

Review Essay: Mourning Humanism, or, the Idiom of Haunting

Joshua Gunn

Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (New York: Routledge, 1994), xvii + 198 pp. \$23.95.

Avery F. Gordon, *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), x + 252 pp. \$19.95.

Richard Kearney, *Strangers, Gods and Monsters* (New York: Routledge, 2003), x + 294 pp. \$30.95.

Ruth Leys, *Trauma: A Genealogy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), x + 318 pp. \$20.00.

Nicholas Royle, *The Uncanny* (New York: Routledge, 2003), xii + 340 pp. \$24.95.

In the work of rhetorical theory over the last decade, the term “postmodernist” is sometimes used as a foil to recommend alternatives. For example, in their and Sally Caudill’s popular textbook, *Contemporary Rhetorical Theory: A Reader*, John Lucaites and Celeste Condit address “postmodernism” as if it were a person:

Postmodernism’s critique of modernism [as a misguided positivism] is well-taken; unfortunately, postmodernism does not offer a viable independent alternative to modernism. As a perspective founded primarily on critique and opposition, postmodernism is always parasitic on that which it critiques. In presenting a world where public discourse is nothing but deceit, postmodernism precludes the possibility of any community whatsoever.¹

Lucaites and Condit recommend what Edward Schiappa has dubbed “sophisticated modernism,” an approach to critical inquiry that attempts to mediate the critiques of modernity and the tried and true methods of structural analysis for pragmatic

Joshua Gunn is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Communication Studies, University of Texas at Austin. Correspondence to: Joshua Gunn, Department of Communication Studies, University of Texas, One University Station A1105, Austin, TX 78712, USA. Tel: +1 (512) 471 5251; Email: slewfoot@mail.utexas.edu

insight.² Outside of the academy, postmodernism has been similarly critiqued as lacking a program or productive goal, especially after the attacks on the Pentagon and World Trade Center on September 11, 2001: “After the attack,” Julia Keller wrote for the *Chicago Tribune*, “postmodernism loses its glib grip.” Reality “became real again,” meaning became “fathomable,” and “truth extant.” Following a nasty swipe at Susan Sontag for suggesting that U.S. foreign policy is partially to blame for the attacks, Keller recommends the tried and true posture of self-censorship.³ Inside and outside of the academy, postmodernism is often characterized as a kind of religion that casts true believers into a perpetual state of doubt, in which every utterance becomes an ironic reversal, and every testament of belief, a rhetorical blind.

As anyone who has been called a “postmodernist” would likely admit, in NCA journals (and especially in the remarks of blind reviewers) the term is often used as an epithet that means whatever the name-caller *thinks it means*, frequently without reference to an actually existing literature. To be sure, some rhetoricians would identify their work as “postmodernist,” and there are a number of prominent thinkers whose work has become associated with the label, such as Baudrillard, Deleuze, Foucault, and Lyotard.⁴ Yet outside a general commitment to understanding the dynamics of modernity (whatever we decide *that* is), as well as the more common and generally welcomed abandonment of rigid or positivistic notions of objectivity in the humanities, very little suggests that the accused sit at the same postmodern table. In short, what postmodernism means differs according to the context of usage and to address this or that scholar as a “pomo” says very little about her or his work.

If there is a common denominator among those identified or self-identified with postmodernism, however, it is the de-centering of the autonomous, self-transparent subject, alternately understood in terms of Descartes’ rational knower (the *cogito*), Kant’s transcendental subject, or, closer to home, the *vir bonus, dicendi peritus*.⁵ This common commitment to displacing the masculinist, self-same rational agent as the center of the known universe is the hidden premise of the postmodernist enthymeme and in most instances the accusatory rhetoric of the postmodern (that is, the uses to which the postmodern foil is put) is a reaction to the post-*humanism* that underwrites various, differing understandings of postmodernity. In a disciplinary context, attacking the “postmodern” is the symptom of a theoretical impasse regarding the humanist subject; that which has passed as postmodernism is actually posthumanism.

The humanist subject of modernity is dead, of course, but what this means is a complicated matter better examined on the page than refuted by jumping in front of an on-coming train.⁶ In this review essay I introduce the idiom of haunting as a theoretically informed orientation to criticism that mourns this death in a useful manner. (I use the conspicuous term “idiom” to denote that haunting is more than a vocabulary and cannot be understood in relation to a singular concept, e.g., the figure of the ghost; rather, as an idiom haunting refers to the way in which a theoretical perspective is lived and “owned,” which is sometimes regrettably experienced by the unfamiliar as the “jargon” of a clique). As an orientation toward critical work, haunting attempts to preserve the central values informing rhetorical criticism while

nevertheless embracing the notion of a subject that is constructed, decentered, fragmented, performed, and/or split. Beyond mere metaphor, the idiom denotes a conceptual repertoire for listening to and speaking about the dead, literally and figuratively, as well as a considered attempt to orient the critic in a position of hospitality, open to the other. Below I review a series of books that provide the mental furniture of the haunting idiom, beginning first by contextualizing the discussion in relation to the critique of humanism begun by Heidegger and furthered by Derrida in respect to “hauntology,” a stance of irreducibility that confounds our impulse to essentialize. Derrida’s now famous discussion of hauntology (a pun on ontology in French) marks the beginning of what Jeffery Weinstock has termed the “spectral turn” in cultural theory and criticism.⁷ Since the English publication of *Specters of Marx* in 1994, there has been an explosion of academic work that speaks in the curious language of ghosts: from Jean Baudrillard’s recent discussion of the “spirit of terrorism,” to John Durham Peters’ discussion of spiritualism and the idea of communication, to Jeffrey Sconce’s genealogy of the ghosts in our television sets, to Slavoj Žižek’s frequent discussion of ideology as a “specter,” the appearance of phantoms and ghosts is now ubiquitous in cultural theory and criticism.⁸ All of the books reviewed here entail a debt, at least indirectly, to Derrida’s thinking about ghosts, and so I will devote some space to his introduction of “hauntology.” Then, after a discussion of Richard Kearney’s elaboration of the posthumanist problematic that haunting addresses, I examine a series of books that telescope more narrowly on three, interrelated concepts central to the idiom: the uncanny, trauma, and mourning.

Posthumanism and the Spectral Turn

In the Western intellectual tradition, the critique of humanism is often said to begin with reactions to Jean-Paul Sartre’s celebration of freedom in his existential philosophy. In his well known public address titled “Existentialism Is a Humanism,” Sartre remarked that the central principle of existentialism was that “existence precedes essence,” which he argued demands individual “subjectivity as one’s point of departure” in philosophical inquiry.⁹ The system he erected to meet this challenge, particularly as it is represented in *Existentialism and Humanism* (1947), is complex and somewhat contradictory in relation to his later writings,¹⁰ but at base it provides a necessary centrality for the Cartesian *cogito*.¹¹ “Subjectivity of the individual is indeed our starting point,” he says, because there “can be no other truth to start from than this: *I think; therefore, I exist.*”¹² The notion of the singular imagination as a site of purely interior self-creation, which was extolled first in German Romanticism, finds its humanist aspirations pushed to the logical extreme in Sartre, who also isolates the essence of humanity as self-creation or creativity.¹³ Because existence precedes essence in Sartre’s view, no meaning is predetermined. Rather, meaning is created by human beings in the act of being. Subjectivity is announced as the effect of the making of choices in the process of making meaning, of acting: “There is no reality except in action. . . . Man is nothing else than his plan; he exists only to the

extent that he fulfills himself; he is therefore nothing else than the ensemble of his acts, nothing else than his life.”¹⁴

I have rehearsed Sartre’s view of the humanist subject for two reasons. First, his view represents the last gasp of humanism in continental philosophy. Humanism maintains that human being is the primary and most valuable object of inquiry and often proceeds in its many variations by describing the many ways in which human beings are, as Protagoras is reported to have said, “the measure of all things, all that are that they are, and all that are not, that they are not.”¹⁵ Sartre’s existential philosophy of freedom-through-choice is the ultimate *secular* expression of an ontology built on Protagoras’ conviction. Second, the humanist ethic of a radical responsibility through choice was common in the 1960s, and although Sartre’s existential subject is mentioned rarely, variations were eventually folded into NCA-style rhetorical theory in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The humanist orientation in rhetorical theory is reflected well in the many discussions of the ethical responsibilities of rhetorical choice-making, labeled by Kenneth Burke as “symbolic action,” by Karlyn Kohrs Campbell as a “symbolic approach” to rhetorical theory, and by Robert L. Scott as “rhetoric as epistemic.”¹⁶ For example, an often overlooked yet central consequence of Scott’s epistemic view is the “ethical turn” it recommends: “The point of view that holds that man cannot be certain but must act in the face of uncertainty to create situational truth entails three ethical guidelines: toleration, will, and responsibility.”¹⁷ Many of the notable “turns” in rhetorical studies from the late 1960s onward are, sometimes unwittingly, built on the notion of a self-transparent rhetor/artist who makes rhetorical choices that entail a tremendous responsibility. The rhetor “must recognize the conflicts of the circumstances that he is in,” Scott writes, “maximizing the potential good and accepting responsibility for the inevitable harm.”¹⁸ Recognizing the humanist subject’s central place in rhetorical theory is important because it helps to explain the controversy of post-humanist critique; that is, the critique of humanism would seem to challenge not only the autonomy and self-transparency of the speaker but also the *ethical* foundations of rhetorical practice. I contend that the idiom of haunting addresses this challenge directly in a way that preserves—indeed, foregrounds—ethical responsibility, while acknowledging the problems of the humanist subject in the rhetorical tradition. Before I proceed to explain haunting, however, a basic description of the “death” of the humanist subject that is at the center of the critique of humanism will prove helpful.

So what, then, is the critique of humanism? Although there are a number of answers, this critique is sometimes said to begin with a deliberate, conspicuous rejection of Sartre’s notions of freedom and choice.¹⁹ Origin narratives of the critique of humanism typically cite the work of Heidegger as the first step, whose famous “Letter on Humanism” not only critiques Sartre but also urges an abandonment of “the name [of] humanism” in favor of a different conception that consists in the analysis of “being-in-the-world” over that of subjectivity. For Heidegger, existence per se topples humanity in its expanse, and the narrow, selfish, narcissistic focus on individual subjectivity prevents us from investigating Being properly.²⁰ In this respect, posthumanism gets caught in a semantic pickle insofar as the critique

concerns human-*ism*; from the outside the term is often read as a disavowal of commonly shared values (e.g., social justice, equality, democracy) or as misguided critique of specieism. Posthumanism is *not* an anti-humanitarianism, but represents the view that that subject is neither singular, nor self-transparent, nor the center of the universe, and that the self-important “haughtiness” of the subject of certainty, as Nietzsche put it, “deceives him about the value of existence,” in retrospect having done more harm than good.²¹

After Heidegger’s letter, the critique of humanism finds its fullest expression in the work of the mighty French *ménage a trois* of Lacan, Derrida, and Foucault, as well as in that of a number of feminist scholars (most recently the work of Donna Haraway and others associated with a U.S. version of posthumanism).²² The phallogocentrism of the humanist subject, the poststructural critiques of Lacan and Foucault, and the Derridian deconstruction of humanism have been discussed among rhetorical scholars elsewhere, and I refer readers to that work for more thoroughgoing accounts.²³ What has not been discussed, perhaps because it does not neatly fit into the simple agonistic narrative of modernism versus postmodernism, is how Derrida’s notion of the spectral and haunting assumes the death of the subject, but embraces what many scholars would identify as humanitarian values, most especially toleration, (good)will, and responsibility.

Later in his career, as Derrida moved from critical philosophy to social critique, deconstruction evolved beyond the confines of a narrowly conceived textual technology to an orientation or posture of indeterminacy that an individual makes or takes in relation to structures, institutions, and so on, which does not close up, settle, conclude, or totalize them. In his later work, beginning notably with the arrival of the English translation of *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International* (hereafter *Specters*) in 1994, the posture of indeterminacy is urged in respect to the “other,” a term that refers to anyone worthy of consideration and respect in the general pursuit of justice (sometimes the Other is capitalized in theoretical literature to denote this status). In *Specters* the other arrives as a ghost, as a figure that cannot otherwise be fixed or reduced as a being or as a non-being.²⁴ The result of this willed embrace of indeterminacy is that it reframes the self/other relation so central to our fantasy of communication as an ethical relation between a decentered or uncertain self and *something* that confounds our sense of place in time, our sense of control: this *thing* is the specter, or as Derrida prefers, the *revenant*, a spirit that always comes back. Derrida opens *Specters* with the observation that “learning to live” more justly, more open to the other and to death, “remains to be done.” We have arrived at the “time of the ‘learning to live,’” says Derrida, and the key to such wisdom is “to learn to live *with* ghosts, in the upkeep, conversation, the company, or the companionship, in the commerce without commerce of ghosts.”²⁵ In *Specters* the death of the subject is assumed; now the death of the other—the deaths of others, especially the deaths of others under the aegis of Marxism, as well as the status of the other as a harbinger of death—is in question.

Derrida’s understanding of hauntology in *Specters* is advanced as an ethical posture in response to global capitalism and what he terms the “ten plagues” of the new

world order that emerged in the 1980s (e.g., homelessness, nuclear proliferation, and so on).²⁶ Although *Specters* was intended as a conciliatory project that details the indebtedness of deconstruction to a certain “spirit of Marx,” the problems with Derrida’s thinking in this respect have been extensively catalogued elsewhere, and a number of article-length book reviews on the project are available.²⁷ The scholarly consensus is that reconciling deconstruction and Marxism is futile (at least from a Marxist vantage). Yet few if any condemn Derrida’s ethical project of learning to live among and with others more justly, more *humanely*. This is perhaps the reason why Derrida’s elaboration of the figures of the specter and *revenant* has traveled more widely in the academic imaginary than deconstruction in the spirit of Marx.

From a critical vantage, hauntology offers a critique of presentism by advancing an empty messianism reminiscent of that which Walter Benjamin described in his “On the Concept of History.”²⁸ Insofar as the specter neither “is” nor “is not,” it is a figure that represents past and future temporalities that cannot be “given a date in the chain of presents.”²⁹ Derrida compares Hamlet’s/the audience’s/our waiting for the king’s apparition in the first act of Shakespeare’s play to the worker’s/reader’s/our position in the opening of *The Manifesto of the Communist Party*: “A specter is haunting Europe—the specter of communism.” The specter is either from the past (the king) or from the future (communism), or rather, it would seem the specter is always coming from the future even if it is from the past: “The anticipation [for the ghost] is at once impatient, anxious, and fascinated: this, the thing (‘this thing’) will end up coming. The *revenant* is going to come. It won’t be long. But how long it is taking.”³⁰ Hauntology is then advanced as a politics of “temporal disjuncture” that resists what Derrida terms “mourning,” or the closure of the past and future in terms of the present.³¹

Typically, mourning refers to the process by which an individual is able to detach him or herself from an object of love, usually a loved one. An inability to mourn is melancholia, which is a kind of repetition compulsion driven by an abject inability to detach one’s self from the object of love. The process of detaching oneself from the love object—or rather, the *idea* or *ghost* of the love object, since the object itself is not present—is not instantaneous, but occurs over time. Mourning is thus a process of temporal fixing, of “getting over it,” and can be plotted along a cultural teleology that many of us learn, for example in terms of “stages” of grief, “periods” of morning, and so on. Although it is usually described as normal and healthy, Derrida characterizes mourning as something to avoid. Mourning

consists always in attempting to ontologize remains, to make them present, in the first place by *identifying* the bodily remains and by *localizing* the dead (all ontologization, all semanticization—philosophical, hermeneutical, or psycho-analytical—finds itself caught up in the work of mourning but, as such, does not yet think it; we are posing here the question of the specter, to the specter, whether it be Hamlet’s or Marx’s, on this near side of such thinking).³²

Mourning is accomplished by knowledge, by claiming knowledge of the dead, by claiming to know the dead and their location, thereby silencing ghosts in the gestures of a certain present, a certain there. The consequence of this kind of mourning is an

irresponsibility and deafness to the other and the promise of an unknown future (that things can always be otherwise, that communism, in a certain spirit, is still coming). The accomplishment of mourning—of ghost-busting, if you will—is reflected in the dogmatism, absolutism, apocalypticism, and other teleological orthodoxies that party-based Marxism shares with, for example, contemporary Evangelical Christian movements (e.g., a vengeful Jesus coming tomorrow to smite the unrepentant, as in the popular *Left Behind* book series). Later in the book, Derrida counters mournful and strident messianisms with a “desert-like messianism (without content and without identifiable messiah),” as if to redeem the posture of hospitality so central to the New Testament from temporal absolutism—from the certitude of *dates*.³³ The accomplishment of mourning—of ghost-busting, if you will—is a silencing of the specters of communism and democracy, which represents the *possibility* of a different and just future. Although *Specters* is an extraordinarily complex elaboration of hauntology vis-à-vis the *Communist Manifesto* and Francis Fukuyama’s *The End of History and the Last Man*, hauntology is fundamentally a deconstructive way of thinking about the human condition loosed from philosophy into the political and cultural imaginary. As a posture or orientation, hauntology attempts to resist ghost-busting by embracing the figure of the specter or *revenant* as a haunting reminder that we can never completely reckon with the past, nor secure the future.³⁴ Specters urge us to remain open to both by abjuring the present.

Speaking of the many attempts to kill off Marx and Marxism (and at least tacitly, Freud and psychoanalysis), in *Specters* Derrida underscores our general impulse in the West to “chase away a specter, exorcise the possible return of a power held to be baleful in itself and whose demonic threat continues the haunt the [twentieth] century.”³⁵ Richard Kearney’s *Strangers, Gods and Monsters*, the third of a trilogy of books orbiting narrativity and religion, opens with a thorough examination of this problematic assumption, that the specter is, *de facto*, a demonic threat that must be assimilated, exorcized, or killed off and mourned.³⁶ Broadening Derrida’s (non)concept of the specter to alterity as such, Kearney begins with the observation that most “strangers, gods and monsters—along with various ghosts, phantoms, and doubles who bear a family resemblance—are, deep down, tokens of a fracture within the human psyche.” Each strange figure is always a double of one sort or another, mirroring a posthumanist subject that is “split between unconscious and conscious, familiar and unfamiliar, same and other.”³⁷ In other words, at the level of the social, monsters are us. They remind us, argues Kearney,

of a choice: (a) to try to understand and accommodate our experience of strangeness, or (b) to repudiate it by projecting it exclusively onto outsiders. All too often, humans have chosen the latter option, allowing paranoid illusions to serve the purpose of making sense of our confused emotions by externalizing them into black-and-white scenarios. . . .³⁸

The first five chapters that comprise *Strangers, Gods and Monsters* examine a number of these scenarios, ultimately ending with those launched by the events of September 11, 2001. Insofar as each scenario presents us with a choice to be made in respect of

the other, we are again reckoning with haunting as an orientation that avoids the restless dialectics of ontology by forswearing an absolute what (—am I? —are they?) in favor of the “how” of relating to others.

Chapter one provides a genealogy of the scapegoat, beginning with an examination of the figure of the goat in Leviticus and tracing it to and through various “demons” in religious eschatology. Kearney then examines René Girard’s critique of scapegoat myths, which is that since the dawn of humanity the ritual sacrifice of a scapegoat has been used to build community consensus through “collective projection,” but at a horrific cost.³⁹ For Girard, the death of Christ exposed “the sacrificial lie for once and for all by revealing the innocence of the victim,” the lesson being that the genuine other, “ethical alterity,” is God in the end. Kearney takes Girard to task for too readily condemning myth as “somehow inherently monstrous,” and he is careful to point out that sometimes the repudiation of strangeness is in fact deification, a claim vividly illustrated by the bloody monstrosity of Christ in Mel Gibson’s 2004 film, *The Passion of the Christ*. Although Kearney does not examine the film, after reading this chapter one can clearly see how controversy surrounding Gibson’s pornographic vision of divine sacrifice is in part caused by the film’s demonstration of the very close relation between monstrosity and divinity that Kearney is careful to explain.⁴⁰

Moving beyond the scapegoating function in mythic and religious discourse, Kearney turns to the figure of the “alien” in popular culture and philosophy in chapters two and three respectively. With an examination of the alien monster in the *Alien* film series and the Kurtz character in Francis Ford Coppola’s *Apocalypse Now Redux*, Kearney shows how both filmic narratives forward a humane civil pedagogy: our task “is not to kill our monsters but to learn how to live with them,” most especially because they represent the “stranger within.”⁴¹ In echoes of Derrida’s opening remarks in *Specters*, the task of learning how to live with ghosts begins by recognizing the demands of justice. In chapter three the problem of the other is most succinctly and clearly framed in reference to the work of Derrida and his influential colleague, Emmanuel Levinas. Indeed, insofar as chapter three is the core of *Strangers, Gods and Monsters*, a closer account of this chapter alone will help to explicate and organize the rest of the book as Kearney’s response.

Kearney begins the third chapter by arguing that “most ideas of identity,” especially *national* identity, “have been constructed in relation to some notion of alterity.” He continues:

Contemporary thinkers like Levinas and Derrida have made much of the fact that the Western metaphysical heritage, grounded in Greco-Roman thought, has generally discriminated against the Other in favor of the Same, variously understood as Logos, Being, Substance, Reason or Ego. This prejudice is called the “ontology of Sameness” by Levinas and “logocentrism” by Derrida. But both share the view—one canvassed by a wide variety of continental thinkers—that justice demands a redressing of the balance so as to arrive at a more ethical appreciation of otherness.⁴²

Learning to live with ghosts entails the recognition that the other does not have to be the Same. “Openness to the Other beyond the Same is called justice,” continues Kearney, and this posture of openness is termed “hospitality.”

Kearney then proceeds to examine Derrida’s post-*Specters* work that focuses on hospitality. He posits the “other” as another “worthy of reverence and hospitality,” and the “alien” as another about whom we are suspicious or fearful. Kearney suggests that insofar as the law is understood as the necessary and inevitable exclusion of non-conformists in an identitarian regime like the nation state, for Derrida (as well as John Caputo, Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, and Jean-Luc Nancy) justice beyond the law is an “unconditional hospitality to the alien.” For the deconstructionists, hospitality is only “truly just . . . when it resists the temptation to discriminate between good and evil others,” the “hostile enemy (*hostis*) and the benign host (*hostis*).”⁴³ Derrida’s extension of this argument concerns the inherent paradox of hospitality: the general conception of hospitality concerns a “host” who opens his or her home to others. Built into this conception is the idea that the host has the right to discriminate among others who are allowed to enter, because it is possible that certain evil others could get in and hold the host hostage. So each visitor is made to announce his or her identity at the door, which entails a certain degree of injustice and thus collapses the other into a binary: the other is *either* “invader-alien or welcome other.”⁴⁴ Faced with this pickle, Derrida argues for an “unconditional hospitality” that “marks a break with everyday conventions of hospitality governed by rights, contracts, duties and pacts.” Kearney explains that Derrida does not dispense with the law of right altogether, however, for our relation to the other/alien/stranger is still, nevertheless, regulated as a relation.

After rehearsing what reads at times like a cocktail party thought experiment, the point around which the entire book is written emerges: “The problem with this analysis of hospitality is, I fear, that it undervalues our need to differentiate not just legally but *ethically* between good and evil aliens.”⁴⁵ Kearney is admiring of the posture of deconstruction, the critique of identity, the embrace of an openness to the stranger-other but has trouble with the possibility that post-humanism forestalls—or worse, invalidates—judgment. After a quick detour through Levinas on radical alterity to establish one end of an extreme (a radical passivity before the other as Absolute Alterity; e.g., God) and Kristeva on the uncanny to establish the other (that the other is the “mirror image: our othered self”), Kearney proposes the third way, a “diacritical hermeneutics of action.” The basis for this hermeneutic is the necessity of self-constancy for ethics, which is achieved only through narrative. “Narrative identity should not therefore be summarily dismissed as an illusion of mastery,” as some posthumanist arguments seem to suggest, but rather is required in order to “de-alienate” the other. One is tempted to say that, for Kearney, salvation is rhetoric—more rhetoric recognizing “oneself as another” and “the other as (in part) another self.”⁴⁶ The reader must wait until many pages later in the next chapter, however, to learn more about what role the production of discourse has to play in Kearney’s program.

So how does one maintain a commitment to the posthumanist subject and an openness to alterity on the one hand and a need to distinguish between good and evil on the other? First, Kearney promotes “practical understanding,” or the capacity to deliberate about “the enigma of evil” with a commitment to *act against it* once discerned. His elaboration of *phronesis-praxis* depends entirely on the vehicle of narrative, resembling what Dana Cloud has described as a “pragma-rhetorical approach” to evil: “a perspective that emphasizes ‘how’ evil is produced, deployed, used, and misused in public discourse, bracketing the question of the ontological status of evil itself” and stressing the importance of narrative description with an eye toward pragmatic action.⁴⁷ Such wisdom is supplemented with “working-through,” an acknowledgment of suffering and trauma and a commitment to laboring through pain “as best we can.” Such working-through entails a certain commitment to narrative catharsis—writing and speaking about the traumatic, mourning in the more common sense of the term.⁴⁸ Finally, Kearney recommends “pardon,” the gesture of forgiveness that is, at some level, irrational.

After the significant discussions of the third and fourth chapters, the rest of *Strangers, Gods and Monsters* doubles as both a place to take care of some unfinished, tangentially related business (e.g., quibbles with Caputo, Lyotard, and Žižek) and as an example of the sort of action-based hermeneutics Kearney has in mind. He discusses the U.S. response to the attacks on September 11, 2001, as a textbook example of wrongly reckoning with the alien outside and within (in personal communication, Kearney noted that he had started writing the book long before those events). He reviews various alternate attempts to reckon with death and/or the other, such as the adoption of a melancholic imagination in chapter seven, willed silence in terms of the concept of the “immemorial” (a traumatic event that cannot be remembered and mourned) in chapter eight, and the celebration of the uncanny concept of the *khora* (a sort of pre-symbolic “primordial matrix of the unconscious”) in chapter nine. In the second half of the book Kearney is careful to confront various concepts of ineffability—in the language of Lacan, “the Real,” or that which is *beyond* our capacities to represent—in order to stress the necessity of critical judgment and speaking out. For example, in criticizing Lyotard’s notion of the immemorial, Kearney argues that:

[R]ather than reject all notions of ‘representation’ and ‘reference’ out of hand, would it not be wiser to problematize and redefine them? To repudiate absolutely every reality claim amounts surely to a ruinous dichotomy between a modern *positivism of fact* and a postmodern *apophatism of silence*.⁴⁹

He responds similarly to Žižek on the traumatic sublime and Derrida and Kristeva on the *khora*. Although Kearney is willing to admit of multiple figurations of the ineffable in the critiques of ontology, he consistently argues against strategies of silence or inaction; to adopt them, he claims, subordinates the central rhetoricity of ethics, or the centrality of narrative for practical action, working through, and forgiveness, to an aesthetics of radical passivity.

The Uncanny and Traumatic

Kearney only fleetingly discusses the uncanny as one of the many concepts of the ineffable or unrepresentable that mediates the theory of deconstruction and psychoanalysis. Unlike the sublime, the immemorial, or the *khora*, however, for Kearney the critical work on the uncanny experience is more productive and less prone to recommend a radical passivity.⁵⁰ Nicholas Royle's massive *The Uncanny* explains the articulation of the concept to literature, deconstruction, and psychoanalysis in exhaustive detail. The tome purports to be the "first book-length" study of the uncanny in "thinking on literature, film, philosophy, psychoanalysis, feminism, and queer theory."⁵¹ Although it is long and at times too playfully self-indulgent, Royle's book makes a strong case for understanding the uncanny as indexing "three ghosts, or three ghost-effects, that are indissociably linked: intellectual uncertainty, literature and psychoanalysis."⁵² Whereas Derrida's hauntology recommends hospitality and Kearney's diacritical hermeneutics suggests practical judgment, Royle's book recommends an ethic of toleration—namely, a toleration of uncertainty and impropriety, not just when encountering the other, but also when trying to read the book itself.

Royle opens *The Uncanny* with a lengthy description and genealogy of the word and its meaning. Although the word can be traced back to the Scots, the uncanny is most famously discussed in Freud's famous 1919 monograph *Das Unheimliche* as a paradoxical interplay of the "homely" and "unhomely."⁵³ Drawing on the floodtide of examples in Freud's essay, Royle characterizes the uncanny as "ghostly" and "concerned with the strange, weird and mysterious, with a flickering sense (but not conviction) of something supernatural." He follows:

The uncanny involves feelings of uncertainty, in particular regarding the reality of who one is and what is being experienced. Suddenly one's sense of oneself . . . seems strangely questionable. The uncanny is a crisis of the proper: it entails a critical disturbance of what is proper. . . . It is a crisis of the natural . . . one's own nature, human nature, the nature of reality and the world. But the uncanny is not simply an experience of strangeness or alienation. More specifically, it is a peculiar commingling of the familiar and unfamiliar.⁵⁴

Royle continues for many pages with more extensions, tying the concept to everything from Brecht's notion of the "alienation effect," to Harold Bloom's description of the sublime, to Todorov's elaboration of the fantastic, to literature as such. The uncanny concerns both "a feeling and a concept, however spectral," which necessarily unsettles an identity of sameness, overflowing the representation of experiencing it. What emerges in this opening litany of descriptors, however, is the specter of Derrida (yet again): "Another name for uncanny overflow might be deconstruction. Deconstruction makes the most apparently familiar texts strange, it renders the most apparently unequivocal and self-assured statements uncertain."⁵⁵

Ultimately, the purpose of the book is announced in the beginning as an ethical one rooted less in the work of Freud than Derrida:

If psychoanalysis and deconstruction have one thing to teach, it would be about how and why we must not simply give ourselves up or over to the uncanny. There has to be an abiding attachment to the familiar, even if it is one that requires ceaseless suspicion. There has to be grounding in the rational in order to experience its trembling break-up.⁵⁶

In solidarity with deconstruction and Derrida's remarks on the uncanny, Royle notes that the "question" the uncanny poses to us is one of "economy," of not succumbing to some absolute surrender to uncertainty, but, like Kearney, figuring out a way to manage or navigate or experience the unmanageable that is productive, but which forestalls absolutisms and closures at the same time. Announcing this program, in the twenty-one chapters that follow, Royle demonstrates how the uncanny surfaces in multiple contexts and experiences: there are playful, often short, deconstructive chapters on being buried alive, doubles and doppelgangers, cannibalism, and (my personal favorite) "the private parts of Jesus Christ," as well as a number of more straightforward and sustained essays on the pedagogy of Freud's text, the concept of the death drive, and the status of narrative fiction.

Royle's book is recommended because it helps to unravel the many ways in which the uncanny "haunts" in theory and cultural practice, and because it advances a close reading of Freud's foundational text that extends the concept's applicability. Yet Royle's text is deliberately unwieldy—unsummarizable and unrepresentable—and consequently his early call for an "economy of the uncanny" ends up sounding a bit like the recorded message of a telemarketing machine: it's a strong voice, it has persuasive thrust, but by page 100 of 340 one simply wants to hang it up. *The Uncanny* also participates in a much wider theoretical debate regarding the politics of the unrepresentable, a debate that Kearney's book helps to introduce: that the scholarship on the uncanny, the immemorial, the *khora*, the postmodern sublime, and so on, participates in a kind of non-judgmentalism that encourages inaction, extolling a reading-chair or conference room ethical posture at the expense of the political and pragmatic.⁵⁷ In the 1990s, this is precisely the conundrum that the concept of "trauma" was intended to mediate. As Karyn Ball explains, the deconstructive readings of the 1970s and 1980s, of which Royle's book is a descendant, "unsettled presumptions about the automatic validity and authenticity of experiences of disenfranchisement and/or oppression. . . . French antifoundationalist reflections on identity and ideology were inextricably bound up with a reappraisal of humanism," eventually leading to a "posthumanist climate" among certain precincts in the humanities that "made it difficult to treat subjectivity and experience as anything more than the discredited ideas of a retrograde bourgeois individualism."⁵⁸ Because of the connotations of "real-world" (as opposed to "literary") material catastrophe and its rooting in the experience of war and atrocity, trauma emerged as a concept in the ineffability family that seemed to foster some rapprochement between the practical aims of identity politics and the ethical thrust of deconstruction and psychoanalysis. Although the debates among trauma studies scholars seem to be on the decline, the emergence of trauma as a *topos* in the work of Robert Hariman, John Lucaites, Marouf Hasian, and Stephanie Houston Gray marks

the most direct intersection of recent work in rhetorical scholarship and the idiom of haunting.⁵⁹

Like Royle's study, Ruth Leys' *Trauma: A Genealogy* attempts to provide a thorough description of the concept, but in historical as opposed to conceptual terms. Leys' opening argument is that trauma studies is in chaos because those who have studied and theorized trauma often assume two competing understandings. The first understanding of trauma is indebted to the phenomenon of hypnotic suggestion, which provided a model for likening the experience of the traumatized victim to the malleable subject of hypnosis: the traumatized individual mindlessly imitates or repeats elements of the traumatic scene or the behaviors of an aggressor. This "mimetic" understanding of trauma assumes that the "victim" is "immersed. . . in the traumatic scene so profoundly that it precluded the kind of specular distance necessary for cognitive knowledge of what happened."⁶⁰ The second understanding of trauma is decidedly reactive and "anti-mimetic" and forges a strict separation between the traumatized and the source of trauma. If trauma was mimetic, then the autonomy of the subject is a farce. Moreover, the victim's account of the source of trauma could be mere "fabrication or simulation." The anti-mimetic view isolates trauma as an entirely external event that is "non-narrative," tracking a scientific impulse that is reflected, for example, in the literature of post traumatic stress disorder.

Over the course of eight lengthy, well-researched chapters, Leys shows how the most prominent work on trauma in the last century simultaneously assumes both mimetic and anti-mimetic positions. She begins in chapter one with an analysis of Freud's contradictory positions on trauma, and then moves in chapter two to the case of "Miss Beauchamp," Morton Prince's foundational study of what is now known as multiple personality disorder. Leys argues that Prince's theory of personality disassociation relies both on an uncontrollable, mimetic recounting of trauma, as well as an anti-mimetic understanding of pre-traumatic gender roles that emerge as various "personalities." She follows this analysis in chapter three by examining the debate over "shell shock" that emerged after World War I, and then the work of Sándor Ferenczi, a student of Freud's, in the interwar years in chapters four and five. Finally, in chapter six Leys examines the work of William Sargant, who used drugs to catalyze "catharsis" in soldiers suffering from "war neurosis" during World War II. I say "finally" in respect of this last chapter because the scholarly intervention Leys makes really appears in the last two chapters, where she takes on the work of Bessl van der Kolk and Cathy Caruth, the former a neurobiologist and the latter a student of deconstruction. Leys suggests that both scholars seem to almost relish "the currently modish idea that the domain of trauma is the unspeakable and unrepresentable," recalling the ethical problems Kearney details in respect to the immemorial and the *khora*.⁶¹

According to Leys, in response to those activists and scholars who argue that "false memories" can be implanted during therapy (a charge made famous at the end of the U.S. Satanic rumor panic of the late 1980s and 1990s),⁶² van der Kolk flatly denies

“that traumatic memories can be implanted by suggestion and hence falsified.” This is because

trauma is not an experience that is subject to the usual “declarative” or “explicit” and “narrative” mechanisms of memory and recall. Rather, what characterizes traumatic memory is precisely that is “iconic” or “sensorimotor,” by which he means that it is dissociated from all verbal-linguistic-semantic representation. Traumatic memories are “mute,” because they cannot be expressed in verbal-linguistic terms.⁶³

What this means is that trauma victims “cannot witness or testify to the trauma in the sense of narrative,” rather, “all they can do is perform the experience as if it were literally happening over again.”⁶⁴ Trauma is an external event inscribed onto the body that is experienced only in terms of literal repetition. It is impossible to recount trauma in narrative, and any “testimony about the past is necessarily a misrepresentation.”⁶⁵ Leys rehearses van der Kolk’s work only to dismiss it as “low quality,” rife with “slippages and inconsistencies.”⁶⁶

One reason why Leys recounts the work of van der Kolk is because it provides the scientific support for the scholarship of Cathy Caruth, a thinker whose work has unwittingly become central to the trauma studies canon ever since she edited a special, two-volume issue of the psychoanalytic journal *American Imago* on the topic of trauma in 1991.⁶⁷ Leys takes on Caruth’s subsequently widely-read book, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*, which advances a theory of interpersonal, traumatic immediacy and intergenerational trauma vis-à-vis narrativity.⁶⁸ Informed by Paul de Man’s deconstructive theory of crisis, Caruth argues that “language succeeds in testifying to the traumatic horror only when the referential function of words begins to break down,” the consequence being that what is communicated in traumatic reportage is not sensuous knowledge of the event, but the traumatic event, literally.⁶⁹ In the recounting of trauma, in other words, there is the “transmission of the unrepresentable—a transmission imagined by Caruth simultaneously as an ineluctable process of infection. . . .”⁷⁰ For Caruth, past traumatic events can haunt succeeding generations and can be experienced as if the original event had no origin; trauma is transmitted across generations by virtue of its representational impossibility.

Leys will have none of this, and seeks to critique this radical, traumatic (anti)mimesis by closely reading and critiquing Caruth’s use of Freud’s *Moses and Monotheism* and *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. Leys argues that Caruth (and van der Kolk) ultimately confuse the mimetic and antimimetic because they stress trauma as unrepresentable (and therefore radically exterior) on the one hand, and because they insist on the literalness of traumatic replay (as “flashback,” etc.) on the other. Why Leys is so determined to undermine Caruth’s position is never revealed except in terms of scholarly rigor: “As for Caruth, I feel. . . [an] impatience with the sloppiness of her theoretical arguments; in the name of close reading she produces interpretations that are so arbitrary, willful, and tendentious as to forfeit all claim to believability.”⁷¹ But it is clear that Leys does not agree that trauma is experienced by victims and non-victims alike; there is an implied ownership to trauma.

Leys concludes *Trauma* by arguing her mapping of the tensions in trauma studies “does not yield a meta-position,” only a pragmatic one:

[I]f it is true that the entire discourse on trauma in the West has been structured by an irresolvable tension or conflict between mimesis and antimimesis, then it would be a mistake for therapists to think that treatment for the victims of trauma should follow theory in some direct way, because theory will continue to be subject to the alterations and contradictions inherent in the mimetic–antimimetic structure. Another way of putting this is to say that. . . the soundest basis for a therapeutic practice would be an intelligent, humane, and resourceful pragmatism.⁷²

Therapists should not worry “too much about the exact fit between practice and theory,” she says, taking a position somewhat similar to Richard Kearney’s stress on practical wisdom and working through. Yet there is no forgiveness. Although clearly the ethics of witnessing and the historicization of traumatic horror—remembering Hiroshima and the Holocaust—are central to the discussion, the ethical dimensions of reckoning with the traumatic source of haunting are rarely mentioned. If trauma is, in fact, another Real that merely does the bidding of a theoretical ahistoricism, then it would seem for Leys that the victimized other is denied a sense of compassion and respect, denied ownership of his or her experiences. All of this is speculation, of course, about Leys’s meta-position (it seems impossible not to have an ethical one, at least), but insofar as trauma studies is closely aligned with deconstruction, I think she would at least partially agree with Kearney’s summation: “[I]f we need a logic of undecidability to keep us tolerant. . . we need an ethics of judgment to commit us, as much as possible, to right action.”⁷³ For Leys, this ethics is simply, and disappointingly, “intelligent, human, and resourceful pragmatism.”⁷⁴

Mourning/Criticism

Leys’ book is important because it demonstrates the centrality of the *event* to haunting. Every haunting can be characterized as a loss, as the recall of an event of losing, and in some sense, as a melancholic inability to let go of the *thing* that is lost (even a sense of a coherent self, which is typically undone in trauma). On the one hand, haunting is an inability to mourn a person or figure, a kind of melancholia that Derrida has suggested keeps us more hospitable. On the other hand, haunting is the mourning of a traumatic event, a coming to terms with some horrible practice or occurrence. Arguably, the discussion up to this point is propaedeutic for examining (and strongly recommending) Avery F. Gordon’s *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination*, which skillfully mourns traumatic events yet remains open and hospitable to the ghosts that they create. Better than the other books reviewed here, Gordon’s remarkable scholarly performance ties together all of the concepts of the haunting—the dead humanist subject, the ghost, social justice, mourning, the uncanny, trauma—beautifully demonstrating their relevance to cultural criticism in a manner that is resolutely hospitable.

Although a sociologist by training, Gordon’s project is not a disciplined argument. *Ghostly Matters* is performatively written and posed against any “method,” reading

alternately as a history at times and a close textual reading at others, but as a reflective meditation throughout. She remarks she is ultimately in pursuit of “sensuous knowledge,” but deliberately refuses to tell us what this is; she would prefer us to *feel* it instead. In *Ghostly Matters*, Gordon demonstrates how criticism is a mournful process of reckoning with a dead other that nevertheless lives among us. The book opens with a subtle critique of the academic enterprise of the humanities (and sociology in particular) for its proclivity to distance the scholar from the social world in a number of ways. First, she critiques the distance of theorizing subjectivity from afar and failing to approach and/or write about people as complex and contradictory agents, worthy of hospitality. “It has always baffled me,” says Gordon, “why those most interested in understanding and changing the barbaric domination that characterizes our modernity often—not always—withhold from the very people they are most concerned with the right to complex personhood.”⁷⁵ Such withholding happens in a purely theoretical stance, of course, but Gordon also means to stress an *emotional* withholding and a failure to communicate a sense of self in one’s writing. A second way that scholars distance themselves from the social is with “method” and the obsession over the approach one takes to studying the other. Gordon admits to being “haunted” by the question of method, by the questioning of colleagues: “[W]hat method have you adopted for your research? Or, more precisely, how can a fiction be data? What is this about ghosts and haunting? Why do you call it sociology?”⁷⁶ Readers who have wrestled with learning or teaching rhetorical criticism will recognize Gordon’s predicament, and perhaps will be more comfortable with her refusal to answer such questions except by example, except by offering the book itself.

Gordon’s first move is to stress that a posthumanist orientation demands an understanding of “complex personhood” and, in a sense, what Derrida had recommended as hospitality. Just because the modernist subject or “superhuman agent” is dead does not mean that people are consequently dronish victims of ideological interpellation:

Complex personhood means that all people (albeit in specific forms whose specificity is sometimes everything) remember and forget, are best by contradiction, and recognize and misrecognize themselves and others. Complex personhood means that people suffer gracious and selfishly too, get stuck in the symptoms of their troubles, and also transform themselves. Complex personhood means that even those called “Other” are never never that.⁷⁷

Gordon then offers up “haunting” as a perspective that better captures complex personhood in the context of “modern social life,” which she admits is on its way to the kind of postmodernity that Fredric Jameson describes as all surface and no depth (nevertheless, she adds, “we are not ‘post’ modern yet”).⁷⁸ “The available critical vocabularies were failing (me) to communicate the depth, density, and intricacies of the dialectic of subjection and subjectivity” in an increasingly postmodern world, says Gordon.⁷⁹ Haunting, because of its ability to mediate presence and absence on the page and in history, because of its ability to accommodate the split status of the subject, and because of its ability to bring together the living and the dead in

conversation, is offered as both a phenomenon and critical orientation that Gordon sets out to describe and explain in the four succeeding chapters.

In chapter two, Gordon tells us the story of Sabina Spielrein on her way to critiquing psychoanalysis. She tells us she stumbled across Spielrein's book, *A Secret Symmetry*, a collection of diary entries and letters in which the author describes the relationships between herself, Freud, and Jung, as well as a number of vivid hallucinations and lurid fantasies. A schizophrenic, Spielrein was "cured" by Jung and later had an affair with him, which he eventually broke off in pursuit of a rival that she described as "the jewish girl." Gordon examines the figure of Spielrein as a "ghost" that haunts psychoanalysis in a number of ways: in terms of her absence in a photograph of the Third Psychoanalytic Congress, which she was supposed to attend but did not; in terms of her invisible visibility—the fact that she was part of the psychoanalytic scene, but appears in the writings of Freud and Jung only in traces; in terms of the theft of her ideas, insofar as Spielrein penned "On the Death Instinct" ten years before Freud would take up the topic; in terms of the invisibility of women in early psychoanalysis, their haunting in Freud's theory of sexuality; and in terms of the transference—the central structure of the psychoanalytic cure.

In general, the transference refers to the developing relationship between a patient and an analyst in psychotherapy. More specifically, the transference refers to the attribution of inappropriate feelings to the analyst, which recalls those of earlier relationships. Therapy works in the transference in terms of attachments and resistances. For example, Spielrein's comment about Jung, "I love him and hate him," reflects the feelings of aggressivity and of love typical of the transference. In therapy, one "works through" these feelings—including those of countertransference, the unconscious feelings of the analyst—so that the patient begins to *use* the analyst, not as a love object or parental figure, but as a kind of tool to analyze herself. Throughout the second chapter (and in a way, the book), Gordon yokes transference, the concept of "field" (a term that for Gordon embodies an opposition between discipline and social totality), and "method" in order to critique Freud's reduction of psychotherapy to dyadic relations, which she argues ignores the importance of the social and collective in the name of the Other as the Symmetrical and Same. The phallogocentric solipsism of the enterprise is reflected in the Freudian unconscious, which is a "self-contained closed system, inaccessible to worldly consciousness. . . ." ⁸⁰ In pursuing scientific validation, Gordon demonstrates Freud was a ghost-buster through and through. By critiquing the psychoanalytic focus on the transference as an apolitical, interpersonal relation, Gordon seems to push for a broader, posthumanist understanding of the transference as a socio-cultural phenomenon that is not reducible to "a two party affair."⁸¹

In ways that echo Royle's celebration of the essay, however, Gordon suggests that Freud's "The Uncanny" is a notable and unique posthumanist moment in his work, an instance when the Father confronts an intolerable unrepresentability and openness to the outside, the *socius*. In the essay:

Freud might have called the primitive . . . the social and thereby have supplemented the Marxist notion of estrangement. The social is ultimately what the uncanny is about: being haunted in the *world of common reality*. To be haunted is not a contest between animism and a discrediting reality test, nor a contest between the unconscious and conscious faculties. It is an enchanted encounter in a disenchanted world between familiarity and strangeness. The uncanny is the return, in psychoanalytic terms, of what the concept of the unconscious represses: the reality of being haunted by worldly contacts.⁸²

At this moment Gordon recommends the standpoint of Spielrein, who frequently wrote about her fantasies and hallucinations as realities, open to what they had to teach her about the social. In the next few pages this standpoint is linked directly to Derrida's *Specters of Marx* and a concern for justice, a hospitality toward ghosts: "Dear Sabina," she writes, "I'm uneasy about using your story . . . as a pretext for speaking about methodology and other matters, about needing or seeming to need a dead woman to enliven matters, to make them have some material force."⁸³

The next two chapters are sustained yet deliberately wandering readings of a novella and a novel that Gordon suggests provide the sensuous knowledge of haunting: Luisa Valenzuela's "surreal and magically realist" *He Who Searches* (1977) and Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1987). Chapter three begins with a helpful summary of haunting as a perspective and an ethical orientation toward justice, indirectly rooted in Derrida's hauntology:

We have seen that the ghost imports a charged strangeness into the place or sphere it is haunting, thus unsettling the propriety and property lines that delimit a zone of activity or knowledge. I have also emphasized that the ghost is primarily a symptom of what is missing. . . . Finally, I have suggested that the ghost is alive, so to speak. We are in relation to it and it has designs on us such that we must reckon with it graciously, attempting to offer it a hospitable memory *out of a concern for justice*. Out of a concern for justice would be the only reason one would bother.⁸⁴

She continues by bringing in the thought of Walter Benjamin to help her underscore that haunting is not an idealism, but a materialist project that seeks to reckon with history by "blasting" open the "door of the uncanny, the door of the fragment, the door of the shocking parallel" and letting the ghosts (or the Messiah) walk through.

Gordon seeks to promote a "different kind of materialism" by examining Valenzuela's "postmodern" novel about state-sponsored terrorism in Argentina. Valenzuela's novel demonstrates that "a great deal of what can be known is tied to the search for knowing it," which Gordon attempts to replicate at the level of her reading as well. Although the plot is scattered and takes Gordon two pages to summarize (so I won't do so here; suffice it to say that there are a lot of composite characters and time is warped), Gordon suggests the form of the "hard-to-understand-what-is-happening narrative" helps its primary audience to reckon with the very real terror of "disappearance," the term used for the illegal abductions practiced by the military government of Argentina between 1976 and 1983. Gordon reports that "it is estimated that thirty thousand people disappeared," mostly young people "between the ages of sixteen and thirty five" who were "workers and students." All of the

abducted were tortured, “most of them killed, their bodies burned, thrown to the sea, into the Rive Plate, or into the jungles” or buried in unmarked graves.⁸⁵ For the remainder of the chapter, Gordon skillfully weaves together the social (the context and practice of disappearance in Argentina), Valenzuela’s novel, and the practice of psychoanalysis in Argentina during the late 1980s and early 1990s.⁸⁶

The Argentine Psychoanalytic Association refused to “engage social and political questions as a fundamental mandate,” in part because talking about disappearance was illegal. This continued Freud’s tendency to focus exclusively on the individual psyche and private, familial life at the expense of the social and political causes of symptoms. Gordon asks, “[H]ow could an analyst understand a patient’s singular unconscious when the state itself is a major agent of repression?”⁸⁷ The answer is that he or she cannot. Gordon argues that Valenzuela “exposes the absurdity of scientific practice. . . . without social and political reference.”⁸⁸

In the next chapter she approaches Morrison’s *Beloved* similarly, dropping the critique of scientific psychoanalysis in favor of a Benjaminian understanding of “memory as haunting.” There, the argument is that Morrison helps readers reckon with a traumatic practice of U.S. slavery in a way that is open to haunting and that refuses to tidily sew up everything in final judgments. Unlike Valenzuela, however, through the description and resolution of “the struggle between Sethe and Beloved”—the central characters of the novel, one a mother, the other, the ghost of the daughter she murdered because she feared she would be enslaved—the atrocity of historical slavery is mourned in a way that confronts evil but that does not ossify into an inhospitable righteousness or indignation. Further, Morrison helps

us to see that haunting [as a way of life, or as a method of analysis, or as a type of political consciousness, must be passed through. (This lesson can be aptly applied to other contemporary versions of endless mourning, such as left pessimism or cynicism, political paralysis, or DeLillo’s telecommunicative indifference). To remain haunted is to remain partial to the dead or the deadly and not the living. Morrison provides a stunning example of how to hospitably and delicately talk to ghost and through hauntings, which we must do.⁸⁹

Or as Derrida has said, when the *revenant* comes—and it will, it’s coming—we must be open to what it has to say. By writing *Beloved*, Morrison opened herself up to the ghost of a slave; by reading *Beloved*, Gordon suggests that readers are opened as well.

Given the poetic and performative analyses of the previous two chapters, Gordon somewhat unexpectedly closes *Ghostly Matters* by calling for a new Marxo-Freudianism that reflects a Benjaminian brand of materialist criticism. Throughout the book Gordon prepares us for the call, hinting that some reconciliation of the psychical and the social is needed. In chapter three, for example, she remarks:

[T]he efforts to create a psychoanalytic Marxism or a Marxist psychoanalysis have thus far . . . attempted to patch together two distinct modes of analysis and healing . . . while allowing neither to be essentially altered by the union and leaving the crucial question of mediation to be answered only by the most mechanical of solutions. . . . The more-psychoanalytic-than-Marxist never quite accept that the subject is a superstructural effect. . . . The more-Marxist-than-psychoanalytic never

quite accept the autonomy of the psychic world. . . . Heart and force, individual and class, repetition and revolution, drives and networks—the marriage never quite succeeds.⁹⁰

Gordon suggests haunting is that perspective/method/healing that brings a kind of emotive thirdness to the table, and announces that it does so by producing what Raymond Williams described as a “structure of feeling,” a kind of “sensuous knowledge” that is achieved through a critical process that Benjamin termed the “profane illumination.”⁹¹ The discussion of Benjamin’s “profane illumination” seems tacked on as yet another way to explain performative writing—writing that reckons by surrendering to the past and possible futures betokened by the figure of the ghost. As a poetic reconciliation of Marxism and psychoanalysis, *Ghostly Matters* fails to delight. Although Gordon does not claim such a reconciliation, her frequent recourse to the language of socializing the psyche and psychologizing the social leads to the suspicion that she is after possibility. Setting the conclusion aside, however, the key contribution of *Ghostly Matters* is its demonstration of a mode of criticism that is movingly hospitable to the other, dead and alive. By the end of the book, Gordon has held up two writers of fiction as exemplars of the practice of mournful reckoning. To them we should add a third, a sociologist who writes cultural criticism. Admirably, *Ghostly Matters* is itself a model of its subject matter, demonstrating with its many personal disclosures and considered reflections on others why the critical act is, in the last instance, a mournful one.

Concluding Critical Melancholia

Profound mourning, the reaction to the loss of a loved person, contains the same feelings [as melancholia] of pain, loss of interest in the outside world—in so far as it does not recall the dead one—loss of capacity to adopt any new object of love, which would mean a replacing of the one mourned, the same turning from every active effort that is not connected with thoughts of the dead.⁹²

—Sigmund Freud

As an extreme form of haunting, melancholia denotes the impossibility of substitution and turning away, an inability to exorcize a ghost. Derrida’s recent death is particularly demonstrative of a profound haunting in the academic imaginary. Recently the philosopher’s corpus has become an object of both derision and defense in the ongoing battles of the so-called culture wars. The public *mêlée* between smug journalists denouncing Derrida’s playful, poststructuralist prose at the event of his passing, and outraged academics defending his intellectual legacy and humane character, reenacts the Freudian allegory of primal horde: the exiled sons, desiring equality and resentful of the father’s control over women (knowledge), band together, kill the father, and eat him. “As soon as they kill and devour the detested father,” explains Laurence Rickels, “they double over with indigestion . . . and thus they find that they must also mourn him, that they are already mourning him.”⁹³ The occasion of Derrida’s death and the debate over its significance not only underscore the continued importance and power of his thought, but also the way in which the figure

of Derrida *haunts* the academy—how it haunted it even before the anti-intellectual feeding frenzy on the obituary page.⁹⁴ Derrida's ghost forces a continual and perhaps impossible reconciliation of his ideas and established ways of thinking—even among those contemporary intellectual progeny who refuse to taste it.

In a sense, in this review essay I have been chasing Derrida's ghost through a series of books in order to demonstrate the influence and utility of the idiom of haunting. The books reviewed here demonstrate that the purchase of haunting is ultimately an ethical one, a commitment toward the other or alterity that hesitates administering last rights—the claim to truth and final ends—in favor of an openness to surprise, to what a given ghost has to say, to the Messiah's return at any moment. As Royle suggests in respect of the uncanny, the posture of haunting translates to the act of reading as an openness to the difficult text, even to the profane or blasphemous speech of those ghosts whom we would rather exorcise (e.g., in rhetorical theory, the specter of Freud). As Gordon suggests in respect of traumatic histories, the posture of haunting translates to the act of criticism as an openness to the social as an agency that mediates self and other. Ultimately, the condition of such openness is the acceptance that the humanist subject, as a singularly self-transparent and autonomous object, is dead. Only its ghost remains.⁹⁵

To say that the subject is a ghost is not the same thing as saying there is no such thing as intention or judgment or that rhetorical scholars “should break entirely with tradition, toss concerns about agency into the trash heap of obsolete ideologies, and go about the business of interpretation without any qualms of conscience.”⁹⁶ Although for many years the case *for* conscience has been built on the humanistic subject in respect of the responsibility demanded by a fundamental (rhetorical) contingency, the books reviewed here demonstrate how the death of the subject and the end of certitude, rather than herald nihilism, actually demand a kind of posthumanist conscience that is resolutely ethical. Without metaphysics, there is only ethics and politics. If the “what” is indeterminate, a ghost, a being and not-being at the same time, then perhaps attention should turn away from “what” to “how.”

To say that the subject is a ghost is to say that both the other *and* the self are ghostly. Viewing one's self as a ghost is undoubtedly difficult; nevertheless, if one accepts the premise that the self is a product of discourse and that one should be open to alterity, then affirming the ghostly self implies many things: Derrida argues that ghostly subjectivity recommends absolute hospitality; Kearney suggests that the posthumanist subject not only recommends hospitality, but requires a critical hermeneutics and the production of narrative as the only positive consistency for agency that we have; Royle demonstrates that the unsettling encounters with the uncanny—experiences that remind us of our own ghostliness—demand the tolerance of difference; Leys' excavation of trauma suggests a certain degree of respect toward the victims of trauma; and Gordon's analyses demonstrate one way in which the work of haunting, of mourning hospitably and respectfully, is achieved in the critical act.

Understanding criticism as a mournful practice requires a confrontation and encounter with our ghosts. I have suggested above and elsewhere that rhetorical

scholars have been haunted for some time by the death of the humanist subject, that the protestations against “postmodernism” actually reflect a tacit recognition of this death and an unwillingness to let go of the much beloved traditional rhetorical agent. In this sense rhetorical theory suffers from a kind of critical melancholia, a haunting that manifests itself in various disciplinary discussions about whether “agency” or “community” is possible.⁹⁷ While haunting calls agency into question, it nevertheless acknowledges there is a positive consistency to subjectivity—a consistency that even survives our individual deaths. This consistency is, of course, rhetorical. Although living with ghosts reminds us that narrative is all we have to work with, it also reminds us that there is *something more* than rhetoric, that there are material events that escape the horizon of intelligibility, that there is a fundamental ineffability to human experience most discernable in the moment of trauma. Such reminders recommend humility and openness to the other—to the victims of the attacks on September 11, 2001, as well as the “terrorists” who were ultimately responsible for the traumatic scene. Human being as such demands a degree of hospitality in order to avoid fashioning others into gods and monsters so that we can kill them.⁹⁸

Notes

- [1] John Louis Lucaites and Celeste Michelle Condit, “Epilogue: Contributions from Rhetorical Theory,” in *Contemporary Rhetorical Theory*, ed. John Louis Lucaites, Celeste Michelle Condit, and Sally Caudill (New York: Guilford, 1998), 610.
- [2] Edward Schiappa, “Sophisticated Modernism and the Continuing Importance of Argument Evaluation,” in *Arguing Communication and Culture*, ed. G. Thomas Goodnight (Washington, DC: National Communication Association, 2002), 51–58.
- [3] Julia Keller, “After the attack, postmodernism loses its glib grip,” *Chicago Tribune*, September 27, 2001, available <http://www.chicagotribune.com/features/chi-0109270018sep27,0,6301525.story> (accessed 10 January 10, 2005).
- [4] For informative overviews, see Steven Best and Douglas Kellner, *Postmodern Theory: Critical Interrogations* (New York: Guilford, 1991); and Steven Best and Douglas Kellner, *The Postmodern Turn* (New York: Guilford, 1997).
- [5] For an excellent, exhaustive excavation of the rhetorical subject, see Bradford Vivian, *Being Made Strange: Rhetoric Beyond Representation* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004).
- [6] My purpose here is not new; there are a number of attempts to explain posthumanism in rhetorical terms. For example, see Barbara Biesecker, “Coming to Terms with Recent Attempts to Write Women into the History of Rhetoric,” *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 25 (1992): 140–61.
- [7] Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock, *Spectral America: Phantoms and the National Imagination* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004), 3. Kenneth Rufo’s work investigates this “turn” from the different angle of media ecology. See Kenneth Rufo, “Ghosts in the Medium: The Haunting of Heidegger’s Technological Question,” *Explorations in Media Ecology* 4 (2005): 21–48.
- [8] See Jean Baudrillard, *The Spirit of Terrorism*, 2nd ed., trans. Chris Turner (New York: Verso, 2002); John Durham Peters, *Speaking Into the Air: A History of the Idea of Communication* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1999); Jeffrey Sconce, *Haunted Media: Electronic Presence from Telegraphy to Television* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000); and Slavoj

- Žižek, *Welcome to the Desert of the Real* (New York: Verso, 2002). The list goes on and on and on, of course; for a quick account, see Weinstock, *Spectral*, 3–17.
- [9] The communication was subsequently rendered into an essay titled “The Humanism of Existentialism,” translated by Bernard Frechtman, currently collected in Jean-Paul Sartre, *Essays in Existentialism*, ed. Wade Baskin (New York: Citadel Press, 1993), 31–62. The cited phrases are found throughout the essay.
- [10] In particular, *The Critique of Dialectical Reason*, vol. 1, trans. Alan Sheridan-Smith (New York: Verso, 1991), in which Sartre stresses the collective subject over the individual.
- [11] For an excellent overview, see Richard Kearney, *The Wake of Imagination* (New York: Routledge, 1988), 218–48.
- [12] Sartre, *Essays in Existentialism*, 51.
- [13] Also see Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Psychology of Imagination*, trans. unacknowledged (Secaucus, NJ: Citadel Press, 1991); and Jean-Paul Sartre, *Imagination: A Psychological Critique*, trans. Forrest Williams (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1972).
- [14] Sartre, *Essays in Existentialism*, 47.
- [15] The remark appears in Sextus’ *Against the Schoolmasters* as “Of all things the measure is man, of things that are that they are, and of things that are not that they are not.” See *The Older Sophists*, ed. Rosamond Kent Sprague (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1972), 18.
- [16] See Kenneth Burke, “Definition of Man,” in *Language as Symbolic Action: Essays on Life, Literature, and Method* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), 3–24; Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, “The Ontological Foundations of Rhetorical Theory,” *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 3 (Spring 1970): 97–108; and Robert L. Scott, “On Viewing Rhetoric as Epistemic,” *Central States Speech Journal* 18 (February 1967): 9–17.
- [17] Scott, “On Viewing,” 16; also see Robert L. Scott, “Rhetoric Is Epistemic: What Difference Does That Make?” in *Defining the New Rhetorics*, ed. Theresa Enos and Stuart C. Brown (Newbury Park, NJ: Sage, 1993), esp. 131–33.
- [18] Scott, “On Viewing,” 16–17.
- [19] See Jacques Derrida, “The Ends of Man,” trans. Alan Bass, in *Margins of Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 109–36.
- [20] Martin Heidegger, “Letter on Humanism,” rev. ed., edited by David Farrell Krell. (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1993), 217–65. On 223 he remarks that “If man is to find his way once again into the nearness of Being he must first learn to exist in the nameless.”
- [21] Friederich Nietzsche, “On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense,” trans. Walter Kaufmann, in *The Portable Nietzsche*, ed. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Penguin, 1954), 43.
- [22] For a sampling of the U.S. version of posthumanism, much of which concerns the kinds of “new” subjectivities that are emerging in the twenty-first century in the wake of the death of the humanist subject, see Neil Badmington, ed., *Posthumanism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000); Judith Halberstam and Ira Livingston, eds., *Posthuman Bodies* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1995); Donna J. Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York: Routledge, 1991); and N. Katherine Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).
- [23] Barbara Biesecker is, incontestably, the scholar who has worked most diligently to introduce posthumanism and poststructuralism to rhetorical studies. See Barbara A. Biesecker, “Rhetorical Studies and the ‘New Psychoanalysis’: What’s the Real Problem? or Framing the Problem of the Real,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 84 (1998): 222–39; Barbara A. Biesecker “Michel Foucault and the Question of Rhetoric,” *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 25 (1992): 351–64; Barbara A. Biesecker, “Rethinking the Rhetorical Situation from within the Thematic of *Différence*,” *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 22 (1989): 110–30. Also see Gregory Desilet, “Heidegger and Derrida: The Conflict Between Hermeneutics and Deconstruction in the Context of Rhetorical and Communication Theory,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 77

- (1991): 152–75; Joshua Gunn, “Refitting Fantasy: Psychoanalysis, Subjectivity, and Talking to the Dead,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 90 (2004): 1–23; Joshua Gunn, “On Dead Subjects: A Rejoinder to Lundberg on (a) Psychoanalytic Rhetoric,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 90 (2004): 501–13; and Christian Lundberg, “The Royal Road Not Taken: Joshua Gunn’s ‘Refitting Fantasy: Psychoanalysis, Subjectivity, and Talking to the Dead’ and Lacan’s Symbolic Order,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 90 (2004): 495–500.
- [24] For a deeper and more detailed reading of Derrida and spectrality, see Kenneth Rufo, “Shades of Derrida: Materiality as the Mediation of Difference,” in the forthcoming edited collection by Barbara Biesecker and John Lucaites. Also see Bill Trapani’s essay, “Rethinking Rhetoric’s Materiality from the *esprit d’á-propos* of the Event,” in the same volume.
- [25] Derrida, *Specters*, xviii.
- [26] Derrida, *Specters*, 78–82.
- [27] See Moishe Postone, “Deconstruction as Social Critique: Derrida on Marx and the New World Order,” *History and Theory* 37 (1998): 370–87; and Michael Sprinkler, ed., *Ghostly Demarcations: A Symposium on Jacques Derrida’s Specters of Marx* (New York: Verso, 1999).
- [28] Walter Benjamin, “On the Concept of History,” trans. Harry Zohn, in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings*, vol. 4, 1938–1940, ed. Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge: Belknap/Harvard University Press, 2003), 389–400, esp. 391.
- [29] Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, 4.
- [30] Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, 4.
- [31] Postone, “Deconstruction,” 371.
- [32] Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, 9.
- [33] Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, 28.
- [34] See Benjamin, “On the Concept of History,” esp. 397.
- [35] Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, 96.
- [36] Also see Richard Kearney, *The God Who May Be: The Hermeneutics of Religion* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001); and Richard Kearney, *On Stories: Thinking in Action* (New York: Routledge, 2001).
- [37] Richard Kearney, *Strangers, Gods and Monsters* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 4.
- [38] Kearney, *Strangers*, 4.
- [39] See René Girard, *The Scapegoat* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986); and René Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, trans. Patrick Gregory (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1972).
- [40] Kearney, *Strangers*, 39. Also see Edward J. Ingebreetsen, *At Stake: Monsters and the Rhetoric of Fear in Public Culture* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2001), esp. 177–201.
- [41] Kearney, *Strangers*, 61–62.
- [42] Kearney, *Strangers*, 66–67.
- [43] Kearney, *Strangers*, 68.
- [44] Kearney, *Strangers*, 69.
- [45] Kearney, *Strangers*, 70.
- [46] Kearney, *Strangers*, 80.
- [47] Dana Cloud, “Introduction: Evil in the Agora,” *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 6 (2003): 509.
- [48] For a more extensive elaboration of Kearney’s understanding of narrative vis-à-vis self, see *On Stories*.
- [49] Kearney, *Strangers*, 186.
- [50] Kearney, *Strangers*, 75.
- [51] These claims are emblazoned on the back of the paperback edition; Nicholas Royle, *The Uncanny* (New York: Routledge, 2003).
- [52] Royle, *The Uncanny*, 51–52.
- [53] See Sigmund Freud, “The Uncanny,” trans. David McIntock, in *The Uncanny* (New York: Penguin, 2003), 121–62.
- [54] Royle, *The Uncanny*, 1.

- [55] Royle, *The Uncanny*, 24.
- [56] Royle, *The Uncanny*, 25–26.
- [57] See John Mowitt, “Trauma Envy,” *Cultural Critique* 46 (2000): 272–97.
- [58] Karyn Ball, “Introduction: Trauma and Its Institutional Destinies,” *Cultural Critique* 46 (2000): 6–7.
- [59] See Robert Hariman and John Louis Lucaites, “Public Identity and Collective Memory in U.S. Iconic Photography: The Image of ‘Accidental Napalm,’” *Critical Studies in Media Communication* (2003): 35–67; and Marouf Hasian Jr., “Remembering and Forgetting the ‘Final Solution’: A Rhetorical Pilgrimage through the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum,” *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 21 (2004): 64–93. Also see Stephanie Houston Grey, “Writing Redemption: Trauma and the Authentication of the Moral Order in Hibakusha Literature,” *Text and Performance Quarterly* 22 (2002): 1–23.
- [60] Ruth Leys, *Trauma: A Genealogy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 9.
- [61] Leys, *Trauma*, 304.
- [62] See Joshua Gunn, “Prime-Time Satanism: Rumor-Panic and the Work of Iconic *Topoi*,” *Visual Communication* 4 (2005): 93–120.
- [63] Leys, *Trauma*, 247.
- [64] Leys, *Trauma*, 252.
- [65] Leys, *Trauma*, 253.
- [66] Leys, *Trauma*, 305.
- [67] Also see Linda Belau, “Trauma and the Material Signifier,” *Postmodern Culture* 11 (2001), available at <http://www.iath.virginia.edu/pmc> (accessed January 22, 2005); Shoshana Felman, “Education and Crisis, or, the Vicissitudes of Teaching,” in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, ed. Cathy Caruth (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 13–60; Petar Ramadanovic, “Introduction: Trauma and Crisis,” *Postmodern Culture* 11 (2001), available at <http://www.iath.virginia.edu/pmc> (accessed January 22, 2005); and Tom Toremans, “Trauma: Theory—Reading (and) Literary Theory in the Wake of Trauma,” *European Journal of English Studies* 7 (2003): 333–51.
- [68] Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996).
- [69] For a helpful and detailed explanation of the importance of de Man to trauma studies, see Toremans, “Trauma: Theory—Reading,” 335–43.
- [70] Leys, *Trauma*, 269.
- [71] Leys, *Trauma*, 305.
- [72] Leys, *Trauma*, 307.
- [73] Kearney, *Strangers*, 72.
- [74] For a scathing criticism of Leys’s book, see Murray Schwartz, “Locating Trauma: A Commentary on Ruth Leys’s *Trauma: A Genealogy*,” *American Imago* 59 (2002): 367–84.
- [75] Avery F. Gordon, *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 4.
- [76] Gordon, *Ghostly Matters*, 38.
- [77] Gordon, *Ghostly Matters*, 4.
- [78] Gordon, *Ghostly Matters*, 12; see Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991).
- [79] Gordon, *Ghostly Matters*, 8.
- [80] Gordon, *Ghostly Matters*, 47–48.
- [81] Gordon, *Ghostly Matters*, 86.
- [82] Gordon, *Ghostly Matters*, 55.
- [83] Gordon, *Ghostly Matters*, 59.
- [84] Gordon, *Ghostly Matters*, 63–64.
- [85] Gordon, *Ghostly Matters*, 73.

- [86] Also see Karen A. Foss and Kathy L. Domenici, "Haunting Argentina: Synecdoche in the Protests of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 87 (2001): 237–59.
- [87] Gordon, *Ghostly Matters*, 92.
- [88] Gordon, *Ghostly Matters*, 96.
- [89] Gordon, *Ghostly Matters*, 182.
- [90] Gordon, *Ghostly Matters*, 97.
- [91] Gordon, *Ghostly Matters*, 200–206.
- [92] Sigmund Freud, "Mourning and Melancholia," trans. Joan Riviere, in Sigmund Freud, *General Psychological Theory* (New York: Touchstone, 1963), 165.
- [93] Laurence A. Rickels, *The Vampire Lectures* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1999), 41.
- [94] See Johnathan Kandell, "Jacques Derrida, Abstruse Theorist, Dies in Paris at 74," *New York Times*, October 10, 2004, late edition, 1, for the original act of cannibalism, and the web-based shrine maintained by the University of California at Irvine (http://www.humanities.s.uci.edu/remembering_jd/) for links to various responses to the obituary. For an overview of the controversy, see Ross Benjamin, "Hostile Obituary for Derrida," *The Nation*, November 24, 2004, available at <http://www.thenation.com/doc.mhtml?i=20041213&s=benjamin> (accessed January 29, 2005).
- [95] See Joshua Gunn, "On Dead Subjects: A Rejoinder to Lundberg on (a) Psychoanalytic Rhetoric," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 90 (2004): 501–13.
- [96] Michael Leff and Andrea A. Lunsford, "Afterwords: A Dialogue," *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 34 (2004): 62.
- [97] See Cheryl Geisler, "How Ought We to Understand the Concept of Rhetorical Agency?" *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 34 (2004): 9–17; and Christian Lundberg and Joshua Gunn, "'Ouija Board, Are There Any Communications?' Agency, Ontotheology, and the Death of the Humanist Subject, or, Continuing the ARS Conversation," *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 25 (2005): 83–106.
- [98] See Stephanie Houston Grey, "The Consolation of Rhetoric: A Coming to Terms with the Discourse on *Thanatos*," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 90 (2004): 103–32.