlessness or uncontainability of the voices within Joyce's *particular* network give way to that overwhelming sense of disorientation and dislocation for the

reader who attempts to get it under control or contain it. Such a venture will always prove itself impossible upon the realization of its excess: there is simply *too much here* to comprehend.

The moment of too-much-ness delivers a shock to the reader, who finds herself suddenly thrust out of her comfort zone by something bigger than she is capable of imagining, producing the violent effect of a sublime encounter. As Lyotard tells us: "Sublime violence is like lightning. It shorts circuits thinking with itself. Nature, or what is left of it, quantity, serves only to provide the bad contact that creates the spark. The teleological machine explodes" (*Lessons* 54-55). One can say with certainty, then, that the condition of the network as articulated by *Finnegans Wake* is that, while we enter into the text with the belief that it can be apprehended or contained, it is always already beyond our systematic control, registering itself not as a singular readable work but as an explosion of language and form. This explosion, as D.H. Lawrence firmly asserts in "Surgery for a Novel—or the Bomb," is inherent in the project of modernism.[112]

What I want to keep in the foreground throughout this discussion of the sublime as it emerges within and through the Joyce Industry is its relation to its own expansiveness and extension, to its generative properties that motivate progress and that allow for the possibilities of Lawrence's "new world" to emerge. Kant offers the following reading of the sublime to assist us with this notion of extension:

> The sublime is not to be looked for in the things of nature, but only in our own ideas. But it must be left to the deduction to show in which of them it resides.
>
> The above definition may also be expressed in this way: *that is sublime in comparison with which all else is small.* […]. But precisely because there is a striving in our imagination towards progress *ad infinitum*, while reason demands absolute totality, as a real idea that same inability on the part of our faculty for the estimation of the magnitude of things of the world of the senses to attain to the idea, is the awakening of a feeling of a supersensible faculty within us; and it is the use to which judgement naturally puts particular objects on behalf of this latter feeling, and not the object of the senses, that is absolutely great, and every other contrasted employment small. (80-81)

Extension can be understood for our purposes as the relentless accumulation of stuff by, within, and around the text which refuses the possibility of its containment or control and maintains the impulse to strive towards its totality. We might recall as an example Joyce's infamous declaration that, in *Ulysses* "I have put in so many enigmas and puzzles that it will keep scholars and critics busy for centuries trying to understand what it means" (Joyce qtd. in Ellman). The epistemological challenge that Joyce poses for his critics in what will be their thwarted desire to say precisely what the text means is symptomatic of the sublime. Joyce's claim for his texts is that they have achieved a level of sublimity

in their insistence on this failure. As De Man argues: "the sublime fulfills itself as a desire for what it fails to be, since what it desires—totality—is not other than itself" (de Man 76). In order to finally make this relation between the network and the sublime more explicitly relevant to the argument of this chapter as a whole I want to turn to two scenes from Joyce's oeuvre that explore this relationship in different ways through the perspective of Joyce's recurring protagonist and struggling artist Stephen Dedalus. These examples articulate both the challenge and potential of thinking about ourselves as subjects within networks: as network-beings or as being-in-the-network.

In the early pages of Joyce's *Portrait of an Artist as a Young Man*, Stephen Dedalus, new to his boarding school and attempting to find his place within its strange community of students, sits in studyhall to review a geography lesson. He opens his book to the first page and sees "a picture of the earth […] a big ball in the middle of the clouds" (12). This image of the world is simple and contained: the earth is situated in the center of the page and surrounded by clouds. The clouds appear to anchor the earth in space by providing a kind of protective shield or cushion around it, delivering an image that presents what Kant refers to as an "architectonic construct." This concept, in which nature becomes nothing more than a construction, is also a *mis*conception based upon the idea that "space…is a house in which we dwell more or less safely, or more or less poetically, on this earth" (de Man 81; 126-27). The boundaries or bounded-ness of the earth as a "big ball" are visible in Stephen's textbook image: the earth's position in the center of the page offers a sense of grounding in space despite its

ungrounded placement amidst the clouds in the sky. But as Stephen turns to study his lesson, which asks him to name all of the places in America, he finds himself struggling to match the places with names and his mind drifts back to consider that world at large. He thinks: "they were all in different countries and the countries were in continents and the continents were in the world and the world was in the universe" (12). This mode of thinking requires a reconfiguration of the visual representation of the earth bound by clouds into a mathematical schema of the world whereby X (insert country) is contained in Y (insert continent) which is contained in Z (the world). Thinking in these cumulative terms begins a process of extension that approaches what Kant refers to as an "absolute magnitude" (de Man 75). According to Kant, the process of extension takes the object under contemplation "as far as consciousness can grasp it in an intuition" (de Man 75). In Stephen's case, this point of "absolute magnitude" is the understood in relation to the universe.

Imagining the universe as a set of containers that extend outwards towards infinity, Stephen articulates the universe as possessing "the possibility of a determined totalization, of a contour" (de Man 75). In other words, Stephen is able to comprehend the universe—and to subsequently name it as such—by way of a system of logic that breaks down the whole into manageable parts. The exercise continues as Stephen attempts to plug himself into the equation:

> [Stephen] turned to the flyleaf of the geography and read what he had written there: himself, his name and where he was.

*Stephen Dedalus*

*Class of Elements*

*Clongowes Wood College*

*Sallins*

*County Kildare*

*Ireland*

*Europe*

*The World*

*The Universe*

(*Portrait* 12-13)

Charting his location in space from the inside (the body) out (from the classroom to the universe), Stephen creates a taxonomy in which stable points of reference are informed by one another and expand logically towards a desired end. But despite Stephen's methodical approach to its construction, his comprehension of the universe predictably gets beyond him. He wonders: "What was after the universe? Nothing. But was there anything round the universe to show where it stopped before the nothing place began? It could not be a wall but there could be a thin thin line there all round everything. It was very big to think about everything and everywhere" (13). The drawing of a virtual borderline between the world and the abyss of the nothing place—a "thin thin line there all round everything"—is the only defense Stephen can muster to protect himself against what exists out there in the *beyond*. Returning to the universe as an invocation of Kant's encounter with the sublime as it instantiates Stephen's sense of being

overwhelmed or stifled by its vastness, this series of exercises in the studyhall at Clongowes performs the "acts of imagination" necessary "to make the sublime appear in space" (77). Kant identifies these acts as *apprehension* and *comprehension* and de Man usefully unpacks these concepts as follows:

> Apprehension proceeds successively, as a syntagmatic, consecutive motion along an axis, and it can proceed ad infinitum without difficulty. Comprehension, however, which is a paradigmatic totalization of the apprehended trajectory, grows increasingly difficult as the space covered by apprehension grows larger. The model reminds one of a simple phenomenology of reading, in which one has to make constant syntheses to comprehend the successive unfolding of the text: the eye moves horizontally in succession whereas the mind has to combine vertically the cumulative understanding of what has been apprehended. The comprehension will soon reach a point at which it is saturated and will no longer be able to take in additional apprehensions: it cannot progress beyond a certain magnitude which marks the limit of the imagination. (77)

Given de Man's reading of these concepts, Stephen's exercise in the classroom is one in which apprehension of the universe occurs but comprehension does not. The analogy de Man makes between apprehension/comprehension and the reading process draws a relationship between Stephen's attempt and subsequent failure to comprehend the universe and the diligent reader's experience of reading

Joyce. As Derrida argues, there is always, in reading Joyce, the problem of the overload that resists comprehension. And yet comprehension or, as Kant articulates it, the "holding the many in one" ("the one" in Stephen Dedalus' case being the universe) is both Stephen's desire and our own. Both readers will eventually reach their saturation points.

Stephen's saturation point occurs when he recognizes that he cannot think beyond the universe. The thought of its expansiveness makes him "feel his head very big" and he struggles to close it up, finding himself "small and weak" in his failure to pinpoint "where the universe ended" (13-14). Stephen's assertion of the absence of *walls*—those tangible barriers that delineate space as finite and secure—further acknowledges the instability of Stephen's otherwise well-constructed universe, producing "an excess for the imagination" that is "like an abyss in which it fears to lose itself" (Kant 88). This moment in which the "abyss" threatens to obscure the universe returns us to the violence that an encounter with the sublime provokes, "a violence which must be proportionately more striking the greater the quantum which the imagination comprehends in one intuition" (89). In other words, there is no way for the reader to make sense of this experience: there is no language with which to capture it. Despite his repeated attempts to encircle or bind the universe in order to articulate his vision, Stephen is still unable to comprehend the whole of its parts by means of an equation or explanation. This moment of saturation is the moment of the fall.

This point should now be made explicit: there is no network without a fall. However, the concept of the fall comes with its own complications. For example,

as de Man tells us of reading Kleist, "one would isolate the dissemination of the word *Fall* and its compounds […] as such a moment when the aesthetic dance turned into an aesthetic trap, as by the addition of one single mute letter which makes *Fall* (fall) into *Falle* (trap)" (89). A similar trope of the fall is at work in Joyce's *Wake*. As Rabaté suggests "one need only to cite Finnegans first fall: 'it may half been a missfired brick, as some say, or it mought have been due to a collupses of his back promises, as others looked at it.' The misfired, flawed brick is equivalent to a failure to keep one's word, a breach of promise: the collapse is therefore also a lapsus" (91). That is to say that Finnegan's fall suggests a kind of failure that the text insists upon from the beginning, from the very first fall that is part of its non-narrative thread. At the very moment the diligent reader begins to contemplate the network, when its coherence seems to be within her grasp, she will fall, lose the thread, and find herself trapped, once again, in Joyce's web. But the panic and pain that she feels as she takes that plunge into the text also produce a strange kind of pleasure that incites the desire to return again and again in order to conquer it, perpetuating the belief that such mastery is, in fact, possible. This relation between pain and pleasure is also inherent in the sublime encounter as it manifests itself as a "negative pleasure" (Kant 75). As Kant tells us "the sublime is a pleasure that only arises indirectly, being brought about by the feeling of a momentary check to the vital forces followed at once by a discharge all the more powerful, and so it is an emotion that seems to be no play, but a serious matter in the exercise of the imagination" (76). Kant's experience of the sublime as delivering a "check" to the "vital forces" offers a sense of the danger of the

encounter for the subject who seeks it, despite the eruption of pleasure experienced simultaneously. To engage the threat of the sublime (a threat that, in the end, proves empty in its failure to be fulfilled) I return again to Joyce.

Stephen Dedalus's concept of space and its geographical and mathematical limits in *Portrait* are revisited by Joyce in *Ulysses*. The Stephen of *Ulysses* is no longer an aspiring artist but a failed one. His notions of himself and the world around him have changed since his days as a student at Clongowes. Consider the following passage from "Proteus":

> Ineluctable modality of the visible: at least that if no more, thought through my eyes. Signature of all things I am here to read, seaspawn and seawrack, the nearing tide, that rusty boot. […]. Limits of the diaphane. But he adds: in bodies. […]. Shut your eyes and see.
>
> Stephen closed his eyes to hear his boots crush crackling wrack and shells. You are walking through it howsomever. I am, a stride at a time. A very short space of time through very short times of space. Five, six. The Nacheinander. Exactly: and that is the ineluctable modality of the audible. Open your eyes. No. Jesus! If I fell over a cliff that beetles o'er his base, fell through the *Nebeneinander* ineluctably! I am getting on nicely in the dark. (*U* 3.1-18; 31)

This older, jaded Stephen Dedalus is more self-aware than his Clongowes self about his relation to the physical world around him: he characterizes both the

visual and auditory senses of perception as "ineluctable" or inescapable. At the same time, he taps into that notion of the mathematics of his location as he is struck by the limitations of his imagination. Stephen closes his eyes and imagines that he is walking "a stride at a time. A very short space of time through very short times of space" (*U* 3.10-12; 31). Attempting to restrict his sense of space to this moment, to locate himself in time by narrowing his focus (in effect, zooming in on his grounded position), Stephen finds himself, again, coming unbound as time and space become entangled. As he struggles to open his eyes to *see*, to mark his space in relation to the physical world that surrounds him, Stephen repeatedly faces the boundlessness of his universe, which both threatens to consume him and opens up a potential site out of which to *see* (and thus experience) something new.

Stephen's later construction of space in the maternity ward as "what you damn well have to see" echoes the tension produced in an encounter with the sublime. As Stephen attempts to take hold of the present, he finds it forever slipping out of his grasp: "Through spaces smaller than red globules of man's blood they creepycrawl after Blake's buttocks into eternity of which this vegetable world is but a shadow. Hold to the now, the here, through which all future plunges to the past" (*U* 153). The world as a "shadow" of eternity maintains the concept behind the mathematical sublime in its relation to the infinite. But there is a shift taking place in this moment as Stephen imagines the impossibility of grasping the here and now—of maintaining a sense of being in the present—as a passing through space. The "now" is the future plunging to the past. This is not a static but a fluid position. The sense of movement that connects

the present to the future which is also the past evokes the Kantian sublime with a slight yet important difference: this time Stephen's thinking about his relation to time and space is not a mathematical but a dynamic gesture. The reformulation of what we might call Stephen's "being in the world" articulates Kant's "dynamically sublime" at work, which has to do with the scope of the sublime and our striving towards its totality: it is the mind's "susceptibility for ideas" allowing for a sense of "[looking] out beyond itself into the infinite, which for it is an abyss" (Kant 95). The dynamic sublime is what ultimately threatens to crush us in our attempt to comprehend it. But the fact that we can never reach it is precisely the point. As Stephen opens his eyes and sets his gaze out on the shore of Sandymount Strand he thinks: "there all the time without you. World without end" (*U* 31).

Back at the beginning. Time for another turn.

***Net Work: Part Two***

Having considered the multiple characteristics and permutations of the network as they emerge through a series of architectural, literary, and philosophical examples, I now look to a visual representation of the network offered by contemporary French-Canadian artist Francine Savard. Savard's work is not the only example that I could use to advance my reading of the network, but in this particular moment it provides another medium through which to pursue our thinking in relation to both modernism and to notions of the sublime. My reading focuses on a recent exhibition of Savard's work at the Musée d'art Contemporain

de Montréal. This retrospective exhibit, which ran from October 2009 to January 2010, included a series of work that engaged Savard's ideas about the interrelation between the written word, visual art, and media.[113]

Savard's work as a whole considers how the visual field of representation interacts with literature, philosophy, technology, and geography in productive and innovative ways. I want to highlight two of Savard's pieces as they immediately respond to my reading of Joyce, modernism, and the network: *Épigraphes* (2008) and *Tableau Chronologique* (2009). *Épigraphes* is a series of quotations (or "epigraphs") painted on separate canvases of varying shapes, installed "salon style" across a single white wall of the gallery. The words, brushed out in muted pastels, are borrowed from works by writers and philosophers from Pascal to Sigmund Freud, Charles Baudelaire to Walter Benjamin, William Shakespeare to Stéphane Mallarmé. There are gaps in both the epigraphs themselves, marked by blank spaces between words and phrases, and in the relation between works, marked by the physical distance between the individual "blocks" of text against the white space that unites the piece as a whole. Curator Lesley Johnstone tells us that in this work "Savard presents only fragments that are more suggestive than denotative" so that "readers" of the work are offered "multiple leads" but "no precise meaning" (81). Savard, like Joyce, forces the viewer into the text without guidance or the promise of coherence. This mode of reading requires an engagement with the text as a collection of fragments and invites the reader to take part in its production, maintaining a continuum through the engagement with the (w)hole through its parts. As Derrida says of Joyce's work: "Each writing is at

once the detached fragment of a software and a software more powerful than the other, a part larger than the whole of which it is a part" ("TW" 48). Savard's "detached fragments" cohere through their engagements with concepts of space, distance, and time, but the gap of white space both within and between them maintains their position as distinct parts, separate from the whole. The viewer who desires to take in the entire work must therefore learn to negotiate between these parts and tailor the work to her own experience of it.

In the center of the same room is Savard's *Tableau Chronologique*, which is presented as a companion piece to *Épigraphes*. Constructed as a web of influences, *Tableau Chronologique* offers a collection of names, enclosed in ovals along with dates of birth and death, linked to one another by finely-drawn lines. This web articulates a specialized genealogy of influences that is bound to a medium limited in its scope: it is one particular network emerging out of something infinitely bigger. In this work, Johnstone notes, "Savard teases out a web of philosophers, critics, artists, and poets who have nourished our understanding of painting" (81). The artist offers a "key" to the organizing structure of her network on the right-hand side of the work: a list of categories into which the adjacent names to the left can be placed. Marcel Duchamp is clustered amidst artists such as Pablo Picasso and Francis Bacon while Jacques Derrida falls in line alongside other philosophers such as Arthur Danto and Jacqueline Lichtenstein. While this systematic approach has the potential to deliver an image of the creative process as a singular event by visually charting its influences across generic and temporal boundaries, the viewer of the work cannot

help but get tangled up in this web, on the brink of a sublime encounter. The viewer may attempt to trace the multiple paths Savard offers between writers and linguists, historians and painters, poets and theoreticians in an effort to understand the logic of her network. But while at work untangling this web of relations, the viewer finds herself drawing her own connections between the lines, opening up the work to new possibilities in collaboration with both the work of art and the artist. The viewer creates new paths for herself in the work, overlapping topographies that extend Savard's web of influence to include those she may never have imagined would be there, or, perhaps, to those writers and thinkers she never may have read. This act of networking is what Johnstone refers to as the seductive "trap"[114] of Savard's entire oeuvre: it is what allows for a creative re-vision of the work that depends upon new systems of relation and reference that proliferate, resisting a singular reading or interpretation of the work.

As an artist whose work insists upon crossing borders between disciplines, on merging texts and technologies, and interrogating what Susan Stanford Friedman will identify as "the paradox of all borders" (the "slash" between binaries that allows for multiple meanings to co-exist in the same word or work), Savard, like Joyce, makes visible the effects of a network in the making, a network that opens itself up to endless possibilities for connectivity and collaboration across time and space (Friedman "Planetarity" 7). So as my final gesture, I want to consider how Joyce's model of the network extends to contemporary modes of critical thinking and specifically to the turn towards planetarity in the field of modernist studies.

***Planetarity***

Planetarity has been articulated in scholarly discourses across disciplines as a way of rethinking the construction of individual and collective identities, structures of community, canon formation, and, perhaps most broadly, modes of reading (in) the globalized world. While there are myriad ways of understanding this term and its possibilities, I will focus on two invocations of the planetary that I find most productive for this particular line of inquiry in order to circle back, once again, to our examples of Joyce and the modernist network. The first reading is offered to us by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, and the second, more recently, by Susan Stanford Friedman. While I acknowledge that these two approaches are inherently different in their agenda and scope—Spivak is speaking from the perspective of a comparative literature discipline which is slowly fading into obscurity while Friedman is considering the possibilities for what she calls a "planetary epistemology in modernist studies" for the twenty-first century—considering them alongside one another offers a more expansive understanding of the concept than either reading could provide on its own (Friedman "Planetarity" 7).

In her chapter titled "Planetarity" in *Death of a Discipline*, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak argues for what she terms "planet thought" as a way to "overwrite [the systematized figure of] the globe" in the field of comparative literature. This mode of thinking, she argues, allows for a consideration of the human in relation to an outside that is not restricted by the rational "gridwork" of

Geographical Information Systems: a relation to the other that is exterior to the self but that is also not neatly positioned as its opposite (72). Spivak writes:

> To be human is to be intended toward the other. We provide for ourselves transcendental figurations of what we think is the origin of this animating gift: mother, nation, god, nature. These are names of alterity, some more radical than others. Planet-thought opens up to embrace an inexhaustible taxonomy of such names, including but not identical with the whole range of human universals: aboriginal animism as well as the spectral white mythology of postrational science. If we imagine ourselves as planetary subjects rather than global agents, planetary creatures rather than global entities, alterity remains underived from us; it is not our dialectical negation, it contains us as much as it flings us away. And thus to think of it is already to transgress, for, in spite of our forays into what we metaphorize, differently, as outer and inner space, what is above and beyond our own reach is not continuous with us as it is not, indeed, specifically discontinuous. We must persistently educate ourselves into this particular mindset. (73)

According to Spivak, what is at work in "planet-thought" is an opening up of the concept of the self as a singular, knowable entity with a stable and unique origin to include, rather than exclude, what was previously assumed to be outside or beyond that self. It thus produces, in many ways, a coming undone of the human in space by forcing an engagement with the other as something that is not fixed

but fluid, broadening our sense of ourselves as part of a larger community or network of people, places, and things. (We might recall here, as a parenthetical point of return, Mark Taylor's experience of the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao as a transformative and referential, rather than oppositional, movement from grid to network). In this way, planet-thought becomes a mobilization of the self, a transgression of imposed boundaries that invites an exchange of our concept of the world as a controlled space—one that is both managed and delineated through representational systems such as the grid, the map, and the globe—for a different kind of system. But what does this other system look like? And furthermore, isn't the act of positing "the planet" as part of any kind of system necessarily going to entail another order of mapping to resist falling back into the Kantian abyss of the sublime?

Joyce anticipates an answer to these questions the "Circe" episode of *Ulysses*. "Circe" is scripted like a screenplay in which everything that has come before it—its people, places, and objects—is called up and transformed in the spirit of a hallucination. At the start of the episode the bustling streets of Dublin fade into the dark set of "nighttown," a place at whose entrance "stretches an uncobbled tramsiding set with skeleton tracks, red and green will-o'-the-wisps and danger signals" (15.1-3; 350). Clocks, bells, gongs and gramophones speak. The dead are resurrected as ghosts within the novelistic machine. As such, "Circe" is offered as a chaotic and unpredictable textual explosion, a display of "mock psychosis [that] shows reality as made up of linguistic repetitions" and free associations (Rabaté *AR* 86). Throughout this episode Joyce exposes the technical

difficulties of his work as he reveals "language's infelicities, the cramps of the textual body, in constant metamorphosis" (Rabaté *AR* 87). Leopold Bloom undergoes several physical metamorphoses of his own here, including a moment in which he gives birth to "eight male yellow and white children" (*U* 15:1821; 403). Within this transformative space, Joyce's planetary moment arrives as Bloom is crowned "emperor-president and king-chairman" of a new nation called Bloomusalem. The scene plays out as follows:

> *(Bloom holds up his right hand on which sparkles the Koh-i-Noor diamond. His palfrey neighs. Immediate silence. Wireless intercontinental and interplanetary transmitters are set for reception of message.)*
>
> […]
>
> BLOOM
>
> My beloved subjects, a new era is about to dawn. I, Bloom, tell you verily it is even now at hand. Yea, on the word of a Bloom, ye shall ere long enter into the golden city which is to be, the new Bloomusalem in the Nova Hibernia of the future. (*U* 15.1499-1545; 394-95)

The transmission Bloom puts out over the airwaves signals the dawn of a new day and anticipates an "interplanetary" system that is wireless and unbound, that distributes itself across continents, beyond Dublin and beyond nighttown to reach out to a seemingly limitless number of listeners with his platform of "social regeneration" and reform (*U* 15.1703; 400). This is the moment where Joyce

anticipates the openness that he achieves in *Finnegans Wake*: Bloom "employs a mechanical device to frustrate the sacred ends of nature" (*U* 15.1741; 401). But such openness is met with resistance as the new Bloomusalem gives way to a structural collapse:

> *In the course of its extension several buildings and monuments are demolished. Government offices are temporarily transferred to railway sheds. Numerous houses are razed to the ground. The inhabitants are lodged in barrels and boxes, all marked in red with the letters: L.B. Several paupers fall from a ladder. A part of the walls of Dublin, crowded with loyal sightseers, collapses.* (*U* 15.1550-55; 395)

In the moment where the text threatens to get beyond itself, moving towards the threshold of a sublime encounter, its landscape begins to fall apart. Bloom is unable to sustain his "interplanetary" connection. His kingdom begins to crumble as his subjects are suffocated in barrels and boxes, left for dead, and buried beneath the rubble.

Spivak admits that a planetary mode of thinking is difficult, if not impossible, for scholars to fully embrace as it refuses to be governed by a set of rules or adhere to a system of strict definitions. So despite advocating for its possibilities Spivak states, "I cannot offer a formulaic access to planetarity. No one can" (78). The fact that there is no "grounding in planetarity," is part of its appeal and its promise (82). But it is also what puts us in position for a fall. What happens when we buy into a planetary mode of thinking is a radical shift in

ground. As Spivak puts it: "the globe is on our computers. No one lives there. It allows us to think that we can control it. The planet is in the species of alterity, belonging to another system…" (72). By embracing planetarity we aim to change the surface of our political, social, and cultural landscapes without knowing in what direction—or even how far—it will take us.

In her 2009 address at the Modernist Studies Association Conference in Montréal, Susan Stanford Friedman offered another reading of planetarity as an epistemological framework for rethinking scholarly approaches to modernism.[115] Friedman's talk engaged a broad range of voices in an introductory "polylogue" that reflected on the terms "modern," "modernity," and "modernism" in an effort to demonstrate the malleability of the terms as they have emerged in literature and literary scholarship over time (471-73). Friedman's insistence on the multiplicity of meanings as well as on the possible contradictions inherent in these terms provided the platform from which she argued for "a planetary epistemology of modernity…delineating not a nominal set of characteristics (e.g., "big" = x, y, and z), but rather defining one thing in relation to another (e.g., "big" is not "small")" (477-78). This "planetary epistemology" is founded upon a "comparative framework" that "balances the commensurable—what different modernities share—with the incommensurable—how they are different" (478). Friedman therefore invites scholars in the field to read modernity in its multiple forms. This, in turn, challenges us to consider how often competing concepts of modernity and constructions of modernism(s) across the globe pave the way for new critical practices in modernist studies.

Like Spivak, Friedman acknowledges that there are obstacles to overcome in order to put planetarity into practice but, unlike Spivak, she does not posit it as an impossible or idealistic task. In order to posit modernity as a planetary phenomenon, Friedman argues, we must work together to explode the term as it operates as a dividing line across temporal and geographic boundaries and then to locate the intersections that bring seemingly disparate constructions of modernity into conversation with one another. This weaving together of different modernities often requires a radical decentering of the normative constructions of modernity as they have taken shape in the West in favor of a plural, or *center-less* network of voices and ideas. This project becomes difficult in the relational model that Friedman proposes as the attempt to bring modernities from across the globe to bear on one another too often falls back on institutionalized systems of relation that sustain the West as the central point of comparison or that privilege one modernity over another, which only serves to reinstate the center from another vantage point. Moreover, the relational model threatens to fail in another way as it posits an opening up of the field to the extent that anything and everything can be read as reflecting a "modern" sensibility or practice. Friedman explains: "the relational approach opens us up to the difficult question of whether anything is 'not modern,' and thus whether an expressive form is 'not modernist'" (478). This is why, for Spivak, "planet thought" is inaccessible to us: it is ultimately a utopian concept. For Friedman, on the other hand, a planetary framework presents opportunities for "collaboration in the project of scholarship" that not only require the engagement of the dynamic properties of network-thinking but that help us,

finally, to read modernism itself as a fluid and transformational network of its own making.

In her article "World Systems and the Creole," Spivak references Edouard Glissant's engagement of the theory of relation. Glissant asks his scholarly audience:

> How have cultures…made their way to us, and how have we reached them…No matter how many studies and references we accumulate (though it is our profession to carry out such things properly), we will never reach the end of such a volume; knowing this in advance makes it possible for us to dwell there. Not knowing this totality does not constitute a weakness…Relation is open totality; totality would be relation at rest. Totality is virtual. (Glissant qtd. in Spivak 109).

In forging this connection between relation and totality, Glissant campaigns for a world without end: that is, a world perpetually in motion in which the text (a word that has acquired multiple meanings throughout this chapter) exists not as object (the book, the art piece, the building), but as an "ever-changing landscape" or network of readers, writers, and thinkers. The essence of the network as Joyce imagined it—a vision that I argue persists in the re-visioning of modernist studies today—depends upon a transgression of traditional borders. As scholars, we are too often forced to draw arbitrary lines, to historicize, to periodize, or to stop reading in order to declare an end to our current work. These strategies are in many ways necessary to maintaining the coherence of our respective fields. But if

this chapter has done any work at all, it has demonstrated that we are not alone in our studies. Our work is generative. Our machines are in perpetual motion. And these machines are hooked up to other machines within networks that we do not even know exist, that we may never know exist unless we actively seek them out and engage them in our practice. Just as Joyce embraces the modernist imperative to "make it new," this imperative returns, in our twenty-first century moment, as a directive to acknowledge the possibilities offered to us when we stop trying to master the texts we read and instead open ourselves up to chance encounters—even if we risk losing the thread and taking a fall.

***In the Wake of Joyce: A Postcard from the Grave***

I now offer my own arbitrary ending, which fulfills an earlier promise to make Joyce "one of us" (Latham 122). The place is the Flutern Cemetery, Zurich; the year, 1978. The grave encountered here is that of James Joyce. We are delivered to his grave site by way of a postcard from one of our interlocutors, Jacques Derrida. The postcard reads:

> *20 June 1978*.
>
> I had not come back to Zurich since spring 1972.
>
> You accompany me everywhere. Hillis, who was waiting for me at the airport…drove me to the cemetery, near to Joyce's tomb. I should say funerary monument. I didn't know that he was here. Above the tomb, in a museum of the most costly horrors, a life-size Joyce, in other words colossal in this place, seated, with his cane, a cigarette in hand it seems to me, and a book in the other hand. He has read all of us—and plundered us that one. I imagined him looking at himself posed there—by his zealous descendants I suppose. We continued to walk around in the cemetery speaking, I believe, about Poe and Yale, all that. At the end of an alley, the tomb of the inventor of something like the telescripter: Egon Zoller, *Erfinder des Telephonographen*. This inscription is engraved in stone between two globes, one of which bears the Alpha and the Omega, and the other meridians and a kind of telephonic device spitting out a band of paper. After the raucous

> burst of laughter we spent a long time musing in front of this phallus of modernity. I like that he is called Zoller and with his name beckons toward the toll, customs, debt, taxes. We also looked for Szondi's tomb without finding it. It is there, once out of the water his body had been brought back from Berlin. (148)

In his postcard, Derrida positions the graveyard as a space for chance encounters. As a theorist who has often described himself as haunted by Joyce, Derrida is struck by the sudden presence of this colossal figure in the graveyard who he did not expect to find there.[116] Looking at the monument, Derrida imagines that the book Joyce is reading is ours. "He has read all of us," he says, "and plundered us." While this image of Joyce at rest upon his pedestal seems to confirm (at least, for Derrida) the power, mastery, and celebrity status that the author and his Industry has always assumed over its descendents, what happens next suggests a different possibility.

Walking past Joyce's grave, Derrida engages his friend in a bit of shop talk and eventually happens upon the grave of a man named Egon Zoller, the inventor and patent agent of "something like" the telescripter. While Zoller's gravesite is not nearly as monumental as Joyce's, it strikes Derrida as curious enough for him to record it here alongside Joyce, forging a connection between them. Zoller's work as a developer of communication technologies that aimed to transmit and register signals between callers and receivers suggests that he too had a vision of network-thinking: like Joyce, Zoller created points of connection between people and cultures and sought to maintain systems of relations and open

lines of communication by way of his many machines.[117] Marked by an inscription that offers what might now be read as a planetary image—two globes, united by "a telephonic device spitting out a band of paper"—Zoller's grave is positioned alongside Joyce's as a "phallus of modernity." The relation between Joyce and Zoller is, of course, arbitrary, which is precisely what makes it relevant. Here we are, experiencing a network in the making.

And so I offer this final return, turning back to the beginning, or to the before-the-beginning of our exagimination of the Joycean Industry as it suddenly becomes part of something bigger than itself: a modernist network that proliferates, collects, and channels between and across other networks, forming, above all else, a *worldwide connection*.

## *End Notes*

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**NOTES TO INTRODUCTION**

[1] This description bears a striking resemblance to the visual representation of the Matrix from the Wachowski Brothers' 1999 film of the same name. *The Matrix* also depicts a world in which machines feed off the human race; the physical structure that houses the humans contains an endless number of cells stacked tier above tier. Unlike the cells in Forster's story, the cells in *The Matrix* are pure storage units: the bodies hooked up to the machine are plugged in and have no physical mobility to speak of, making escape impossible. Neo's liberation from the Matrix and into the "real world" echoes Kuno's rebellious excursions to the surface of the earth, which has been dubbed a wasteland. I find this comparison between the Wachowski Brothers' film and Forster's story useful as it suggests a continuum between the political and social landscapes of modernism and those of our present day: both texts emerge at the turn of their respective centuries to articulate similar concerns about subjectivity and control in a mediated world.

[2] Kuno's reading of the machine as a "monster" of man's own making recalls the monster of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) with a distinct difference. Frankenstein's monster is assembled from human corpses and therefore bears a physical resemblance to the human: his monstrosity is biological. At the moment of the monster's creation, Frankenstein observes with "horror and disgust" the physical nature of the "wretch" that he has just brought to life: "His yellow skin scarcely covered the work of muscles and arteries beneath; his hair was of a lustrous black, and flowing; his teeth of a pearly whiteness; but these luxuriances only formed a more horrid contrast with his watery eyes, that seemed almost of the same colour as the dun white sockets in which they were set, his shriveled complexion, and straight black lips" (Shelley 42-44). Forster's "monstrous" machine incorporates the human into its structure, but is in no way physically human. This distinction is significant to consider as it demonstrates a continuum between nineteenth- and twentieth- century notions of the relationship between the human and the machine while also positing a difference in the shift from biological to technological concepts of monstrosity. As my dissertation will demonstrate, the boundaries between the biological and the technological become increasingly blurred in the twentieth century as machines take on more "human" properties.

[3] Recent scholarship in new media and modernist studies that has begun to engage the changing state of the field through readings of electronic media, "digital modernisms," and/or the emerging field of the "digital humanities" include (but are certainly not limited to): Jessica Pressman's "The Strategy of Digital Modernism: Young-Hae Chang Heavy Industries's *Dakota*"; N. Katherine Hayles's *Electronic Literature: New Horizons for the Literary*; Sean Latham's "New Age Scholarship: The Work of Criticism in the Age of Digital Reproduction"; David M. Earle's "MySpace Modernism"; and Kathleen Fitzpatrick's *Planned Obsolescence: Publishing, Technology, and the Future of the Academy*.

[4] In his 1946 Introduction to the collection of stories in which "The Machine Stops" appears, Forster argues that "Fantasy now"—by which he means the period after the Second World War—"tends to retreat, or to dig herself in, or to become apocalyptic out of deference to the atom." Suggesting that this particular set of fantasies offers a different kind of end, one that is more optimistic than terrifying, Forster positions his tale as a "messenger, machine-breaker, and conductor of souls to a not-too-terrible hereafter" (v). In this way, Forster anticipates Heidegger's reading of technology as something *active* rather than *neutral*, a force to be reckoned with. And the after-effects of this reckoning, according to Forster, offer a range of "not-too-terrible" possibilities.

[5] As if speaking back to Eliot, Yeats writes: "My curse on plays / That have to be set up in fifty ways" (ln 8-9).

[6] There is a vast array of strong scholarship across fields on the rise of voice technologies and the effect that they have historically, socially, culturally. See for example John Durham Peters' *Speaking into the Air*, Steven Connor's *Dumbstruck*, Friedrich Kittler's *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter* and Lisa Gitelman's *Scripts, Grooves, and Writing Machines: Representing Technology in the Edison Era*.

[7] See Sebastian Knowles's article "Death by Gramophone" for a more extensive reading of this scene and its after-effects in relation to other modernist works (10-11). Knowles's argument engages the gramophone as an instrument through which the voices of the dead are reanimated and therefore produce a threat to the living subjects who hear it. His argument concludes with the notion that "the great texts of modernism…all rage against the box, push the coffin lid open, insist on the voices of the living" (12). While I agree that modernists posit the mechanical voice as a threat, my reading is slightly more elastic than Knowles' as it emphasizes the tension produced by the mechanical voice as a modernist construction. In other words, I am more interested in the effects of the suspension of that tension as it informs the modernist movement rather than in overcoming it.

[8] It is productive here to consider Woolf's gramophone in relation to James Joyce's Gramophone, a character introduced in the "Circe" episode of *Ulysses*. Joyce marks the entrance of the Gramophone with the following stage directions: "Nebulous obscurity occupies space. Through the drifting fog without the gramophone blares over coughs and feetshuffling" (506-07). Here, the Gramophone enters into a space filled with static—amidst a general clamor of coughing fits and street noise—in order to call for Jerusalem to "open your gates and sing." The Gramophone also signals the arrival of Elijah who appears and speaks to the assembled crowd. But just as Elijah speaks, the Gramophone creates a disturbance: "the disc raps gratingly against the needle" and competes with Elijah's sermon (508). As Joyce's play continues, the language and the narrative quickly deteriorate and Leopold Bloom states: "past was is today. What now is will then tomorrow as now was be past yester" (515). In both *Between the Acts* and *Ulysses*, the presence of the gramophone produces a textual *chuffing* that exposes a cultural anxiety about national and individual identity that my dissertation explores in its later chapters.

[9] In "This Strange Institution Called Literature," Jacques Derrida considers the relation between modern literature and the "machine" of the literary institution. In response to a question posed to him about his engagement with "twentieth-century modernist, or at least nontraditional texts" Derrida answers that he is drawn to such texts as they

> are themselves a sort of turning back on the literary institution. […]. And the force of their event depends on the fact that a thinking about their own possibility…is put to work in them in a singular work. Given what I was saying just now, I'm brought more easily toward texts which are very sensitive to the crisis of the literary institution […], to what is called 'the end of literature," […]. (*Acts of Literature* 41-42).

Derrida's remarks can be read as a reflection on James Joyce's oft-quoted statement that in the writing of *Ulysses* he "put in so many enigmas and puzzles that it will keep scholars and critics busy for centuries trying to understand what it means": Joyce's insistence that the difficulty of his text is offered as a challenge to scholars *in particular* makes visible his awareness of the pre-established institution to which his work belongs (Joyce qtd. in Ellman). In an earlier reading of the Joycean Industry (as it has come to be known), Derrida posits Joyce's work as an "institution" that "can be seen as a powerful reading machine," making the machine into a metaphor for literary and cultural production ("UG" 36). In this way, Derrida articulates a relationship between language and machines that is structured by difficulty, a relationship that I examine more closely in the final chapter of this dissertation.

[10] Two brief articles published in *The New York Times* in 2007 demonstrate this continuum. In "Our Lives, Controlled from Some Guy's Couch," John Tierney invokes N. Katherine Hayles as he argues that we are living in a "posthuman" society—and he expects that it is at least possible that our lives are already part of some guy's simulation, a world "inhabited by virtual people with fully developed virtual nervous systems" (F1). Tierney's suggestion that by the end of the twenty-first century the world will be governed by the machine resonates with claims made by George Johnson in a related article titled "An Oracle: Part Man Part Machine." Johnson's article focuses on the use of computer algorithms on internet sites such as Amazon, Google, Netflix, and MySpace that determine what—and *whom*—we want. He argues that humans are destined to become mere cogs in the machine, stating that "what is spreading through the Web is not exactly artificial intelligence. For all the research that has gone into cognitive and computer science, the brain's most formidable algorithms—those used to recognize images or sounds or understand language—have eluded simulation. The alternative has been to incorporate people, with their special skills, as components of the Net" (Johnson).
[11] See "IBM's Watson supercomputer Crowned Jeopardy king."
[12] See Maerz, "'Jeopardy!' challenge, Day 2: Watson annihilates weak humans."
[13] See "It's Official: The Computer's Smarter."
[14] See Perna, "Game Over Humanity: Watson Wins 'Jeopardy!'"
[15] The correct response to the Final Jeopardy answer was "Who was Bram Stoker?" The clue's reference was to Stoker's most famous work *Dracula*, a novel that also invokes the man/machine binary not only through its myriad references to technology and technological innovations but more significantly through its presentation of Dracula as a threat to humanity: a "master" and "monster" of the "un-dead" (339).

**NOTES TO CHAPTER ONE**

[16] For an expanded etymology of "machine," see the *Oxford English Dictionary*.
[17] Walkowitz reads Conrad in the context of cosmopolitanism, emphasizing the ways in which identity is constructed in his novels through perception rather than "conditions of existence, what people really are" (38). Walkowitz argues persuasively that "Conrad's work attests to an emerging conflict between naturalness and nature, between a model of identity based on manners and a model based on instinct or race" (38). While not engaging explicitly in this discussion of Conrad's "naturalness" as Walkowitz comes to identify it, I am interested in the way the novel insists on blurring the boundaries between what is natural and what is unnatural through its articulation of the Professor, who forces others in the text to question who they are in relation to him.
[18] Blake's "London" depicts London as a world of madness and despair: "I wander thro' each charter'd street, / Near where the charter'd Thames does flow / And mark in every face I meet / Marks of weakness, marks of woe. / In every cry of every Man, / In every Infants cry of fear, / In every voice; in every ban, / The mind-forg'd manacles I hear" (*Songs of Innocence and Experience*, Oxford: Oxford UP, 1970). This image resonates with the Professor's declaration at the end of Conrad's *The Secret Agent*: "Madness and despair! Give me that for a lever, and I'll move the world" (236).
[19] Jacques Berthoud argues that "force is measured by the capacity to resist that perpetually recuperating embrace of the social, the cultural, the moral, the linguistic": the Professor embodies that force by his complete refusal to value human life over his mission to produce the perfect detonator, a machine with the capacity to exterminate (115).
[20] My reading of the novel diverges from Clark's in my insistence on the Professor as an active (rather than impotent) force in the text, whereas Clark argues that "Stevie and Winnie are the real anarchists" of *The Secret Agent* "whose violence ironically leads London to equilibrium" (3).

[21] As a philosophical work, *Anti-Oedipus* seeks to dismantle psychoanalysis by getting rid of the Oedipal structure as the locus of desire and relocating desire in the "real world" as the driving force for systems of production and capital. Psychoanalysis is reinvented as schizoanalysis as Deleuze and Guattari privilege the position of the schizophrenic as a site of excess and plurality. They write: "Desire and its object are one and the same thing: the machine, as a machine of a machine. Desire is a machine, and the object of desire is another machine connected to it" (*AO* 26).

[22] In this chapter of *Negotiations*, Deleuze reads the work of Michel Foucault. But he also offers more general insight on philosophical thought as something that is produced out of "a whole set of crises" (*N* 84). I find it useful to categorize Deleuze's work in these terms, as they also inform my reading of *The Secret Agent* as a novel in crisis.

[23] There are many books and articles in circulation that consider Deleuze and Guattari's unconventional style in relation to the content of their work. See, for example, Todd May's *Gilles Deleuze: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2005); John Rajchman's *The Deleuze Connections* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2000); Eugene W. Holland's "The Anti-Oedipus: Postmodernism in Theory; Or, the Post-Lacanian Historical Contextualization of Psychoanalysis" (*boundary 2* v.14.1/2).

[24] Deleuze and Guattari's introductory discussion of these three modes of cutting can be found in *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schitzophrenia*, pp.36-41. I find Bogue's reading of this section to be most concise and accessible for the purposes of this chapter, which is why I have quoted it at length.

[25] Graham's reputation as a revolutionary in England during this period was of great interest to Conrad and this letter articulates Conrad's fascination with Graham's anarchist ideology. The letter opens with Conrad's reading of Graham's political ideology. Conrad argues that his friend's "hopeless [idealism]" and insistence on promoting "faith, honour, [and] fidelity to truth" at all costs make him a "dangerous" figure within a State apparatus that works to maintain order and stability and that therefore threatens those who stand in its way of preserving that order and protecting its people. Conrad positions himself against Graham, stating firmly that the difference between them is Graham's absolute conviction that his "desire may be realized." Conrad admits that he does not believe, adding that, consequently, "if I desire the very same things no one cares" (*Collected Letters* 424-25). While Conrad's admiration for Graham's convictions is clear from their personal correspondence, Conrad also understands the danger of his friend's actions, a danger that is widely felt during this particular historical period as anarchists came to dominate newspaper headlines in both Britain and the United States with their demonstrations against political and social systems. This blend of admiration and caution found its way into the development of the character of the Professor in *The Secret Agent*. For a more detailed discussion of Conrad's relationship to R.B. Cunninghame Graham, see *Joseph Conrad's Letters to R.B. Cunninghame Graham*, ed. C.T. Watts. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1969. This relationship is also discussed in Part III of Christopher GoGwilt's *The Fiction of Geopolitics: Afterimages of Culture, from Wilkie Collins to Alfred Hithcock* (2000).

[26] Peter Lancelot Mallios's positions Conrad's knitting machine as a metaphor for the "very fundamental sociopolitical mechanism" or capitalist machine of twentieth-century England in his article "Reading *The Secret Agent* Now: The Press, the Police, the Premonition of Simulation" in *Conrad in the Twenty-first Century*. More expansively, Ian Watt reads this image of the knitting machine as revealing Conrad's "notion of the universe as a determinist mechanism denying all man's aspirations towards progress and reform" (3). This image also gives way to readings that position the machine as supernatural, or as something one might expect to emerge out of a science fiction novel. For example, Carola M. Kaplan argues that Conrad's depiction of "a monstrous machine in which humans are trapped" is haunting in its suggestion that the "workings" of the machine "are oblivious to human need and desire" (141). Of these readings of Conrad's knitting machine, only Martha A. Turner acknowledges

Conrad's divergence from traditional ways of reading the machine in history. That is, "mechanisms traditionally represent order and regularity; they are comprehensible and can be used productively. Conrad's mechanistic universe…seems indifferent to human desires and actions and may be impervious to reason as well. The knitting-machine signifies chaos rather than order, meaninglessness rather than knowability" (123).

[27] Conrad dedicated this novel to H.G. Wells, another famous writer of the machine as a destructive, apocalyptic force [*War of the Worlds* (1898)]. The full text of the dedication reads: "To H.G. Wells / the chronicler of Mr. Lewisham's love / the biographer of Kipps / and the historian of the ages to come / this simple tale of the XIX century / is affectionately offered" (Harkness and Reid 2).

[28] While the machine is an important image in Victorian literature, I do not want to assume that all Victorian writers are concerned with progress and innovation over the working class anxiety. I do, however, want to emphasize that artists and thinkers of this period look to the machine as a vehicle to progress and the prosperous age of Empire. Simultaneously, however, there is a traceable thread of the threat that technology poses despite innovation that deserves mention here. The image of the train, for example, arrives in both Trollope and Dickens (to name just a few examples) as a site of anxiety: the train will run you down and there is no stopping it. This is an example of an image that carries weight in thinking about technological advances in the twentieth century and what happens to the notion of progress when faced with the machine's acceleration.

[29] I use the term "war machine" here in a literal sense: the guillotine is a killing machine, read as a product of the French Revolution. But I also want to invoke a more theoretical reading of the term as it is adopted by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari explore the war machine as an abstract concept, as something that works against the State apparatus but that can also be appropriated by the State for its own use. Operating on the periphery, "exterior to the State apparatus" and therefore over and against the Law, the war machine relies on both the inside and the outside workings of the State in order to function (351). Most importantly it marks the alternative space of the nomad that is "localized and not delimited" (382). I will discuss the concept of the Deleuzean war machine in greater detail later in this chapter as part of my reading of Conrad's Professor, but for now I want to suggest that there are two readings of the war machine at work simultaneously here: first, the machine as a revolutionary apparatus or *thing*; and second, the machine as an abstract concept that opens up a new and often contradictory space alongside what Deleuze and Guattari identify as the "striated" (and therefore "limited and limiting") space of the State (382).

[30] The word "agent" here is used to evoke two related definitions of the term: first, as one "who operates in a particular direction, who produces an effect" and second, as a force that "produces phenomena" (*Oxford English Dictionary*). Both of these images emerge out of Conrad's *The Secret Agent* in the forms of Agent Verloc, introduced as having the appearance of a "well-to-do mechanic in business for himself," and the Professor, described throughout the text as pure force (29).

[31] This plot point is based on an actual event that took place in London in 1894. For a discussion of that event in relation to Conrad's novel see the chapter "The Secret Agent: Anarchism and the Thermodynamics of Law" in *Terrorism and Modern Literature: From Joseph Conrad to Ciaran Carson* by Alex Houen.

[32] A psychoanalytic reading of this moment might consider Stevie's remains as the Lacanian "body in bits and pieces" (see Jane Gallop's reading of Jacques Lacan's mirror stage in *Reading Lacan*; Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1985, p.79). In "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the *I* Function," Lacan writes: "this fragmented body…is regularly manifested in dreams when the movement of analysis reaches a certain level of aggressive disintegration of the individual. It then appears in the form of disconnected limbs or of organs exoscopically represented" (*Écrits*. trans. Bruce Fink. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2002. p.6). If the mirror stage

represents a past and a future simultaneously, we might suggest that the moment of Stevie's death produces a similar effect in *The Secret Agent*. As Jane Gallop argues in her reading of Lacan "No ground is ever definitively covered, and one always risks sliding all the way back. Hence the effect of anticipation is anxiety" (84). The anxiety produced by *The Secret Agent*, then, is manifested in the aftermath of the explosion that kills Stevie and disseminates his body in pieces, forcing the other characters of the novel to anticipate another fatal rupture in the fabric of their world.

[33] I borrow this heading from a phrase used by Frances Mulhern to characterize the Professor in her article "Inconceivable History: Storytelling as Hyperphasia and Disavowal" (797).

[34] Conrad, *The Secret Agent* (68).

[35] The Professor's spectacles are described in the text as "glittering," a characterization that positions him in relation to the Lacanian gaze and suggests his illusionary and inaccessible status as the novel's subject-supposed-to-know. See Lacan's *Seminar XI: The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*. Trans. Alan Sheridan. New York: W.W. Norton & Co. 1981. The glitter of the Professor's spectacles also allows us to read the Professor in relation to the Deleuzean nomad: "an errant point flashing here and there along the various paths inscribed on the surface" (Bogue 62). As nomad, the Professor is a threatening figure in his refusal to be pinned down. His appearance in the text is never guaranteed, but always anticipated. It is the anticipation of his presence that causes anxiety.

[36] Lacan tells us that, for Freud, "the characteristic of the drive is to be a *konstante Kraft*, a constant force" (*Seminar XI* 164).

[37] See Walter Goodman's "The Infection of Terrorism" published in *The New York Times* on June 28, 1977. Goodman uses Conrad's Professor as an introduction to his argument about how the figure of the terrorist in the later part of the twentieth century has changed since Conrad's time. Goodman's article focuses on terrorist acts in the South Moluccas, Croatia, Iraq, and Syria. Another article that invokes the Professor is Terry Teachout's "Mad Loner Builds Perfect Bomb," in which he compares the Professor to Theodore J. Kaczynski, who "was an avid reader of Joseph Conrad's novels" (19). While these articles are hardly representative of all of the different ways the Professor can be read in relation to other historical events and acts, they position the Professor as a figure whose presence in the modernist literary tradition is powerful enough to register outside of it.

[38] See Tom Reiss's article in *The New York Times*, "The True Classic of Terrorism" (September 11, 2005) and James Wood's discussion of the Professor in his *New Yorker* piece "Notes from Underground" (March 3, 2008).

**NOTES TO CHAPTER TWO**

[39] In my discussion of "archival technology" I am invoking Jacques Derrida's reading of the concept of the archive in *Archive Fever*. This concept is discussed in more detail in my fourth chapter, "From *Film* to Archive."

[40]I want to acknowledge that both of these works fall outside of historically constructed boundaries of modernism but maintain distinctly modernist investments, a point which helps me to demonstrate that the continuum that I set up in Chapter One between nineteenth- and twentieth-century attitudes towards the machine can be extended through the twentieth century to our contemporary moment. Beckett's play is written and debuted on stage in 1958 during a period that many scholars identify as the historical break between modernism and postmodernism. Ishiguro's novel is published in 2005 in a period that some scholars have identified as the post-postmodern or posthumanist moment of the late-twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. I prefer to read Ishiguro's novel as part of this more ambiguous "contemporary" moment that is still struggling to be defined, which places him in a similar position as Beckett as a transitional literary figure writing on the brink of something new. It is also interesting to think about the relation between the settings of these two texts. While there

is a fifty year gap between the publication dates of *Krapp's Last Tape* and *Never Let Me Go*, Beckett's work takes place in an ambiguous future (as indicated in Beckett's opening stage directions to the play) while Ishiguro's work opens in a decade of the past (his epigraph reads "England, late-1990s"). Ishiguro's protagonist Kathy H. looks backwards at least twenty years from this date, which places the majority of her narrative somewhere around the 1970s, offering a potential historical convergence of the two works in their fictionalized narrative spaces.

[41] Particular works that align these theorists with this concept are: Adorno's *The Culture Industry*; Baudrillard's *Simulacra and Simulation* and, as articulated in an earlier footnote, Benjamin's "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction."

[42] Derrida articulates "the history of (the only) metaphysics" as an expansive tradition, including writers ranging from "Plato to Hegel (even including Leibniz) but also, beyond these apparent limits, from the pre-Socratics to Heidegger" (*OG* 3).

[43] In order to make this point, Derrida acknowledges that speech, like writing, is subject to spacing: "Even before speaking, as I shall do further on, of a radical and a priori necessary infidelity, one can already remark its massive phenomena in mathematical script or in punctuation, in *spacing* in general, which it is difficult to consider as simple accessories of writing. That a speech supposedly alive can lend itself to spacing in its own writing is what relates it originarily to its own death" (*OG* 39).

[44] This word is used in Beckett's *Endgame* in a conversation between Hamm and Clov. In this scene, Hamm struggles, like Krapp, to find the words to express the environment in which he survives. The explosion of his voice in its violence towards Clov echoes Krapp's erratic behavior as he battles with his machine. The scene goes as follows:

HAMM: Nothing stirs. All is—
CLOV: Zer—
HAMM: (violently): Wait till you're spoken to!
(Normal voice.)
All is…all is…all is what?
(Violently.)
CLOV: What all is? In a word? Is that what you want to know? Just a moment.
(He turns the telescope on the without, looks, lowers the telescope, turns towards Hamm.)
Corpsed.
(Pause.)
Well? Content? (29-30)

While Hamm does eventually respond to Clov, the pause bears the weight of the emptiness that these characters face and reflect the hollowed out world of *Krapp's Last Tape*, a work that was written just one year after the debut of *Endgame* at the Royal Court Theatre in London in 1957.

[45] For a more detailed discussion of Krapp's displacement, see N. Katherine Hayles's reading of the play in her chapter titled "Voices out of Bodies, Bodies out of Voices: Audiotape and the Production of Subjectivity" in *Sound States: Innovative Poetics and Acoustical Technologies*, ed. Adalaide Morris.

**[46]** This scene is recalled several times in Kathy's narrative, but its most significant return occurs at the end of the novel through the voice of Madame, who remembers bearing witness to Kathy's performance of the song from a distance and who recounts her reading of the scene to Kathy at the end of the novel. The return to the scene from Madame's vantage point produces a playback effect that increases the fear of loss articulated in the song's refrain. As Madame tells her side of the story, playback comes to be read not only as a repetition, but as a repetition with a difference, creating an even wider gap between the "authentic" experience

(which comes to be read as always already an illusion) and the moment of the return. Madame narrates:

> When I watched you dancing that day, I saw something else. I saw a new world coming rapidly. More scientific, efficient, yes. More cures for the old sicknesses. Very good. But a harsh, cruel world. And I saw a little girl, her eyes tightly closed, holding to her breast the old kind world, one that she knew in her heart could not remain, and she was holding it and pleading, never to let her go. That is what I saw. It wasn't really you, what you were doing, I know that. But I saw you and it broke my heart. And I've never forgotten. (272)

Madame's assertion of her own misreading of this scene—articulated through her confession that "it wasn't really you…I know that"—reaffirms the failure of playback to recover any truth of Kathy's experience. On a larger scale, Madame's recollection of the scene as it anticipates "a new world coming rapidly," a world that is "harsh" and "cruel," reinforces the modernist anxiety about technology as a force to be reckoned with, one that challenges the world that we have come to know with a future unknown.

[47] Beckett's insistence on failure is discussed by Leo Bersani and Ulysse Dutroit in *Arts of Impoverishment*: "when Beckett speaks of failure as the artist's vocation, as 'his world,' he is not referring to the artist's subject matter; rather he is speaking of a failure intrinsic to the very process of artistic production. In the terms of the Three Dialogues, to fail does not mean to represent successfully existential failures or existential meaningless; it means to *fail to represent* (either meaninglessness or meaning)" (14).

[48] Virginia Woolf explores the vulnerability of the subject in relation to the recording machine through the breakdown of the gramophone in her novel *Between the Acts*. The mechanical "chuff chuff chuff" and "tick tick tick" of the gramophone's moving parts as it begins to break down during a long-awaited pageant give way to the anxious dispersal of its audience, exposing anxieties about the loss of communication and of identity in the postwar period in which the novel is set. The eerie refrain that Woolf attributes to the gramophone—"'*Dispersed are we*'"—resonates long after the pageant has ended as the characters question their place in the world and how they might preserve something of themselves within it: "they were suspended, without being, in limbo. Tick, tick, tick went the machine" (196-97; 178).

[49] In *Beckett and Aesthetics*, Daniel Albright suggests that there is something "unreal" about the tape recorder that Beckett uses in *Krapp's Last Tape* that seems to rhyme with Menand's characterization of the "irreal effect" of Kathy's narrative as playback. Albright writes: "no matter how faithfully the machine reiterates Krapp's old spiels, it is still a warped, unreal thing, a plot-contrivance, a 'stage image,' more than a credible piece of technology" (91).

[50] See Louis Menand's "Something About Kathy" and James Wood's "The Human Difference" for more commentary about the banality of Kathy's language and persona.

[51] See Rebecca Walkowitz's reading of Kathy's "unoriginality" in "Unimaginable Largeness" (12).

[52] In her reading of *Never Let Me Go*, Rebecca Walkowitz asserts: "Instead of thinking about the novel's comparison between humans and clones, we could think about its comparison between humans and cassette tapes" ("Unimaginable Largeness" 12).

[53] There are several excellent works in circulation that read the politics of race and class in *Never Let Me Go*. These articles include Lisa Fluet's "Immaterial Labors: Ishiguro, Class, and Affect"; Bruce Robbins's "Cruelty is Bad: Banality and Proximity in *Never Let Me Go*" (reprinted in a slightly different form as a chapter in Robbins's *Upward Mobility and the Common Good*); and Pascal Zinck's chapter titled "Kazuo Ishiguro's Otherhood" in

*Diasporic Literature and Theory—Where Now?*, ed. Mark Shackleton. These readings are crucial to thinking about the novel's global investments, but tangential to my particular argument about playback. Bringing these questions into the argument would broaden its scope and move us further away from the argument at hand.

[54] This is Daniel Albright's reading of Adorno's take on the voice over the gramophone in his essay "Nadelkurven" (Curves of the Needle 1928). Adorno argues that there is something authentic to value in the old records that exposed their wear and tear through cracks and "incidental noises" (qtd. in Albright 85). While these records are still copies, they take on a kind of uniqueness in their individual state of decline that is more faithful to its position as copy than, say, a copy that refused the wear and tear, proclaiming itself to be the original itself. As Albright suggests: "every movement to increase fidelity only exposes the illusory character of the reproduction all the more fully" (86).

**NOTES TO CHAPTER THREE**

[55] This piece was published in the *New Yorker* on June 2, 1975. The quotations taken from this essay can be found on pp. 37-39 of that issue.

[56] In his book *Artists of the Floating World: Contemporary Writers Between Cultures* Rob Burton explores the concept of the "floating world" as reflects a "suspension between two or more states of being" (10). Burton considers this concept through the works of four contemporary writers: Kazuo Ishiguro (whose 1986 novel *An Artist of the Floating World* inaugurates the conversation), Bessie Head, Bharati Mukherjee, and Salman Rushdie. Burton is most invested in thinking about how an increase in migration, which he defines more particularly as "the radical movements of peoples, cultures, and finances around the globe," after World War Two leads to a breakdown in the maintenance of national identity. I consider Spark to be among the "floating world" writers as she articulates her own vision of the world as a place of colliding ideologies, histories, and cultures. My argument will touch on only a few instances where Spark demonstrates this phenomenon, but a larger study of her life's work would reveal many more examples of these "worlds" (which, in turn, inform the construction of both individual and collective identities) that are shaped through the global trafficking of information and ideas. Most of this trafficking in Spark's work occurs through the media.

[57] Goble's *Beautiful Circuits: Modernism and the Mediated Life* provides a reading of "the mediated life" through the lens of American literature and film and media culture. Goble's complex reading of this phenomenon as it develops alongside modernism is articulated in the Introduction: "Communications Now Are Love" (1-25).

[58]See Stannard's discussion of Spark's illness and her recovery as it influenced her career as a novelist (151-155). Of particular interest in this period of Spark's life is the publication of Spark's first novel *The Comforters* whose protagonist, Caroline, suffers from hallucinations that include hearing strange voices and the "tap-tic-tap" of typewriter keys. Derek Stanford explains that this novel "uses autobiographical material freely" as Caroline's experience mirrors Spark's in many ways (123). Like Spark, Caroline is also a convert. Spark herself discusses the work as a reflection of these transformative years: "I suppose this first novel, *The Comforters*, really reflected my changed state. Its theme is really a convert and a kind of psychic upheaval" ("My Conversion" 25).

[59] In the essay "Edinburgh-born" Spark talks about exile as a state of being in the world: "Edinburgh is the place that I, a constitutional exile, am essentially exiled from. I spent the first 18 years of my life, during the Twenties and Thirties, there. It was Edinburgh that bred within me the conditions of exiledom; and what I have been doing since then but moving from exile into exile? It has ceased to be a fate, it has become a calling" (21).

[60] Marilyn Reizbaum explores this condition of wandering as a symptom of dislocation, conversion, and exile in Spark's life and work. I have been privileged to read the unedited version of her chapter titled "The Stranger Spark," which appears in *The Edinburgh Companion to Muriel Spark*, edited by Michael Gardiner and Willy Maley. All in-text citations are from the unedited version of the manuscript. I am grateful to the author for granting me permission to reference this work in my chapter.

[61] Steven Connor articulates a similar sense of the incorporation of technology into everyday life when he argues against readings of the disembodied voice that position it as "evidence of cultural trauma" in *Dumbstruck—A Cultural History of Ventriloquism*. He argues that "far from being dismayed or made anxious by the coming of the technological disembodied voice, we have, it might be said, become prematurely adjusted to it. The determination of some cultural historians to find amazement and anxiety at the coming of the telephone and the phonograph meets with a puzzling lack of evidence for cultural trauma. Although there were some who were intrigued and amazed by the new invention, in many ways, the contemporary reaction to the coming of the telephone seems to have been 'about time too'" (410).

[62] Acoustic technologies as defined by Steven Connor overlap with the archival technologies posited by Derrida in *Archive Fever*. These technologies include "the telephone, the phonograph, the gramophone, the microphone, the megaphone, the radio, and the tape-recorder" (*Dumbstruck*, 366).

[63] Spark's first-hand knowledge of the treasonous activities that took place during the Second World War inspires the backdrop of war that MacKay finds "crucial" to reading Spark's early novels. It is this political backdrop that situates Spark's work firmly within its specific historical context (509-12).

[64] In his reading of Spark's *The Mandelbaum Gate*, Frederick R. Karl argues that "for Muriel Spark, the 'other' may take many forms, but the real 'other' is one's awareness of God's presence, and everything else is ultimately a variation or a manifestation of this sense" (41). Karl's reading of the "other" in Spark's work is limited by his reading of her oeuvre as tethered to a particular religious ideology. It is useful to think about how this concept of "othering" that Karl reads as pervasive in Spark's work can be resituated in a reading of Spark's technologies, particularly the telephone whose dependence on an Other constitutes its very *Dasein*. See Avital Ronell's reading of Being and Other vis-à-vis Heidegger in *The Telephone Book*.

[65] All of the citations from this play are taken from the English television-screen version of *The Human Voice*, translated by Carl Wildman and adapted by Clive Exton. This version premiered on BBC television in 1966.

[66] Martin Stannard secures a connection between Muriel Spark and Jean Cocteau in the 2009 biography. Stannard writes: "Much of [Spark's] material, she admitted, now came from 'the glossies and the newspapers and print mags.' The remark might have seemed flippant but it was not. These, after all, had been Cocteau's working materials, and, more recently, those of postmodern art" (378).

[67] Recent box-office thrillers such as *Scream* (1996) and *The Ring* (2002) employ the telephone to this effect, but these films are hardly the only ones who use the telephone as a deadly weapon. For a more comprehensive reading of the telephone as a phenomenon that infiltrates these genres (and others), see Michel Chion's seminal work *The Voice in Cinema* (1999).

[68] Mark Goble does not reference Cocteau's play directly in *Beautiful Circuits*, but his discussion of Greta Garbo's final scene in the 1932 drama *Grand Hotel*, in which her repeated attempts to get her recently departed lover on the phone ("departed" in the sense that he has just been bludgeoned to death by the telephone) builds to a similar climax. Goble's reading of Garbo's "erotic inaccessibility" might produce a different reading of the woman caller in Cocteau's play as both calls open up a space for a third (or fourth, or fifth,…) party. Like the switchboard operator who listens in as Garbo places her call, Cocteau's audience cannot help

"overhearing" and therefore participating in the protagonist's desire, allowing for the displacement of the erotic exchange, a redirection of the call outside the boundaries of the text. Both play and film debuted in the early 1930s, making the parallel even more interesting for this discussion. See Goble, 130-32.

[69] In French, *parasiter* means both "to interfere on, with" and "to live as a parasite on" which maintains the reading of the telephone in *Memento Mori* as a potential threat to the characters who receive the call.

[70] This is not the only question that is unanswerable in *Memento Mori*. After all, the anonymity of the caller only prompts the reader, along with the characters, to wonder what is motivating the caller and, in turn, to attempt to determine what his/her message means. But the insistence on meaning is misleading, if not beside the point. Allan Pero argues that the gap produced by the voice is what "forms the very substance of the novel's mystery. The necessity of the memento mori lurks precisely in the impossibility of its verification; that is, one must remember in advance to die in order for it to be accomplished. Like the voice, death exceeds any attempt to fashion meaning out of it as an event" (561). In the attempt to close the case by locating the source of the voice, the characters in *Memento Mori* expose a desire for knowledge that the voice—in its dislocated presence over the telephone lines—makes impossible.

[71] Since *Memento Mori* takes place before the introduction of answering machines, the call in the novel is even more persistent since there is no one to stop the phone from ringing; the caller will continue to call until someone—not *something*—answers.

[72] In his reading of *The Comforters*, Frank Kermode links the concept of mediation first to the process of writing and then to the spread of disease. Kermode argues that "we are here made to see an affinity between novel-writing and mediumship (fraudulent and authentic in indeterminable degrees…) and between mediumship and the disease of epilepsy. Mediums, like novelists, speak in a variety of voices, depend on stock responses in their audiences; yet they are no more their own masters than epileptics, who suffer (as all the stories do) from atavism in the central nervous system." While epilepsy is, of course, not contagious, the analogy that Kermode offers between the medium and the disease echoes the link made by the London masses between the telephone and infection. There is something foreign about the telephonic system that registers in the inscrutability of the voices that pass through it. See Kermode, "*The Girls of Slender Means*" 176.

[73] This idea of radical exposure is inspired by Ronell's reading of the making of her own *Telephone Book*. She writes: "the telephone line forms an elliptical construction that does not close around a place but disperses the book, takes it into the streets, keeping itself *radically open* to the outside" (5, *my emphasis*).

[74] Godfrey is one of the few characters who willingly ventures outdoors and when he does, his paranoia gets the best of him and he finds himself hiding his car outside a bomb site, where it was not likely to garner attention: "he […] felt it necessary to park his car anonymously, and walk the rest of the way, by routes expressly devious, to Tite Street" (88).

[75] While Spark expressed a particular anxiety about being on the telephone—and there are multiple examples of her attempts to disconnect in Stannard's biography—Spark's articulation of the world as predicated on mediated experience in her novels is evidence of the pervasiveness of media during her lifetime and of her inability to escape it. Towards the end of the biography, Stannard provides an anecdote that demonstrates how Spark's desire to stay off the telephone is made possible by her purchase of a fax machine: "It seemed miraculous: instant, accurate communication and the promise of huge savings on postage and time. It was also the perfect instrument of discrimination. There was only one number for both telephone and fax. She rarely heard anything beyond the ringing tone. None of these attempted communications was answered as telephone calls. Questions came through in writing, responses could be carefully considered, accurate records maintained. […] it was like having a private telegraph service. For those with whom she wished to be in touch, replies would

come back within minutes" (493). Spark's fax machine serves as a substitute for the telephone – but it maintains the connection to the mediated world that I argue is impossible to sever.

[76] In keeping with the desire on the part of the girls of slender means to live up to a certain standard of living by keeping up appearances, it should be noted that the characterization of The May of Teck Club as a "hostel" is particularly frowned upon within the community itself. Spark's narrator divulges that "no one at the May of Teck Club referred to it as a hostel, except in moments of low personal morale" (26).

[77] After the collapse of the Club, Joanna Childe's father comes to London to see the site of his daughter's death. Nicholas Farringdon takes him to the grounds and the two of them quietly contemplate the scene. The narrator tells us that the Club has become "one of the familiar ruins of the neighborhood, as if it had been shattered years ago" (136). After a few minutes, the rector says, "There's really nothing to see. […] it's all gone, all elsewhere" (137).

[78] In "A User's Manual," Ronell introduces the "problem" that she and her editors encountered in the making of the book. *The Telephone Book*, Ronell argues, required an "open switchboard, one that disrupts a normally functioning text equipped with proper shock absorbers." I would argue that Spark's design of her own text exhibits a concern for a similar problem in the making. Ronell advises her readers to "respond as you would to the telephone, for the call of the telephone is incessant and unremitting. When you hang up, it does not disappear but goes into remission. This constitutes its *Dasein*." If the telephone seems peripheral to *Girls*, it's because it's gone into remission, but I argue that the telephone should be central to any reading of the text as it exposes the larger historical and cultural implications of Spark's tiny novelistic network.

[79] See Derrida's articulation of "being-at-the-telephone" as a reflection on the subject position of Joyce's Leopold Bloom in "*Ulysses* Gramophone: Hear say yes in Joyce." Derrida writes: "This can be read as a particular paradigm: he is at the telephone, he is always there, he belongs to the telephone, he is riveted yet destined there. His being is a being-at-the-telephone. He is hooked up to a multiplicity of voices and answering machines. His being-there is a being at the telephone, in the way that Heidegger speaks of a being for the death of Dasein. And I am not playing with words when I say that: Heideggarian Dasein is also a being-called, it always is […] a Dasein that can only comply with itself using the Call as a starting point, a call which has come from afar, which does not necessarily use words, and which, in a certain way, is not saying anything" (40-41).

[80] Nicholas characterizes his relationship to The May of Teck Club in this way when he decides to "do everything nice for Jane, except sleep with her, in the interest of two projects: the publication of his book and his infiltration of the May of Teck Club in general and Selina in particular" (65).

[81] This is only one of many instances of the failure of communication in the future narrative of the call. In the very first phone call, to cite another example, Dorothy Markham mistakes Jane's mention of "Haiti" for "Tahiti" and goes on to talk about how "marvelous" it is there, casting aside the tragic news of Nicholas's death in favor of lighter conversation (10).

[82] This concept of the telephone as dummy is borrowed from Steven Connor's reading of the listening apparatus in Florence McLandburg's 1873 short story "The Automaton-Ear," described by Connor as a "proto-technological fantasy" in which a professor sets out to create an instrument "that will allow him to hear all the fugitive, inaudible sounds of human history." For the full reading of this story see *Dumbstruck—A Cultural History of Ventriloquism* (360-61).

[83] The significance of Haiti as the site of Nicholas's untimely death has been largely ignored in the criticism of this novel. While I do not have adequate space to rigorously pursue this line of inquiry here, I am interested in how this critical gap reflects the gaps produced by the telephone calls in the novel. I would argue that casting Nicholas into Haiti extends the novel's geographical boundaries and invites us to look beyond London and reflect upon how the

violence and instability of this particular moment in the history of England might be read within a global context.

[84] Nicholas's idealization of Joanna rhymes with his impression of The May of Teck Club as "an image incomprehensible to itself" (71). Joanna's incomprehensibility positions her alongside Nicholas as a strange figure whose origins are unknown: "Nobody at The May of Teck Club knew her precise history, but it was generally assumed to be something heroic" (25). As heroine and anti-hero respectively, Joanna and Nicholas come to represent what cannot be contained by the novelistic network.

[85] For a comprehensive and insightful study of this vast and complicated line of inquiry about perception as it emerges in the 19th century with the invention of the camera obscura, see Jonathan Crary's *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1990.

**NOTES TO CHAPTER FOUR**

[86] Beckett is explicit about E maintaining this forty-five degree angle to O in his general notes to *Film*: "Until end of film O is perceived by E from behind and at an angle not exceeding forty-five degrees. Convention: O enters percipi = experiences anguish of perceivedness, only when this angle is exceeded. […] E is therefore at pains, throughout pursuit, to keep within this 'angle of immunity' and only exceeds it (1) inadvertently at beginning of part one when he first sights O (2) inadvertently at beginning of part two when he follows O into vestibule and (3) deliberately at end of part three when O is cornered. In first two cases he hastily reduces angle" (Beckett 11).

[87] For full discussion of the iris and pupil and their structures and functions in the body, see *Gray's Anatomy*, pp. 1329-33.

[88] The newsfeeds that Haneke offers in *71 Fragments of a Chronology of Chance*, *Code Unknown* and *Caché* demonstrate how news of the outside (of global conflicts and national events) enters the private, domestic spaces of the home. These newsfeeds, which often resonate with the conflicts that are taking shape within Haneke's films, however, are not digested by the characters but rather experienced on a surface level as "spectacle" or background noise. Many of these newsfeeds depict scenes of violence and war, but the characters do not visibly react to these images. As Kalpana Rahita Seshadri argues: "the shock effect of film is today entirely taken over by television, which renders the violent shocks of reality a routine affair. In one of the most revealing moments in [*Cache*], Georges turns off the empty 'terrorist' video they have been watching and switches to television which is showing an accident and people being taken in a stretcher to the hospital. Georges and Anne barely glance at the TV […]. They are more unsettled by the empty video where nothing happens than they are by the violent and spectacular events on TV" (43-44).

[89] For example, when Anna is looking for the dead dog, Paul turns and winks at the camera, as if sharing a secret. In another scene, when Paul is asking the family to bet on whether or not they will live to see the next morning, he looks straight into the camera and asks the audience: "What do you think? Do you think they have a chance of winning? You are on their side, aren't you? So, who will you bet with?" (*Funny Games*). By asking the audience what they think, Haneke's *Funny Games* blurs the boundaries between reality and fiction, presenting his viewers with the choice to become accomplices in the acts of violence that are being produced.

[90] In an interview with the journal *Cineaste*, Haneke responds to a question about the relationship between Georges and Majid by explaining that "We don't really know which one of the characters is lying—just as we don't know in real life. You can't say that the poor are only poor and good and the rich are only rich and evil. Life is far more complex and as a filmmaker and artist, I'm trying to explore the complexities and contradictions of life. I hope that, for that reason, the film is unsettling and disturbing—mainly because we don't know

how to react" (Porton 51). Paul Gilroy also speaks to the paralysis caused by *Caché*, but his analysis of the film's effect on its audience produces negative consequences: "We leave the theater jolted but with no clear sense of how to act more justly or ethically. Instead, Haneke invites his audience to become resigned to its shame, discomfort and melancholia" (235).

[91] In *Looking Awry*, Slavoj Žižek defines this notion of looking awry in relation to the Lacanian gaze and the *objet petit a* as the object-cause of desire. He writes: "if we look at a thing straight on, i.e., matter-of-factly, disinterestedly, objectively, we see nothing but a formless spot; the object assumes clear and distinctive features only if we look at it 'at an angle,' i.e., with an 'interested' view, supported, permeated, and 'distorted' by *desire*" (11-12).

[92]An interesting point of convergence between Beckett's and Haneke's films emerges in the original manuscript for Beckett's *Film*. The first scene of this screenplay, like the first scene of Haneke's film, is set on a common street during the afternoon. Beckett indicates in his notes that accompany the manuscript that he wants this scene to play out as people go about their daily routines, seeing each other being seen by one another. This vision of the everyday street scene anticipates the opening sequence of *Cache* in which nothing out of the ordinary happens. Beckett's original scene, however, was deleted from *Film* due to technical difficulties with the location of the shoot (Schneider).

[93] The house, in this example, is that of the lawmaker, which posits another relationship (that is, Georges' relation to the law or his position as an institutional figure) to consider in another context.

[94] David Sorfa also discusses the tension produced within the domestic space of *Caché*, suggesting that there is "an instability within the concept of home, which pretends to require only itself, but, in fact, relies on the existence of the other, always perceived as threat, for its own existence" (99).

[95] Another image that returns throughout the film is that of the rooster, an image that is finally contextualized in a scene from Georges' childhood in which young Majid beheads the animal in front of a terrified Georges, who watches as the headless body flounders hopelessly on the ground at his feet. Both of these images project visual representations of the lies that Georges later confesses he told about Majid in his childhood, lies that, for many critics of the film, hold him accountable for Majid's death and more generally signify the burden of French guilt in the wake of the French-Algerian war.

[96] Alenka Zupančič's reading of Lacan on Hamlet is useful to this reading of Georges' blindness in *Cache*. According to Lacan, Hamlet is guilty "from the moment he enters the game—guilty of existing" (qtd. in Zupančič 173). Guilt, as defined by Zupančič, "in the sense of symbolic debt, arises when the subject knows that the Other knows. […] In a whodunit novel, the question of guilt is resolved by explaining the crime and revealing the murderer, while in Hamlet this revelation serves only to inaugurate guilt—it places the hero in a position where he is 'guilty without being guilty', guilty at the very level of his existence, guilty simply on account of the fact that he knows." (183). But what, she asks later, does the subject know? There is a kind of excess of knowledge that the subject does not have conscious access to but that he in some way understands as his desire and that he therefore incorporates it into his being. The idea that knowledge is 'dislocated' from the subject is the "origin of the tragedy of Oedipus," according to Zupančič (186). I'm not sure that I want to get into Laurent's desire in *Cache* beyond what I've already discussed, but I think the theme of pursuit at work in this scene—and Georges' incessant reiterations of the question "*what do you want from me?"* where the *you* can be read as the camera and/or its mysterious operator— ties into this idea. This game that Laurent invests himself in (while simultaneously attempting to disavow himself from) eventually leads to Majid's death and subsequently to the moment of blinding, which can be read through his attempt to escape perception.

[97] Jacques Rancière helps us to consider the motivation behind Georges' silence and his inability to react throughout the film, suggesting that "there is no appropriate language for

witnessing. […] It is the very language whereby aesthetic fiction is opposed to representative fiction. And one might at a pinch say that the unrepresentable is lodged precisely here, in the impossibility of an experience being told in its own appropriate language" (126).

**NOTES TO CHAPTER FIVE**

[98] This fall, which occurs on the very first page of the *Wake*, also serves as an introduction to Finnegan: "The fall…of a once wallstrait oldparr is retaled early in bed and later on life down through all christian minstrelsy. The great fall of the offwall entailed at such short notice the pftjschute of Finnegan, erse solid man, that the humptyhillhead of humself pumptly sends an unquiring one well to the west in quest of his tumptytumtoes: and their upturnpikepointandplace is at the knock out in the park where oranges have been laid to rust upon the green since devlinsfirst loved livvy" (3).
[99] This word is part of the sentence that becomes the title of the collection of early reviews of Joyce's *Work in Progress*, a collection commissioned by Joyce and gathered in collaboration with Samuel Beckett: *Our Exagmination Round His Factification for Incamination of Work in Progress*. In the context of the *Wake* itself, this sentence emerges after the question: "His producers are they not his consumers?" (497). I offer this question here as a side note to my discussion as it reflects the idea that the reader of the book—as a consumer—is also its producer. That is, the book is not only to be read as the work of a single author, but as the product of a network of readers that inform its legacy and sustainability.
[100] In her article "iSpace: Printed English after Joyce, Shannon and Derrida" Lydia H. Liu offers a rich overview of Joyce's anticipation of the computer age and cyberspace as she explores how reading Joyce alongside Claude Elwood Shannon's work on information theory and Jacques Derrida's engagements with arché-writing and communication technologies helps to "[explore] whether the perceived entanglements between literature and technoscience can promise a new understanding of the nature and function of the phonetic alphabet and alphabetical writing" (517).
[101] Susan Stanford Friedman understands planetarity "as an epistemology, not an ontology. On a human scale, the 'worldness' of the term invokes—to echo Glissant—a polylogue of languages, cultures, viewpoints, and standpoints on modernism/modernity. It requires attention to modes of local and translocal meaning-making and translation, to processes and practices of perception and expression on a global scale. It is not nominalist, fundamentalist: it doesn't name a singular modernism/modernity, therefore privileging one over all the others. It must, by its very 'worldness,' encompass multitudes ona global grid of relational networks. And that means encompassing contradictions, tensions, oppositions, and asymmetries" (494).
[102] The title of the 2011 Modernist Studies Association Conference in Victoria, B.C. Canada, "Modernist Networks," suggests that conversations about network culture and the possibilities it opens up is of particular interest to current scholars in the field of modernist studies. The 2010 Modernist Studies Association Conference, "The Languages of Modernism", also offered several panels and seminars that explored intersections between literature, language, and technology and/or considered the changing shape of modernist studies in the twenty-first century. Such panels included: "Digital Modernism," "Modernism and the Languages of Modern Media," "Theory and the Archive," "Modernism and the New Cosmopolitanism," "Modernism's Global Economy," and "New Forms of the Book: Modernist Texts, Digital Editions, Virtual Libraries, Bookstores Real and Imagined." In his 2009 article "MyspaceModernism" David M. Earle articulates the importance of "marketing" modernism to students through the use of digital networking tools in the classroom, which suggests that modernism as a movement lends itself to network-thinking (478-79). Many of these critical and pedagogical engagements were inspired by Douglas Mao and Rebecca Walkowitz's 2008 *PMLA* article "The New Modernist Studies," which I discuss in my Introduction.

[103] As discussed in my previous chapter, the Derridean archive can never be constituted as a complete or totalizing whole and therefore what is produced out of the archival process is not a singular or transparent event or meaning but rather a collection of interpretations, experiences, and voices that do not—and cannot—fully cohere. In "Planitarity: Musing Modernist Studies" Susan Stanford Friedman articulates a similar notion of the archive through her discussion of collage as an example of a planetary mode of scholarly practice. Friedman writes: "collage is the archive of radical juxtaposition, the scholar's act of paratactic cutting and pasting. It establishes a montage of differences where the putting side by side illuminates those differences at the same time that it spotlights commonalities. Ideally, collage is a non-hierarchical act of comparison, a joining that illuminates both commensurabilities and incommensurabilities" (493).

[104] While there is a wealth of scholarship on network culture and complexity theory available for our consideration, I am drawn to Taylor's work for its investment in the interplay between literature, theory, and art as it reflects modernist experimentation with narrative forms and genres.

[105] In his 2004 article "Joyce, the Propheteer" Jonathan E. Goldman discusses Joyce as a self-engineered celebrity and articulates the significance of his self-proclaimed legacy as it contributes to the fantasy of the impenetrable author and his impenetrable text. Goldman writes: "By establishing the author as both a function of writing and the means of decoding it, Joyce enacts a fantasy of a complete and bounded subjectivity uncontaminated by and impermeable to the outside world. In that he was the first to use the logic of celebrity to transform the author in such an overtly grandiose manner, I consider Joyce's production of the author the best demonstration of how modernism enabled the popular celebrity to serve as 'a sort of Platonic ideal of the human creature' as Roland Barthes calls it" (85). Recent projects that engage the construction of celebrity in modernism on a broader scale include Timothy W. Galow's 2010 article "Literary Modernism in the Age of Celebrity" (*Modernism/modernity*) and Aaron Jaffe's *Modernism and the Culture of Celebrity* (2005).

[106] Derrida describes "the mixture of assurance and distress that one can feel in 'Joyce scholars'" ("UG" 50). This affective response on the part of both the reader and the critic is pervasive in scholarly criticism on Joyce and his oeuvre. Contributions that highlight this engagement with affect within the Joyce Industry are Leo Bersani's "Against Ulysses" (2001); Sean Latham's "Hating Joyce Properly" (2002); and Derek Attridge's "On Being a Joycean" (*Joyce Effects* 2000).

[107] For more expansive reviews of contemporary scholarship that engages Joyce and the machine see Louis Armand's "Introduction: Literary Engines" and Mark Nunes's, "Gaps and Convergences in the Joycean Network" in *joyceMedia: James Joyce, Hypermedia & Textual Genetics*, edited by Louis Armand.

[108] Stephen's sense of being connected to something bigger than himself, linked to a past that forever intrudes upon the present, is echoed in the final stanza of another exemplary modernist text: T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*. Joyce's channeling of Eliot (or vice versa, for these works were both published in 1922) considers these writers as participants in the generative and associative network of modernism. Looking at Eliot's closing stanzas, we can begin to posit the connection. Eliot's speaker states:

> I sat upon the shore
> Fishing, with the arid plain behind me
> Shall I at least set my lands in order?
> London Bridge is falling down falling down falling
> down
> […]
> These fragments I have shored against my ruins
> (424-31)

The image of the dissipating landscape conjured by Stephen Dedalus in "Proteus" resonates in Eliot's scene through the musings of the fisherman who sits on the shore and casts his line out in front of him, considering his relation to the world that surrounds him. The question of how to set his lands in order—to map the landscape that is already "behind" him—is answered by the repetition of the fall: *falling down falling down falling down*. Both Stephen Dedalus and the fisherman are lost on the shores of their ruins, tethered to a landscape that refuses stability and order. The relation between Joyce and Eliot as significant players in the foundation of modernist networks is also acknowledged by Michael North in *Reading 1922*. North argues that the publication of *Ulysses* and *The Waste Land* marked 1922 as "a definitive break in literary history" (3). North's study looks at this break as opening up different nodes in the modernist network: his book explores the intersections between literary production, mass media, popular culture, and politics.

[109] Some important contributions to the study and history of the sublime are: Andrew Ashfield and Peter de Bolla, *The Sublime: A Reader in British Eighteenth-Century Aesthetic Theory*; Christine Battersby, *The Sublime, Terror and Human Difference*; Edmund Burke and James T. Boulton, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful*; Frances Ferguson, *Solitude and the Sublime: Romanticism and the Aesthetics of Individuation*; Philip Shaw, *The Sublime*; Joseph Tabbi, *Postmodern Sublime: Technology and American Writing from Mailer to Cyberpunk*; Thomas Weiskel, *The Romantic Sublime: Studies in the Structure and Psychology of Transcendence*.

[110] For a more detailed reading of the relation between modern art and the sublime, see the section titled "The sublime and the avant-garde" in Lyotard's "Answer to the Question: What is the Postmodern."

[111] This emphasis on the "monstrousness" of the sublime anticipates the crisis of overload and excess that is integral to the constitution of the network. For example, Samuel Beckett's oft-cited characterization of Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* as "not about something" but rather "*that something itself*" gives weight to the transformative nature of Joyce's work (14). Beckett reminds us that for Joyce "words are not the polite contortions of 20th century printer's ink. They are alive. They elbow their way on to the page, and glow and blaze and fade and disappear" (16). In *Finnegans Wake*, by example, "the traced words run, march, halt, walk, stumble at doubtful points, stumble up again" in restless movement across the page (*FW* 114). What is this image of the text come alive if not a return to the horror of creation articulated in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*? de Man argues that "the notion of the sublime [is] a topic that no eighteenth century treatise of aesthetics is ever allowed to ignore" (73). In light of this assertion, this brief gesture to Shelley's work seems all the more relevant.

[112] Lawrence's charge to put a bomb underneath "the whole scheme of things" is his solution for the future of the modernist novel, which he considers to be on its deathbed (519). Lawrence writes:

> the public will scream and say its sacrilege: because, of course, when you've been jammed for a long time in a tight corner, and you get really used to its stuffiness and its tightness, till you find it suffocatingly cozy; then, of course, you're horrified when you see a new glaring hole in what was your cosy wall. You're horrified. You back away from the cold stream of fresh air as if it were killing you. But gradually, first one and then another of the sheep filters through the gap, and finds a new world outside. (520)

This venture to make the novel new is both radical and difficult as it involves a breaking out of what is known to face the unknown. As we see with the sublime encounter, this explosion has potentially fatal consequences. But this is a chance worth taking, Lawrence argues, as it is what is necessary for the novel—and, by extension, for modernism—to evolve.

[113] My acknowledgement and thanks to curator Lesley Johnstone of the Musée d'art Contemporain de Montréal for granting me permission cite images of the gallery and Savard's work from the exhibit.

[114] Johnstone writes: "the reference is the spring for this trap, insofar as it induces external relationships that the work prompts us to see but does not confirm. Whether referring to something located elsewhere, or embodying or showing a secure value (an authority) whose effect is inevitably equivocal, since it suggests that the artist retains something from the force she draws upon, the reference presents a puzzle that the captivating power of the work's visual effect deters us from solving" (89).

[115] Friedman revised this talk into the article "Planetarity: Musing Modernist Studies" published in *Modernism/modernity* in September 2010. All of my parenthetical citations refer to the published article.

[116] Later in *The Post Card*, Derrida returns to that moment in the graveyard, articulating the desire to return to the Fluntern Cemetary in Zurich and to Joyce "and read out loud sitting on his knees, starting with the beginning (Babel, the fall, and the Finno-Phoenician motif,…" (240). As Derrida imagines himself reading Joyce upon the knees of that "colossal" statue, he weaves his own fantasy with quotations from Joyce's *Wake*, taking us (his readers) through the work and concluding with the question (and these are Joyce's words): *Is the strays world moving mound of what static babel is this, tell us?*

[117] Among Zoller's patents are those for "Seconds impulse sending effected by a clockwork," "Apparatus for the registration of signals in automatic telephone installations," and "Method and Means for transmission and registration of signals."

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