

TEXTS AS TECHNOBODIES: POST (RE)READWRITING

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For bodies everywhere

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Through this thesis I abandon common humanistic and human-centered conceptions of animate and inanimate bodies. The border between animate/inanimate has become increasingly porous, and technology has begun to more obviously permeate this borderland—not as mediator but as body—simultaneously equal to and different from any other body. Amidst postexceptionalism all bodies are laid out horizontally. The status of animate can no longer be used as a mean of organizing bodies.

To enter fully into unorganized relationships with all those bodies around us we have to become curious about the symbiotic relationships that compose our own bodies. Reading and writing, as technobodies are as present and deeply imbedded in our bodies as any bacterium.

Writing (and the simultaneous reading that always occurs) is a physical impression of the multiplicity implicit in these relationships, and the text, contrary to Plato, responds. As technobody it engages in becoming-reader/writing as reader/writer moves towards becoming-text, and it is impossible to read/write the same sentence twice or even once—it moves and changes along our reading. Throughout this piece I

engage with Derrida's text *The Post Card: From Socrates to Freud and Beyond* (1979).

"Envois" acts as both trace and guide in this endeavor.

CHAPTER 1 POST SCRIPT

This project grew out of a desire to begin reading and writing toward indigestion, toward a conscious and physical understanding and response to my consumptive actions. I had intended to explore how Donna Haraway's notions companion species and messmates function when it is the written text as equal body that I consume (and that consumes me). Haraway writes in her recent book *When Species Meet* that there is "a simple obligation of companion species": you must "become curious about what" in this case the text "might actually be doing, feeling, thinking, or perhaps making available ... [by] looking back at" you (20). And toward further clarifying this obligation for my own expressions it can be noted that there is an extended obligation to not anthropomorphize the text, to be curious beyond familiarity. If written bodies respond rather than react, they respond differently than I do, and it is through expectations of an idealized human response that bodies of all sorts are cast as lesser beings. Moving through works by David Wills, Katherine Hayles, and Haraway, and toward several of Jacques Derrida's texts, I want to explore the collapse of the animate/inanimate divide. This paper is the expression of that curiosity, so that while I have not yet fully engaged Haraway's indigestion I have taken steps toward imagining possible means of engaging written bodies.

In this thesis I engage Derrida's notion of the iterability, developed in large part through "Signature Event Context" and *Limited Inc*, of the mark as the means by which written bodies fully respond rather than merely react to encounters with other bodies. Written texts function in a middle ground as both supplement and body, and my

curiosities are driven toward the possibilities and potentialities of relationship with texts as distinct bodies, technobodies that blend through the human body.

Toward this end I move through a (re)readwriting where, following Derrida's moves in "Plato's Pharmacy," "one must then, in a single gesture, but doubled, read and write," so that reading and writing are accomplished simultaneously, a double gesture of always rereading what is written and rewriting what is read (*Dissemination* 65). And in that doubling there is always a retreat, a turning backwards all the while doubled. The text is always encountered from behind, and reading and writing always retrace the text that has always already been incorporated in the body. As I consider iterability as the responsive gesture of a text, then it is along the path of this retreat, through this distancing, that it functions in relation to a (re)readwriter, and it is this notion of distinct position and motion without temporal succession.

Amidst the others, my main focus lays with Derrida's text "Envois" contained in *The Post Card*, originally published in 1980 and translated in 1987. As I begin to type and retype, my reading of "Envois" begins in earnest. "Envois" is a nervous text; indeterminate, it resists a stable, sedate reading, and as I (re)readwrite through it I feel as though motions are always anticipated. Derrida situates "Envois" as "the preface to a book I have not written"; it situates me as a second comer, so that it is always at my back even as I (re)readwrite (3). The text, as physical body, too becomes indeterminate and porous as various passages disappear only to be replaced by 52 blank spaces—open invitations for rewritings, reimaginings, rememberingings with hidden referents. These become gaps to retreat across and in. Early in the text the specter of the "bad reader" is invoked: "the reader in a hurry to be determined, decided upon deciding ... it

is always bad to foretell. It is bad, reader, no longer to like retracing one's steps" (Derrida, "Envois" 4). It is bad, then, to attempt encounters without a careful curiosity, without watching for the trace to (re)readwrite along. These bad readings, where text is base, familiar other, are what I hope to move against, so as I follow behind "Envois" I encounter its potential responses as unfamiliar.

The Post Card has been encountered by a variety of (re)readwriters since its initial publication, and, as in this paper, the bulk of attention has been paid to "Envois." Gregory Ulmer, in 1981, published an exploratory review, "The Post-Age," of the French text. He frames his reading through the anticipation of a shift, "a new object (and mode) of study and communication," and he takes up *The Post Card* as showing how "Derrida himself intends to enter into the question of the media" through Heidegger (39-40). He moves toward an understanding of *The Post Card* as a text in the second stage of grammatology that gestures toward a third stage that "must be performed in the double language of film and video" (56).

David Wills first wrote about *The Post Card* in a piece published in 1984, "Post/Card/Match/Book/Envois/Derrida." In this text alongside traces of love, he focuses on *adestination* and its affects. Wills reads "Envois" as revealing and holding together the paradox that a post card, due to the function of the mark, the distancing of the mark, carries with it the possibility that it "can *not arrive*" (22). Wills takes up *The Post Card* again in 1995 in his text *Prosthesis*, paying specific attention to ways prosthesis and supplement run through "Envois." The mark upon which this reading turns is a right facing parenthetical with no left facing pair. In 2005 Wills published *Matchbook*, a collection of essays predominately written around "Envois." In a rewriting of his first

essay on *The Post Card* he repositions *adestination* as a reconfiguration of iterability from “Signature Event Context” (45). These essays move through “Envois” and various notions of death, technology, and distance, along with others. Wills writes that “Envois” is the “determinate text of the Derridean corpus,” and its presence is felt as he moves through it alongside a plethora of Derrida’s texts.

This text, too, moves through “Envois,” begins to incorporate “Envois” as I creep toward a possible indigestion of such an incorporation. As I begin a consideration of written bodies as potential companion species, specifically exploring possible configurations for human/textual comings together, I engage “Envois” as a text in motion, reading to incorporate and be incorporated by the reader. The place of the post card as already in motion but deliverable invites a (re)readwriting as any given (re)readwriter is incorporated simultaneously in both positions. “Envois” is a text that seems to invite indigestion, and through a deliberate curiosity it might be possible to move toward that.

CHAPTER 2 CONSUMPTION/CONVERSATION

Toward the beginning of "Envois" Derrida writes a short letter directed, misdirected perhaps, at multiple figures. It begins with a gap made clear by a mid-sentence start: "of course it is to Socrates that I am addressing myself at this very moment, you are all a crowd, my sweet love, and you see him reading me at this very instant, already in the course of answering me" (67). The first of seven from 7 September 1977, this post card collapses a multiplicity of possible readers; it is peppered with disappeared passages and revolves around an unnamed she, delinquencies, death and killing. The post card itself is rendered a means of killing as it is sent "through *meurtrières* [vertical slots in the wall of a fortification for projecting weapons; murderesses]" (67-8). It ends, following a gap, "We have never yet seen each other. Only written" (Derrida, "Envois" 68). This closing statement can be read between the literal and metaphorical as it gestures toward different possibilities for relation. It can be (re)readwritten with this death dealing in mind, and with a shift toward a consumptive killing sender and recipient become a double ouroboros; we, textual and human body, have never yet ever conversed with each other. Only eaten. And while we might initially believe that there is a choice between conversing with a body or consuming it, in the end there was really never any choice to be made. All interaction between bodies can be rendered down to a consumptive act. There is, of course, a question of the difference between the physical consumption of flesh and the myriad means by which we consume without killing. This distinction, though, is troubled as we look toward the relationships that we engage in daily, especially written ones. The (re)readwriter

inscribes her or his own absence and is consumed, eaten by the text he or she re)readwrites.

“You tell me that you too are writing someone dead whom you do not know.... Therefore you kill me in advance (it is true that often I await your signs like death sentences), but you also bring back to life” (Derrida, “Envois” 159). And as Derrida writes to the text itself, it as a body assumes the “you,” and as (re)readwriter I in turn ingest the text as we, both text and (re)readwriter, take up the “you,” but in the killing, the conversing, the eating the text, too, consumes and re-embodies. Metaphor and material are muddled as promethean bodies continue to persist through daily devouring, and these bodies are devoured, they are broken down, ingested and incorporated. Bodies are not fixed to a single physical state, but flow as multiplicities in assemblage with physical and non-physical aspects. Donna Haraway, in her piece “A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century” originally published in 1985, begins with a rundown of the collapsing binaries that once established the imaginary of the pure human body. It is this collapse that allows for the post-human body. “The boundary between physical and non-physical is very imprecise for us”; bodies are engaged with all manner of machines and forces; “they are everywhere and they are invisible” (Haraway “Cyborgs” 153). Bodies are built of multiplicities and redundancies so that while the difference for the consumed-other rests with the continuation or lack thereof of a particular body (broken down, devoured, incorporated into its consumer or promethean in its duration, all the while eaten by hungry fingers and eyes and tongues only to reform day after day), there is little difference to be found on the other side of the equation. In *When Species Meet* written

more than twenty years after “Cyborg Manifesto,” Haraway in conversation with Derrida states that “there is no way to eat and not to kill,” so that even as we devour those bodies that continue to endure we, always as both, simultaneously, killers and killed, are killing and being reborn, reformed as bodies (Haraway, “Species” 295). We can look toward those human bodies we have grown accustomed to simply consuming as a readily available example (and this positing as example is another consumption): bus drivers, customer support personnel, the immense swaths of hidden laborers, Walmart greeters, teachers. This is not to say that these killings and deaths are trivial; we must move, instead, toward the opposite—that there is no such thing as a trivial death. All interactions become heavy with death, though not necessarily Hegel’s life or death struggle, and we should pay careful attention to it because indigestion becomes apparent through these deaths. We do real harm, we cannot stop doing harm to all those bodies we encounter, and the same is done to us.

There is no escaping the act of consumption if we, as bodies, are to endure. Haraway as she considers relations of use, bluntly states that “dying and killing are not optional”; there is no way of getting around the requirement that we must kill to survive, consumption is not optional, and an attempted opting out may be but another form of consumption (Haraway, “Species” 74). Bodies are situated as iterable moments of assemblage by the various intersections at which consumptions occur. It is in those consumptive moments that bodies flash into a grounded state. Consumption—both devouring others and being devoured—is something so fundamental that outside of the most literal examples it has been hidden behind other means and explanations; it is utterly familiar. Late in his 1988 interview with Jean-Luc Nancy, “‘Eating Well,’ or the

Calculation of the Subject,” Derrida moves through a shift from killing (in terms “though shalt not kill”) to one “at the edge of the orifices (of orality, but also of the ear, the eye—and all the ‘senses’ in general)” of eating. With consumption “the question is no longer one of knowing if it is ‘good’ to eat the other or if the other is ‘good’ to eat, nor of knowing which other. One eats him regardless and lets oneself be eaten by him” (Derrida, “Eating Well” 282). Consumption is largely a simultaneous act; as bodies come together they both consume and are consumed. Like the double ourobuos mentioned above there is eating all around (and it should be noted that consumption is not a strictly one-to-one affair, multiplicities abound). While consumption is a simultaneous process, it is largely not an equal one; there is almost always one body that lives and one that dies. We are not used to eating well. More often than not we consume bodies without giving them a thought beyond their practical value; we create guilt-free meals through a functional hierarchy that sets humans distinctly apart from all other bodies, with those other bodies ordered amidst themselves. If those bodies we consume cannot respond in the same manner that we imagine we do, then they are fair game. But if we are to begin eating well we must push toward becoming responsible for those bodies we kill and consume. “Responsibility carries within it, and must do so, an essential excessiveness. It regulates itself neither on the principle of reason nor on any sort of accountancy” (Derrida “Eating” 272). We must be troubled by our consumption. Eating well can never be a trivial act; it is through this excess that we move toward cultivating indigestion.

“Significantly other to each other, in specific different we signify in the flesh a nasty developmental infection called love. This love is a historical aberration and a natural

cultural legacy” (Haraway *Species* 16). In love change takes place. It is a new kind of change that works both ways, left and right rather than straight down. Change has never trickled down too terribly well, anyway; things get clogged up, people become bound up in all those structures. When bodies come together as companion species, they become-with alongside one another. Haraway, as she begins to close *When Species Meet*, imagines toward a model for eating well. “Once ‘we’ have met, we can never be ‘the same’ again. Propelled by the tasty but risky obligation of curiosity among companion species, once we know that we cannot not know. If we know well, searching with fingery eyes, we care. That is how responsibility grows” (Haraway *Species* 287). As we move toward texts, pushed along by curiosity (never obligation, which breeds domination; reading wrought with ought is a violent affair), it is amidst the performance of writing that this coming together fully occurs. After writing together, as companion species “we know that we cannot not know” that texts and humans sit at the same table, cultivating and (re)readwriting indigestion.

CHAPTER 3 POSTEXCEPTIONALISM

Donna Haraway makes the claim in “A Cyborg Manifesto” that “by the late twentieth century, our time, a mythic time, we are all chimeras, theorized and fabricated hybrids of machine and organism; in short, we are cyborgs.” And the cyborg, as Haraway further elaborates, as “a condensed image of both imagination and material reality” is crucial in understanding consumptive practices (150). As we push into the twenty-first century and as our everyday bodies are blended with nearly instant access to communication networks that grow larger by the minute and with a growing range of machines that inhabit all layers of the human body, it not only becomes harder to deny Haraway’s claims, it becomes more and more apparent that what we had once considered stable, discreet bodies have never been wholly human. Our conceptions of what constitutes human and more specifically a notion of human-exceptionalism are reworked along with the histories we tell ourselves and what we call ourselves.

Our genealogies are rewritten. Derrida in the second card from 15 March 1979 gestures toward these rewritings through a description of simultaneous sending and receiving—messy substitutions that result in bodies in constant flux.

and when I write you you continue, you transfigure everything (the transformation comes from behind the words, it operates in silence, simultaneously subtle and incalculable, you substitute yourself for me and right up to my tongue you “send” it to yourself and then I remember those moments when you called me without warning, you came at night at the bottom of my throat, you came to touch my name with the tip of your tongue. Beneath the surface, it took place beneath the

surface of the tongue, softly, slowly, an unheard-of trembling, and I was sure that at that second that it was not coming back, a convulsion of the entire body in the two tongues at once, the foreign one and the other one (“Envois” 183-4).

Situated as a guest in our bodies our speech it becomes difficult to speak clearly as our genealogies move to tell themselves. Exceptionalism is made obsolete from the inside out, and this notion of exceptionalism, held still against the trembling, is deeply rooted in conceptions of the self that attempt to create an unassailable divide between human bodies and all those other potential bodies—animals, plants, machines, technologies, etc.

Writing in the late Nineties, Katherine Hayles explicitly engages notions of the posthuman in *How We Became Posthuman*, and early on she articulates several assumptions that form the nebulous core of the posthuman: one of these being that “the posthuman view thinks of the body as the original prosthesis we all learn to manipulate, so that extending or replacing the body with other prostheses becomes a continuation of a process that began before we were born” (3). This notion of an always subverted “natural” human body is key in this exploration as I shift from a notion of the posthuman to a notion of post-exceptional. The posthuman, as it moves against distinctly humanist ideals, risks reincorporating the human as central, as Hayles gestures toward (*Posthuman* 287). She describes that central human self as being “envisioned as grounded in presence, identified with originary guarantees and teleological trajectories, associated with solid foundations and logical coherence,” and these are all aspects that other bodies simply cannot possess (*Posthuman* 286). For the notion of the pure human

body responding was therefore being held as a faculty that allowed for a certain mode of existence; he (a deliberate he for much of human history) by his own hand was able to perform humanness, and it was a performance no others could accomplish because in the end they were only able to react, not respond.

This self-apparent ability to respond was enough to establish an ascended humanity that acts as a separate kind of body and allows for certain modes of guilt-free consumption of nonhuman bodies, bodies that exist, to the human, as mere fodder. Derrida, in the 1993 interview “The Rhetoric of Drugs,” begins an exploration of notions of drug use. The war on drugs can be seen as a war fought in defense of an exceptional human body. At our most exceptional, as we bolster the defenses of a supposedly natural body “we declare and wage the war on drugs, the war against these artificial, pathogenic, and foreign aggressions,” these creeping hints that the human body is not pure. Derrida asserts that “we find a desire to reconstitute what you just called the ‘ideal body,’ the ‘perfect body,’ the fully human body (244). Being conceptually human is rejecting the possibility of those lesser beings (animals, machines, technologies) having any chance of entering into relationships or moments of simultaneous consumption with humans. Their bodies might frighten us but they cannot truly trouble the notion of the pure human because by definition it is impenetrable—and as such many human bodies are left out of the possible wholly human.

More so than the possibility for simultaneous consumption or relationships, the notion that a human body might end up in another’s stomach is disastrous to the notion of human-exceptionalism. It is in these moments, moments when a human might be fully consumed by another body or bodies, that fear is most potent. The specter of the

man-eater, an animal more potent, more virile, than man dogs our position at the top of the food chain; it raises the notion that we, too, might be food. As he examines distinctions drawn between various drugs, Derrida points to the hysteria surrounding drug use, that a person might be fully consumed by a foreign substance, turning him or her away from human company “into a world of simulacrum and fiction” (“Rhetoric” 236). There is similar horror at the prospect of the human disappearing inside the machine, plugged into computer networks or reworked with mechanized organs. These fears are all centered on the prospect of exposing a vulnerable humanness, losing human-exceptionalism, becoming just another body. In a short card written on 1 August 1979 Derrida draws to the forefront these worries. “I can see him carpeted in the image, he is looking out, he is pretending to write. We will never know what he is truly in the course of plotting, if he is reading or if he is writing, if he is or is not behind the words, you can die from it” (226); you can be consumed by text, and in the physical/metaphorical muddle death, physical and metaphorical, is always a possibility. And if not consumed by the text a body can worry itself to death; caught in the constant concern of whether there is a speaker behind me. On the post card that Derrida examines through “Envois” this worry can be read on both of Socrates’ and Plato’s faces. With the back flap extended their worry is constantly in the corner of my eye as I read; their worry, caught in the periphery reflects my own. Socrates’ mouth is pressed in a tight frown as he considers the text before him out of the corner of his eyes—always either just looking down or ready to look away. Plato, more directly looking forward, carries an even deeper frown and a slightly furrowed brow; his footing seems nervous as he leans forward into Socrates’ back. Derrida continues in that same card “contrary to what I had

indicated to you, I think, he did not commit suicide (one never commits suicide, one has oneself killed”; one has oneself consumed by, for example, a suicide note (“Envois” 227). And this acceptance of one’s body as meal is feared more than the possibility of conversation, because worse than losing a struggle or submitting to a powerful force is offering yourself as a consumable body.

It is important to note, though, that the shift to post-exceptional means of relating does not, as Hayles makes clear, “really mean the end of humanity”; the human species and human bodies are not at issue, and in becoming cyborg we are not being replaced but altered (*Posthuman* 286). She further states that the post-exceptional “signals instead the end of a certain conception of the human, a conception that may have applied, at best, to the fraction of humanity who had wealth, power, and leisure to conceptualize themselves as autonomous beings exercising their will through individual agency and choice” (*Posthuman* 286). Without these notions of agency, choice, rational judgment, and response, the ability to differentiate humans from other bodies becomes nigh impossible. These properties are troubled as uniquely human traits both because they seem so apparent in other bodies and because they seem so fleeting in human ones. And so, as Haraway writes at the beginning of “A Cyborg Manifesto,” when “the last beachheads of uniqueness have been polluted if not turned into amusement parks—language, tool use, social behaviour, mental events, nothing really convincingly settles the separation of human” and any other body (151-2).

I have been conscious (an awkward statement, to be sure), perhaps better put as there has been some attempt to make no distinction between, using standard definitions, living and non-living bodies. This division, perhaps more deeply ingrained as

it is more, at the outset, apparently obvious. A human moves and creates; animals, or all sorts, breathe and reproduce, seem to have a real, tangible life; plants grow and flourish and seem to react to stimuli. What, though, of the rocks, the Earth, a myriad of machines, texts. In “A Cyborg Manifesto” Donna Haraway states that one of the core distinctions currently in the process of breaking down is between “animal-human (organism) and machine.” As she moves to describe these machines as they are historically seen, she writes that they “were not self-moving, self-designing, autonomous. They could not achieve man’s dream, only mock it” (152). These distinctions, as Haraway exposed, are porous as well (their nature exposed in part by the initial collapse of human-exceptionalism): “late twentieth-century machines have made thoroughly ambiguous the difference between natural and artificial, mind and body, self-developing and externally designed, and many other distinctions that used to apply to organisms and machines” (“Cyborgs” 152). The ambiguity that Haraway raises rests in large part with the fluidity of bodies as they continuously engage in consumption; any sense of origin is lost in a multitude of re-formings. Natural and artificial, as terms that refer to specific acts of creation, lose their meaning when text and rewriter continuously consume and are embedded within one another.

As these distinctions between animal and machines have begun to crumble, so too must those that separate animate from supposedly inanimate bodies. That is not to say that a pebble thinks and feels, and that we must treat pebbles as humans, but that in the end thinking and feeling and growing and self are not useful means of establishing distinctions between bodies. Of course a pebble is not a human, but then again, neither is a human. And as Judith Butler writes in the introduction for *Bodies That*

Matter, a text primarily concerned with how bodies are inscribed with not only with gender but with sex as well, “it will be as important to think about how and to what end bodies are constructed as is it will be to think about how and to what end bodies are not constructed and, further, to ask after how bodies which fail to materialize provide the necessary ‘outside,’ if not the necessary support, for the bodies which, in materializing the norm, qualify as bodies that matter” (16). To that end any specific beginning or natural formation—the wholly human—becomes impossible to establish. As we move toward a curiosity focused on the specific traces of consumption rather than on bloodlines or on genealogies, hidden relationships, hidden messmates and consumptions, become visible. There are a host of specifically configured consumptions that are positively endemic. Our various relationships with texts as technobodies are one of these sorts. So that in the end or at the start the notion of an already formed body or a body untouched by consumption (either consumed or consuming) is a mirage; those “bodies that matter” are built with a thick, impregnable skin built, patched perhaps, with the always rendered as hopelessly porous skin of those other bodies. They are devouring machines that have little time for indigestion. And as we look toward the other bodies, bodies perhaps wracked with indigestion, we find that stability is perhaps not necessary or desirable. Derrida begins the card from 24 August 1979 with “I again tried to decipher the piece of skin. In any event it’s a failure: I will have succeeded only in transcribing a part of what is printed or printed over on the subject of the support, but the support itself, which I wanted to deliver naked, we will also burn” (“Envois” 252). This is a move toward the actualization of bodies as always already porous, as constantly seeping into one another through various means of consumption

This move toward post-exceptionalism, though, is fraught with pitfalls. There is a constant urge toward anthropomorphizing those bodies we engage with. James Serpell writes in his short piece “People in Disguise: Anthropomorphism and the Human-Pet Relationship,” that anthropomorphism “appears to have its roots in the human capacity for so-called reflexive consciousness—that is, the ability to use self-knowledge, knowledge of what it is like to be a person, to understand and anticipate the behavior of others.” It is through anthropomorphism, as a specific technology, that humans were able to begin both keeping pets and domesticating animals for consumption (Serpell 123). That we anticipate behavior based on our own becomes even more troubling as we push past any actualized behavior and begin to establish an idyllic humanness. Anthropomorphism builds a solid base on which we can build a case for exceptionalism. Bodies are judged against the ideal human and their value based on how well they replicate specific human virtues. Rational response, the ability to make a decision concerning your action, has become the basic measuring stick for deciding which bodies we can consume guilt-free. The closer a body is to performing a response, the more we have to justify and think about our consumption of that body. More than anything anthropomorphism allows us to instantly establish a familiarity with other bodies. They are forcefully read and placed in relation to an idyllic humanness and considered known; we are able to calculate other bodies because anthropomorphism is a constant they can be judged against. If we are to become post-exceptional, then bodies must be taken up on their own terms or in their mix. This isn’t a push toward raising all bodies to the status of the human, but instead this drive moves toward

exposing the human as non-exceptional, as blended and capable of consumption as all other bodies.

CHAPTER 4 TECHNOBODIES

As she progresses further in “A Cyborg Manifesto” Donna Haraway writes that “‘textualization’ of everything in poststructuralist, postmodernist theory has been damned by Marxists and social feminists for its utopian disregard for the lived relations of domination that ground the ‘play’ of arbitrary reading” (152). This textualization, though, offers a means of creating relationship amidst post-exceptionalism when we can no longer rely on a set hierarchical structure to dictate how to treat other bodies. Relationship in this case is built through first acknowledging that curiosity mentioned and through care coming together. Haraway, pushing against common thoughts of technologically induced loneliness, writes that “far from signaling a walling off of people from other ... beings, cyborgs signal disturbingly and pleurably tight couplings,” triplings, quadruplings as bodies come together as multiplicity (“Cyborgs” 152). These comings together are disturbing when viewed from an exceptional vantage point as they highlight an inherent leaky quality in bodies. In *When Species Meet* Haraway begins to seriously disrupt notions of a pure or whole human. Toward this end she provides research that shows that “90 percent of the cells” that occupy a human body “are filled with the genomes of bacteria, fungi, protists, and such” (3); the human body, any body, is muddle. As her section heading states, we have never been human. And in this complete abandonment of the pure body post-exceptional relationships push this near wholly other cellular self outward until your body, built of relations is, as Deleuze and Guattari write about the Body without Organs, “distributed according to crowd phenomena, in Brownian motions, in the form of molecular multiplicities” (30). Consumption, if done well, can act as a becoming together indistinguishable—as in the

double ouroboros where both snakes become muddled. And it is toward this becoming muddled that I hope to become in relation to textual bodies

Where then does our curiosity lead us in this relationship with writing as both a technology and possible body? At their very inception texts have been besmirched as inanimate other, fit only for sustenance. In Plato's *Phaedrus* it is stated that "the words signify only one thing, and always the same thing" (Plato 66). When the text is assumed to be fixed and only capable of delivering a single message, it, most plainly, cannot do anything but repeat its set of words; they are wholly immobile, and no matter their duration absent any alteration they remain just as they were first penned. This is the case as far as a certain physical quality is concerned. And it is worth noting that texts are not alone in this charge. As humans are cast as animal toward a guilt-free consumption, animals are cast as text and studied as such. These bodies are utterly and perhaps viciously consumed through a slight of anthropomorphism. They are expected to respond as a human should, and since they do not, cannot, they are often then consumed without a second thought..

These expectations, though, are misplaced. Response, idyllic rational human response, is a sloppy measure by which to gauge a body's potential for relationship, because a purely human response is never possible—response is always mediated. Language has already seeped through our bodies so that any hope of a natural human is made in vain, and it pushes us toward supposedly blank reaction as we move along mechanized lines—running on the rails language lays out, our responses, in that rationality relies on language, are to a point always rote. Derrida, in "The Rhetoric of Drugs" engages a discussion of the illusory nature of any sort of natural body; all bodies

are always already mixed through, and with this motion toward the “*pharmakon*” he engages Plato and *The Phadreaus*. He writes that according to Socrates “the *pharmakon* ‘writing’ does not serve the good, authentic memory. It is rather the mnemotechnical auxiliary of a bad memory,” and if there can be no such thing as an “authentic memory,” then the question of a good or bad sort slips away (Derrida, “Rhetoric” 234). Insofar as memory is always a rethinking or remembering, our thinking itself is bound up in language, and following these lines then, if pure response is impossible, we can begin to move toward other configurations of the play between bodies engaged in consumptions. Derrida, in “The Rhetoric of Drugs” continues on to write that writing, “like any good parasite ... is at once inside and outside—the outside *feeding* on the inside” (234). This peculiar inside outside state of writing, as a technology, allows for textual bodies and human to blend together. This notion of parasitic blending was raised in *Limited Inc*, written well before “The Rhetoric of Drugs.” In it he notes that “iterability blurs a priori the dividing-line that passes between” binary terms, “contaminating it parasitically” (70). In the case of the animate/inanimate split iterability not only blurs the line between the terms but the bodies engaged in that split, as well.

Toward the beginning of Derrida’s early piece “Signature Event Context,” bound to *Limited Inc* through a train of replies, he writes that “to write is to produce a mark that will constitute a sort of machine which is productive in turn, and which my future disappearance will not, in principle hinder in its functioning, offering things and itself to be read and to be rewritten” (Derrida *Limited* 8). Text exists always already apart from the writer, as a body in and of itself; this initial separation, at the moment of conception,

can be seen as the primary consumption of the text so that it always carries with it the trace of the writer. Text “produce[s] effects independently of [the writer’s] presence and of the present actuality of [the writer’s] intentions, indeed even after [the writer’s] death”—a death caused by the text itself as it consumes the initial force or direction from the writer during that initial relationship (a rich relationship ripe with possibilities for indigestion as we will examine soon) between text and writer—“[the writer’s] absence, which moreover belongs to the structure of all writing” (Derrida, *Limited* 5). This text is simultaneously an independent body and one tied to the writer through backward looking traces; as machine it produces meaning apart from the intentions of any specific creator or user; while we can encounter specific textual bodies, we can never simply pick up or discard language.

Human and textual bodies are blended together; at this point neither can claim a pure origin. Looking again toward Derrida’s writings in “The Rhetoric of Drugs,” we can “take into account what we might call the *technological condition*. There is no natural, originary body: technology has not simply added itself, from the outside or after the fact, as a foreign body” (244). With the *technological condition* in mind any potential body could be considered what Derrida terms a “text in general” as he lays out an understanding of the term in *Positions* (44). So that even as it consumes direction from a specific writer, meaning is iterable. When Plato writes that Socrates says that a written “speech ha[s] no idea to whom it should speak and to whom it shouldn’t. Ill-treated and unjustly abused, a speech always needs the help of its father because it is unable by itself to defend or help itself” (Plato 66), he imagines an impossible text that fails as a human body rather than a textual one. In conversation with Plato’s *Phaedrus* Derrida, in

“The Rhetoric of Drugs” works through various reasons for some of the reasons behind a general cultural aversion to drug addiction, which can, I believe, be read as the *technological condition*, with writing in particular for this writing, He states that “it is in the name of this authenticity that drug addiction is condemned or deplored. This authenticity can be *appropriated*—either simultaneously (in confusion) or successively (in denial) to the values of ... a real relation to true reality” (Derrida, “Rhetoric” 240). This true reality or true response is, of course, an illusion as any sort of true reality demands an authentic body, a pre, rather than post, supplementary body. Plato/Socrates’s imagined text is judged as a singular body rather than one wrapped up with others. Their imagined authentic or singular text is impotent through their imaginings.

N. Katherine Hayles’s *Writing Machines*, published in 2002, considers various material dimensions present in texts. As she begins to lay out a notion of media-specific analysis she notes that “texts must always be embodied to exist in the world” (31). A written text is always written upon and with. Writing, caught up as it is in prepositions, can always be considered alongside its physical body. Pushing this notion of embodiment further I would consider it a double embodiment. Text is always simultaneously both supplement and supplemented. While texts are discrete material objects (book, post card, billboard, email)), and, as Hayles in *Writing Machines* writes to further explain her reasoning behind material-specific analysis, “the materiality of those embodiments interacts dynamically with linguistic, rhetorical, and literary practices to create” a sense of fluidity that imbues textual bodies, these bodies are also incorporated in their (re)readwriters (31). Any text acts on both its material position and

any encountered (re)read/writer. They exist as technology in symbiotic assemblage. And as writing is embodied both within and apart from the (re)readwriter it acts on those bodies it touches equally. David Wills in his text *Dorsality* works through a conception of how technologies interact with various bodies; those bodies, and in this case the body of the (re)readwriter “is therefore receiving a definition from a technologization of the body, in a becoming-prosthesis or a *becoming-dorsal*” (9). This technologization acts from behind, but like Wills’ imagine of the dorsal, it is simultaneously both post and immediate. It is post all around so that it is always behind but always encountered from behind. Text and (re)readwriter are connected back to back, turning one another as they eat.

On the 6 September 1977 post card Derrida writes around Martin Heidegger, referring to him both with the familiar “Martin” and the formal “Heidegger,” on *Geschick* and the objections that Heidegger would raise concerning Derrida’s writing. He goes on to write that “the post is no longer a simple metaphor, and is even, as the site of all transferences and all correspondences, the ‘proper’ possibility of every possible rhetoric.” He notes that Heidegger would see this as “a premature (?) imposition of *tekhne*” (65). And in one sense it is a premature imposition. Technology, as an always already supplement to any body, and as a body, a technobody, is seen from behind so that attached at the back can only be seen from the back. That texts are embodied and specifically created and positioned, though, does not preclude them from existing full and equal bodies in the world—authenticity being no longer a requirement for response. Deleuze and Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus* echo Spinoza as they reiterate a working definition of a body. “A body is not defined by the form that determines it nor

as a determinate substance... [it is defined only by] affects and local movements, different speeds” (260). This definition, as I move it toward a post-exceptional reading, encompasses those bodies that could be read as mere supplement,

As Derrida touches on at the beginning of “Signature Event Context,” “writing in its currently accepted sense—one which should not—and that is essential—be considered innocent, primitive, or natural, it can only be seen as a *means of communication* (3). This “currently accepted sense” is one that relegates written bodies to a state of fixed supplement, merely delivering rote communications. This notion of merely supplement is exactly what is ruptured in the shift to the post-exceptional. A body can only be rendered mere through comparison to an exception. So writing and text can no more be considered a tool or simple artifact than animals or computers. No potential body is excluded from the possibility of engaging with other bodies as companion species. And written texts persist simultaneously in relation to and apart from (re)read writer. As he works through the fundamental action of writing, an action opposed to writing as a “*means of communication*,” Derrida states that “to be what it is, all writing must, therefore, be capable of functioning in the radical absence of every empirically determined receiver in general..., the ‘death’ or the possibility of the ‘death’ of the receiver inscribed in the structure of the mark” (*Limited* 8). So that writing engages any (re)readwriter it encounters; unbound from any determined receiver writing has the potentials of all bodies. Text, as inherently iterable, functions as a body amidst other bodies.

That is to say that they have the agency to consume (and to be consumed by) those bodies they come in contact with. Text, though nonliving, though explicitly

created, though most often intended and taught as a simple tool can be engaged as companion species on the same horizontal plane as human bodies amidst a postexceptional landscape. Texts act as technobodies—simultaneously embedded in our skin and yet capable of discrete consumption. The human body, too, acts as technobody, an amalgamation of prosthesis that engages in mediated consumption—the human as a technology, a vehicle—to language. It is through an active (re)readwriter than texts are engendered. A blended iterability as written text and human bodies muddle together replaces discrete, human response.

Plato/Socrates through the *Phaedrus* expect the text to respond just as a human might, with new words and thoughts and clarifications—with a rational fully-fledged response. The act of (re)readwriting and more specifically, (re)readwriting in concert with a multiplicity of texts, (re)readwriting as part of a community, (re)readwriting as a we rather than an I, is that moment when the written text and human blur into one another. This is a blending that has already begun, it has always already begun before. So that any consumption is a consuming backwards, a reconsumption. Writing, as technobody, is already always present within us, digested, digesting, in indigestion. Bodies are born into consumptions, and the formation of a ‘new’ body is little more than a new point of digestion. Derrida’s card from 20 June 1978 card bears the semblance of a response. His writing is woven around quoted comments concerning him, and in it he writes in a long parenthetical about what he calls “in English the logic of *pregnancy*”; this logic can be read as moving toward this consumptive consumption. He continues: “In other words, you are all born, don’t forget, and you can write only against your mother who bore within her, along with you, what she has borne you to write against her, your

writing with which she would be large. And full, you will never get out of it" (150). In some sense our encounters with text occur within us, through and beneath our skin. As we (re)readwrite we expand and grow that parasite. And while the physical act of writing, the performance, matters—to an extent; just as we are always mediated by language, our interactions with writing are mediated through material—it is a coming together long in coming, and our consumption follows specific patterns. In the same card Derrida continues post parenthetical "what I admired the most, then, is rather the overturning, or say rather the final *renversement*, for it might indeed be a question of that, and the English word (*reversed*) puts us on track of the French *reverser* better, even if it primarily means overturned or inverted, permuted" (150). This overturning, or re, or postconsuming, becomes a means by which the (re)readwriter positions him or herself, through reply, amidst written texts. Because if there is already, pre-encounter, the presence of the technobody, than any response must be made at its back, from behind.

CHAPTER 5 POST (RE)READWRITING

Writing, as a distinct technobody, has been worming its way through our selves since its inception. It is already embedded just like all those other organisms that make up the human body. Writing about the technological condition in “The Rhetoric of Drugs,” Derrida plainly states that “there is no natural, originary body: technology has not simply added itself, from the outside or after the fact, as a foreign body. Or at least this foreign or dangerous supplement is ‘originarily’ at work and in place in the supposedly ideal interiority of the ‘body and soul.’ It is indeed at the heart of the heart” (244). Supplements, technobodies, cannot be cordoned off or made entirely distinct because they are always present at the turn so that any consumption is a reply or post consumption. All reading and writing is a re reading and a re writing. And as the (re)readwriter encounters a text, both as technobodies, they create a rhizome, and respond and consume one another through rhizomatic lines of flight. This (re)readwriter-text rhizome is not so strange, though; as organisms engage as companion species with one another, they are altered so that there is no hint of an originary body; bodies and functions seep through from one species to the next, so that it becomes impossible for that illusory pure body to be located. “The orchid deterritorializes by forming an image, a tracing of a wasp; but the wasp reterritorializes on that image. The wasp is nevertheless deterritorialized, becoming a piece in the orchid’s reproductive apparatus. But it reterritorializes the orchid by transporting its pollen” (Deleuze and Guatarri 10). The rhizome they form can be looked at as a single point on a continual flow of evolution. And while it took eons for the two individual bodies of wasp and orchid to consume as they do now, the process for (re)readwriter and text is immediate. Text, as

a technobody, is already embedded as language throughout the human body, and the simultaneous blending toward rhizome is enacted in the very moment of (re)readwriter; the means of consumption is part and parcel with the specific act of becoming companion species. The (re)readwriter engages in a specific, physical, becoming-text, and the text pushes toward becoming-human as it iterates and shapes itself to the specific (re)readwriter. Textuality as a specific technology that has been thoroughly written through humans can act as a model for displacing familiarity because it can never be pinned down as a single body; it is impossible to read the same sentence twice. This defamiliarization is a necessary step in the move toward becoming companionable, because what is utterly familiar cannot invoke curiosity.

We can never simply write; the notion that we could engage a practice of pure creation is as illusory as the pure human body. As noted above Derrida writes that “you will always precede me”; you, writing as technology incorporated throughout my body will always be the forward mediator (Derrida, “Envois” 19). So we are always writing after writing, writing post writing, writing double. As Derrida turns toward the Socrates and Plato post card he works through their relation to one another; he writes that “S. does not see P. who sees S., but... only from the back. There is only the back, seen from the back, in what is written, such is the final word. Everything is played out in retro and a tergo And moreover nothing will ever prove,” that there was a writing before the rewriting (48). Any hint of original supplement or technobody or writing is impossible as the motion of the technobody is already supplemented. Connected back to back, post-pre-post, it disappears in the trace, for we only ever see the broad back of the postscript. We are clouded by our own back, our own post. And in a card, 9 June 1977,

that begins with a doubled distance Derrida writes that he has to “distance myself in order to write to you” because the moment of (re)readwriting is a retreat, a move backwards that rereads ground (28). Later in the same letter, again immediately following a gap, but separated by a capital letter, he writes: “In the beginning, in principle, was the post, and I will never get over it. But in the end I know it. I become aware of it as our death sentence: it was composed, according to all possible codes and genres and languages, as a declaration of love” (29). It is in this declaration and realization that we are killed by the text; the body of the rewriter is consumed. As we acknowledge this act our stomach churns; in accepting this loss indigestion sets in.

As this consumption occurs, there is a simultaneous shift to the (re)readwriter, so that writing, already always doubled (or more), is now read as it is written—that same reading that enacted the consumption. Text, engendered through consumption, is active in the moment (re)readwriting occurs, so that even in the event that a particular text is never picked up again it acts as active body at the muddled moment of conception. This muddling is a becoming-iterable of the (re)readwriter. Both bodies are iterable through, behind, the other. Written text, as always (re)readwritten, does not acknowledge its creation or supposed-creator, and so there cannot be any direct access to a text; it cannot be fixed. It operates through a logic of reply, and in Limited Inc Derrida's reply to Searle's Reply he writes that “the very structure of the mark (for example, the minimum of iterability it requires) excludes the hypothesis of idealization, that is the adequation of a meaning to itself, of a saying to itself, of understanding... to a mark in general” (61). So that it is along the body of a (re)readwriter and through the absence or distance of that same (re)readwriter—both bodies retreat or turn away through the act of

consumption—that the mark functions. Even the I, especially the I, cannot locate any specific referent; “the functioning of the I, as is well known, is no less iterable or replaceable than any other word. And in any case, whatever singularity its functioning might possess is not of a kind to guarantee any adequation between saying and meaning” (Derrida, Limited 62). And as we (re)readwrite the I we can engage it as messmate, and we can eat it well as fellow body, and indigestion begins.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

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