



LAYER FOUR: The Chora Meta-Physique

One only knows a spot once one has experienced it in as many dimensions as possible. You have to have approached a place from all four cardinal points if you want to take it in, and what's more, you also have to have left it from all these points. Otherwise it will quite unexpectedly cross your path three or four times before you are prepared to discover it.

*Walter Benjamin*¹

*'So Let Us Begin Again...'*²

In the *Dialectics of Seeing*, Susan Buck-Morss outlines a condensed version of the 'temporal and spatial origins' of Walter Benjamin's life and work. In 'Temporal Origins' (pp.8-24), there is a brief biographical sketch: Benjamin's bourgeois family origins in Berlin, the battles he had with his father (both ultimately rejecting each other, and a familial contingency that remains a critical reminder that the 'family romance' is one of the important skeins through which chora-logic is implaced); the writing of *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, 'with which he hoped to secure an academic position at the University of Frankfurt' (p.8); the First World War; his marriage and painful divorce; his first meeting and continuing association with on-again/off-again lover Asja Lacis; his writing in Berlin during the 1920s, especially the 'avant-garde, modernist aesthetics' of *One Way Street* (p.18); his travels criss-crossing Europe during this period; and subsequently, the advent of the Depression and the rise of Fascism during the 1930s; and eventually his suicide on the Franco-Spanish border after trying to escape the Nazi occupation of Paris in 1940 (p.24). When formulating Benjamin's 'Spatial Origins' (pp.25-43), most pertinently in relation to the *Arcades Project*, Buck-Morss places him at the imaginary crossroads of four European cities: Berlin to the north, Moscow to the east, Naples to the south, and Paris to the west.

¹ Walter Benjamin, writing in his Moscow diary, quoted in Susan Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project* (MIT Press: Cambridge, Massachusetts & London, England, 1989), p.25. Also, Margaret Morse alerts us to Benjamin's aim of synthesising a long-term view of commodity fetishism with his Arcades Project in her essay, 'An Ontology of Everyday Distraction: The Freeway, the Mall, and Television', in Patricia Mellencamp (ed.), *Logics of Television: Essays in Cultural Criticism* (Indiana University Press: Bloomington, 1990), p.194.

² 'So let us begin again, calling as we do so on some protecting deity to see us safely through a strange and unusual argument to a likely conclusion.' Plato, *Timaeus and Critias* [48], p.67.



In the *Dialectics of Seeing* these Euro-centric, spatio-temporal trajectories are not simply times and places Benjamin lived through and/or visited during specific periods in his life. They are used by Buck-Morss as an interconnecting set of both abstract and experiential arrangements that constitute the schematic matrix in which the *Arcades Project* was developed. Equally, at least from a chora-logical point of view, these spatio-temporal trajectories might also constitute the schematic matrix for a chora of Benjamin's Progress, with chora here provisionally defined as a subjective/objective combination of fact and fantasy, wisdom and stupidity, arising in and out of every body's birth-to-death existence as it unfolds in [a] particular place[s] on the globe, an understanding that could equally be relayed as Benjamin's Demise.³ This provisional view of chora (with chora's provisional quality considered from every beginning right through to every ending as its constant companion, and an idea whose detail will be provisionally filled out in the following pages) is as much a four dimensional conceptual field as a potted biography in that it lays bare the direct connection between the temporal trajectory of a person's life as it is lived in specific places or across a broader space (or a set of cities and localities, spaces and places); collectively speaking, all these times and places/spaces are the site of Benjamin's 'implacement', or as Ulmer puts it, his 'four-part psychogeography'.⁴ Despite his posthumous stature, Benjamin was still an ordinary person who lived a life from birth to death in a range of specific but interconnected places. Benjamin's chora then is at once specific *and* universal, abstract *and* embodied, ordinary *and* uncanny, another possible version of you *and* me; and hence the neologism — 'meta-physique' — of the title; that is, chora is constituted in and through the *thinking*, the *feeling* and the *action* of a body (although not necessarily in that order) as it domesticates and traverses a range of places in space in the birth-to-death cycle.

In the spatial trajectory from Berlin in the north to Naples in the south, for instance, Buck-Morss makes the point that both are birthplaces: Berlin 'locates the myth-enshrouded childhood of the author himself', and Naples 'locates the Mediterranean origins, the myth-enshrouded childhood of Western civilization' (p.25), the latter a cradle of Greco-Roman inspired rationality and an *implaced* understanding crucial to the formation of Western metaphysics, which also implies differing meta-physical beginnings in Egypt, China, Africa, maybe even Gondwanaland. Both city-spaces then are genesis myths, critical to explaining how knowledge — personal and collective — comes about. Extrapolating then: in Benjamin's various movements from Berlin to Naples, and from Moscow to Paris, and

³ It is a measure of chora's synchronous and intuitive character that it was only after writing this piece on the various settings in Benjamin's life that I read Gregory Ulmer's similar interpretation of Buck-Morss' work in *Internet Invention*, pp.104-106.

⁴ 'Implacement' is a term frequently invoked in Edward S. Casey, *The Fate of Place: A Philosophical History* (University of California Press, Berkeley, 1997); and Gregory Ulmer, *Internet Invention*, p.104.



on to the site of his suicide, there is both a still-point and a parabolic arc.⁵ It is a still-point in the sense that Benjamin's own life-world is just another example of the birth/life/death cycle that continues simultaneously and endlessly in a whole host of animate/inanimate *and* political/epistemological/social/cultural systems. It is a parabolic arc in the sense that the movement from the Greco-Roman to the Post-Modern period we're in is a stretch of time that some historians might refer to as the *longue durée*.

Originally coined by the French *Annales* school of historians (some of whom are responsible for the monumental five-volume *A History of Private Life*), the *longue durée*, according to international relations theorist John Gerard Ruggie, 'does not refer simply to a long period of time', but 'depicts the lives of large-scale historical structures, as opposed to day-to-day events, structures which may shape those events for extended periods of time.'⁶ In Benjamin's chora (like yours and mine) the 'naturalised' conception of these 'large-scale historical structures' permeates knowledge and experience with the sometimes psychically configured and absolutist certainty of *belief*, a disposition that can create the illusion that concepts (like literacy) and particular arrangements of power (like the nation-state or Christianity) are timeless and spaceless. After existing for so long in so many different times and spaces, their 'reality' is beyond question. But it is this very absolutism that engenders *disbelief*, a critical stage in any rethinking of ossified structures and processes.

One idea animating chora is that it is highly specific in both the singularity and diversity of its everyday manifestations while remaining simultaneously understandable as an ancient philosophical protocol worthy of consideration in a *longue durée* style of analysis. Without the constant minute-by-minute, day-in, day-out, year-by-year, *and* the more long-term repetition of these actual everyday micro-components of any *longue durée* category-form, this kind of conceptual organisation would not reach this attenuated level of 'naturalised' belief that does so much to consolidate its embedded power as an ongoing, almost imperceptible frame of reference. Unlike fire, through which there is the immediate impost of 'sudden change' and instant 'renewal',⁷ it is important to make the point that change in a *longue durée* style analysis is generally incremental in nature, even sub-atomically or psychically imperceptible, and any investigation using this style of methodological temperament must look back over this particular category's long-term spatio-temporal gestation while simultaneously projecting any possible intended change into the future because that change is unlikely to come about quickly.

⁵ I've reworked this latter clause from a line in T. S. Elliot's poem *The Four Quartets*: 'At the still point, of the turning world', which itself is a beginning point for Nigel Thrift's essay, 'The Still Point: Resistance, Expressive Embodiment and Dance', in Steve Pile & Michael Keith (eds.), *Geographies of Resistance* (Routledge: London & New York, 1997), pp.124-151.

⁶ Quoted in Ronald J. Deibert, *Parchment, Printing and Hypermedia: Communication in World Order Transformation* (Columbia University Press: New York, 1997), p.10.

⁷ Gaston Bachelard, *The Psychoanalysis of Fire*, trans. Alan C. M. Ross (Beacon Press: Boston, 1964), p.16.



This point remains important because any change in the status of an object of enquiry deemed universal (the same unchanging entity in every temporal and spatial domain) is predicated on understanding change in this previously mentioned minute-by-minute, embodied, everyday life-world that we all inhabit. In this view, *chora* could be considered a ‘primal word’ in the sense Freud articulates it: it is an idea and a term that synthesises opposites, and/or could un/easily be composed out of opposing definitions (or a wide range of variable and sometimes competing meanings).⁸ And somewhat like dream material, *chora* admits of no negation, making it reminiscent of the actions of the two central characters (a producer and a director) in the satiric feature film *Wag the Dog*, where every new disaster for the President of the United States (in trouble after being caught having an affair with a young woman) is greeted with yet another reinvented move in a ‘positive’ direction. *Chora* then can mean anything its ‘implication’ is capable of discerning in the continuous and divergent flows of localised forms of knowledge, its honour and truthfulness, its realities and fantasies, even its lies and ‘bullshit’.⁹ And it is this lack of definitional precision, along with its morphing quality, that is at the forefront of the *chora* method’s strategic capability in relation to the production of meaning in specific places.

Chora, interestingly, as an idea that has itself arisen out of the firmament of Greco-Roman rationality (but one whose own methodological prehistory may well be oral in orientation if Eric A. Havelock’s argument in *Preface To Plato* is acknowledged),¹⁰ could also be categorised as belonging to both a *longue durée* style analysis as well as being central to the more intimate methodology of the ‘day-to-day’, or as Henri Lefebvre and others refer to it, ‘everyday life’. Whether viewed microcosmically or macrocosmically though, according to Niall Lucy, ‘the ‘khoral’ section of the *Timaeus* has always been treated as a literary trifle and not as serious philosophy.’ This is in large part due to *chora*’s ‘singularity – and this is the point – is its very resistance to being identified; it is what philosophy cannot name.’ *Chora*’s multiple, contradictory, set-centred, almost alchemical sense of definition comes about in part because Plato was attempting to name the unnameable at the heart of reason in the very moment when the rudiments of rationality and the scientific method were being reinvented by chirographic writing. It is now easy to see why Derrida and Ulmer (and a whole smorgasbord of debate and interpretation) have been attracted to the *Timaeus* and its *chora*-logical imperative because ‘for a moment there, albeit for a split

⁸ Sigmund Freud, ‘The Antithetical Meaning of Primal Words’, in James Strachey, Anna Freud, Alix Strachey & Allan Tyson (eds.), *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. 11 (Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis: London, 1954), pp.155-161.

⁹ As Harry G. Frankfurt remarks, ‘It is just this lack of connection to a concern with truth – this indifference to how things really are – that I regard as of the essence of bullshit.’ See *On Bullshit* (Princeton University Press: Princeton & Oxford, 2005), pp.33-34.

¹⁰ Eric Havelock, *Preface to Plato* (The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press: Cambridge, Massachusetts & London, England, 1963), see especially ‘The Oral Sources of the Hellenic Intelligence’, pp.115-133.



second, one might say that deconstruction was right at the centre of philosophy, almost but not quite right from the start.¹¹ It would be inappropriate though to think that deconstruction was the only method acting as the antithesis of rational logic at the very beginnings of Western epistemology; an acute analysis of chora illustrates it is *within* the rational episteme itself, a function of its many new beginnings, and that every method of knowledge operating under both a scientific and humanistic rubric has a chora-logical disposition. Chora is both cosmological *and* psycho-geographical and place-bound, it is constituted in and by *embodied* distinction as much as it is by some distantly situated objective methodology where reason usually dominates. Crucially, as capitalism moves to exploit the resources offered up by our emerging knowledge of nano-technology and the human genome, it might even prove a useful viewfinder through which to represent this nano-logical field, or the quantum domain, that is, the sub-atomic world beyond human vision.¹²

Clearly there are problems locating chora in a *longue durée* style analysis: generalisations cast too broadly can be meaningless. On the other hand, highly specified, even solipsistic types of knowledge that the ‘everyday’ presents us with can sometimes ignore highly influential socio-historical, cultural, religious or politico-economic forces that have definite outcomes in everyday life. It is important to keep these two methodological forces of the everyday and the *longue durée* simultaneously in mind though as we come to grips with this most conceptually slippery of all possible terms in Western philosophy. It remains the point that both political structure and epistemological form sometimes appear as fixed *longue durée* style entities; clearly this is not the case because under the influence of changes in technology, perception, environmental understanding, and shifts in the political economy and culture of feudalism, the monarchy and capitalism, among other factors, they do change incrementally and occasionally this change can be momentous in its accumulated force, a phenomenon that is sometimes referred to as the exponential function, or as Damien Broderick calls it from a post-human perspective, ‘The Spike’, a process where a large collection of imperceptible changes are compounded into a short-term but meteoric modification.¹³ The eternal contradiction in specifying a chora-logical analysis in this particular respect is that changes to epistemological form and political structure will not come about without some kind of rationalisation, but this is a species of reason best left open to a dialogical playfulness, contradiction, a little humour, fantasy, and even errors of fact. What is happening here is clear: it is an attempt to discover and reinvent a different kind of politics and/of knowledge. A chora-logical analysis then is better placed to venerate the unnameable *and* the nameable, the unknowable *and* the knowable in its formulations about future possibilities. With a little

¹¹ All the preceding references in this paragraph are from Niall Lucy, *A Derrida Dictionary* (Blackwell: London, 2004), pp.68-69.

¹² The importance of the discovery of the quantum world by Einstein, Planck and others in the history of electronic communication is detailed in Michael Riordan & Lillian Hoddeson, *Crystal Fire: The Invention of the Transistor and the Birth of the Information Age* (W. W. Norton: New York, 1997), pp.37-39.

¹³ Damien Broderick, *The Spike* (Reed Books: Melbourne, 1997).



data foretold then, both *Chora-Logic* and an electronically configured chora-logical praxis should remain, retrospectively, presently and futuristically, both an open realm and an open method; a method constantly open to a whole host of multiple states of becoming that the unknown, the irrational, and the knowledge that a vast retinue of otherlings (which includes *all* earthlings and any imagined aliens) can bring to reason and to every single sentient entity.¹⁴

It is in the *Timaeus* that Western knowledge is first confronted, in spoken/written form at least, with the question of a cosmology, a ‘coherent’, ‘unified’ explanation of the universe and its relation to a particular implaced body in that same cosmos. However, in *Inventing the Universe*, Luc Brisson and F. Walter Meyerstein warn us that this cosmological unity cannot be separated from a diverse range of epistemologies: ‘It is therefore impossible to separate neatly in the *Timaeus* that which pertains to cosmology and that which is dependent on other areas of knowledge: mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology, medicine, psychology, sociology, politics, and even religion.’¹⁵ This question of the ‘one and the many’, that is, a pure (textual?) rationality outlining a theory of everything separated out from, and usually superior to, a more messy kind of ‘epistemological pluralism’ in specific contextualised conditions, remains especially pertinent when discussing electrated forms of knowledge.¹⁶ A related quandary here is that ‘the *Timaeus* ensues from the intertwining of [both a] mythical narrative and scientific approach, a problem indissociable from the status of a discourse on the origin of the sensible world.’¹⁷ Regardless of whether one is secular, agnostic or religious though every sentient being has this question of cosmic genesis tattooed on their breast.

Plainly, as a manuscript, *Chora-Logic* itself will have to leave a substantial amount out of its own discourse, relying rather on a minuscule, incomplete analysis rather than a comprehensive cosmological one. It is this partialised messiness in and across a plurality of discourses that my own ‘being, space and becoming’, as it is codified in both the humanist/scientific myth of *Chora-Logic* and in the working body of Terrence Maybury in its real-virtuality, is intimately enmeshed. Regardless of whatever structure a chora-method might take it remains perennially combustible by virtue of the seemingly contradictory arbitrariness of what it both includes as well as what it excludes. As a method, chora-logic remains in a perpetual state of unravelling, a process hinted at herein but which continues

¹⁴ This relational connection between rationality and irrationality has also been influenced in part by Zoë Sofia, *Whose Second Self?: Gender and (Ir)Rationality in Computer Culture* (Deakin University Press: Geelong, 1993), especially ‘Gender and the Myth of Rationality’, pp.13-37.

¹⁵ Luc Brisson & F. Walter Meyerstein, *Inventing the Universe: Plato’s Timaeus, the Big Bang, and the Problem of Scientific Knowledge* (State University of New York Press: Albany, 1995), p.17.

¹⁶ This question is raised in an electronic media context by Steven Maras, ‘One or Many Media?’, in *M/C: A Journal of Media and Culture*, vol. 3, #6, available at the journal’s website: <<http://www.api-network.com/mc/0012/many.html>> (2000). [Accessed 27/11/2000].

¹⁷ Luc Brisson & F. Walter Meyerstein, *Inventing the Universe*, p.17.



apace despite the apparent fixity within which this discourse is couched (which even by virtue of its long-term archival existence on acid-free, recycled paper is not a permanent thesis but merely a node among multiple and always oscillating nodules dealing with the question of power and knowledge).

In what follows I start out from the *Timaeus* itself, and eventually its ‘choral section’ in which Timaeus discusses this idea as a component of the ‘Work of Necessity’. It is crucial to note here that this up-coming commentary on chora in Plato’s dialogue should be taken less as a contribution to the internalised debates on the *Timaeus* characteristic of both ancient and modern philosophy wherein these debates on it are usually presented. While there is certainly reference to a portion of this debate on the *Timaeus*, this whole layer – ‘The Chora Meta-Physique’ – is guided more by Ulmer’s observation that, ‘Since the *Timaeus* is one of the central documents in the history of method, it offers a useful point of departure for reorienting method in an electronic apparatus.’¹⁸ This approach eventually segues into Ulmer’s own take-up of chora as the methodological basis for a place-based electronic epistemology, a topic he addresses most directly in *Heuretics*, but which is implied in all his work.

The Chora of Plato’s *Timaeus*

Soul and habitat ... are correlates of one another.

*Robert Pogue Harrison*¹⁹

In Plato’s dialogue of the *Timaeus* we come face-to-face with another inaugurating work for this discourse, along with one of its key ideas: *chora*. The *Timaeus* has attracted the attention of scholars down through the ages and is an early attempt to place the human sensorium (in Platonic terms: the soul) at the intersection of what was then known as the four elements: Fire, Air, Water, Earth; all of which are entwined in and by the cosmos. All these elements taken together are Plato’s attempt at explaining how humanity clarifies, and reasons with, the chaos of existence. And it is this notion of a *cosmology* that is often invoked in reference to the *Timaeus* as a means

¹⁸ Gregory L. Ulmer, *Heuretics*, p.75.

¹⁹ Robert Pogue Harrison, *Forests: The Shadow of Civilization* (University of Chicago Press: Chicago & London, 1992), p.149. In Western metaphysics the tree as symbol stands at the mythical (mystical?) centre of the production of knowledge.



via which it might be interpreted.²⁰ Indeed, for Western philosophy at least, the *Timaeus* is something of a creation myth,²¹ significant in that while it makes reference to a higher being (in Platonic terms, the Demiurge) it also puts at the centre of its discourse the human body, and its relationship to both the physical environment and political milieu, all of which constitute the organisational matrix of knowledge-making. It is a creation myth both with a religious *and* a secular, a materialist and politicised undertow, all the while implying a spiritual dimension.

It is tempting to start in the middle rather than at the beginning (the latter, of course, typical of creation myths) because that is the place where Timaeus ‘articulates’ the chora in his own discourse; chora is placed in the middle, in-between reason and necessity, in proximity to each other, indeed maybe *within* each other’s ambit. Chora might also serve a similar middling purpose for the other key terms of the dialogue: being and becoming, mythos and logos, sameness and difference, divine and human, mind (*nous*) and body, and (to a lesser extent) mother and father. But in mentioning this *middling* quality of chora, I’m getting away from my opening theme because, to repeat John Sallis, ‘in the *Timaeus* nothing is more vigorously interrogated than the question of beginning.’²² The ‘introductory conversation’ of the *Timaeus* (before even the discourse on reason) has the most eminent of its speakers — Socrates, the Greek Athenian philosopher — recalling his discussion from the previous day, about which he says, ‘Yesterday my main object was to describe my view of the ideal state and its citizens.’²³ In this recounting, it is widely thought to have constituted a retelling of segments of Plato’s *Republic*, a kind of utopia ruled over by philosopher-kings and his learned underlings, or guardians (bureaucrats, military men, possibly even teachers and the like) and where ordinary people (all of whom, taken together, are characterised as a polis) were the organisational object of this perfect security and order. However, it was a socio-political order that omitted women, slaves and animals, and, being ‘perfect’, it was a polity that could not countenance any bad elements or even change itself. This was a society where justice and the good prevailed by order of a benevolent governing class that were themselves the best of the good. For Socrates, this polis (also characterised as a city-state) is a sterile abstraction devoid of life, motion, bodies and their sensations, of particulate joy and strife, possibly devoid too of cosmic origination and/or divine authentication. The *Timaeus*, here in this pre-introductory dialogue, sets out the purpose of its passage: it is to render this polis *alive*, both in its rational universal/cosmic unity *and* its necessary multiplicity/diversity. This pre-

²⁰ A particularly important reference here is Francis MacDonald Cornford, *Plato’s Cosmology: The Timaeus of Plato Translated with a Running Commentary* (Routledge & Kegan Paul: London, 1937).

²¹ Desmond Lee writes that Plato ‘is telling a creation story.’ See his ‘Introduction’, in Plato, *Timaeus and Critias*, p.24.

²² John Sallis, *Chorology: On Beginning in Plato’s Timaeus* (Indiana University Press: Bloomington & Indianapolis, 1999), p.5. Sallis (ibid.) can even ‘imagine rewriting the dialogue from the natural beginning’, that is, from the chora.

²³ Plato, *Timaeus and Critias* [17], p.29.



introductory 'dialogue form' among the four protagonists (Socrates, Timaeus, Critias, and Hermocrates) is then 'dropped and the main body of the work is a continuous exposition by Timaeus.'²⁴ In other words, Timaeus turns from the dialogue form to a monologue.

This transition and division from '*dia*-' to '*mono*-'logue deserves our attention, if only briefly. Starting as an exchange among the four protagonists *Timaeus* transforms into an uninterrupted monologue by Timaeus, who himself (whether philosophically, fictionally or in reality), is from Locri in southern Italy. Assuming the dialogue is set in Athens, possibly in its agora (Critias, in the pre-introductory section, gives a recounting of the perfect state in the myth of Atlantis as well as in ancient Athens), Timaeus then is an outsider called upon by Socrates and his companions to give a monologue on the origins of the cosmos and how the reality of it might work on a day-to-day basis (he is after all an expert in these matters, especially astronomy). Here, as Hans-Georg Gadamer states, 'The methodological problem is clear. We must establish the philosophical significance of the *scene*, the setting of the dialogues, of the relationship of the speaker to what is spoken, of evolving meaning as it unfolds in live discussion.'²⁵ This scene presents us with a convoluted mix of expert otherness, live dialogical interaction (initially among one, two, three and four protagonists: Socrates, Timaeus, Critias and Hermocrates), and finally, the dialogue is located in the best possible polis: Athens. That an expert has come in (been brought in?) from the outside to address the best thinkers in the best possible polis might itself be a significant (anti-)marker of the chora method. Even in the best possible conditions of an implaced perfection, an outsider is called for (or at least a differentiated episteme, or one who possesses, or is from, a differing chora, or a differing set of chora-logical conditions) to question the 'selfsameness' of that internally specified perfection, at least in matters of the social and political kind, or even of the psycho/physiological variety. Where the monologue might turn into a lecture (and possible hectoring) the dialogue's significant quality 'of evolving meaning as it unfolds in live discussion' is lost to the dominance of the expert protagonist, or the master, regardless of whether they are an insider or an outsider in the polis concerned. A monologue, in some cases, can often be a dialogue *within* one's own self, and/or, embarked upon as an exercise in power over those who are subjected to its hectoring qualities; this latter kind of disempowering is possibly more acute where in those contexts it is disguised as a dialogue.

This unilateral (descending as if from on high) monological quality of the Timaeian discourse (or equally, the appearance of its speculative unilateralism) inadvertently mirrors, perhaps, the philosophy of *The Republic*. In this latter dialogue there is the idea that the philosopher-king represents the intellect or reason (*nous*), while the guardians of the state enact the will of the ruler over the

²⁴ Desmond Lee, 'Introduction', in Plato, *Timaeus and Critias*, p.22.

²⁵ Hans-Georg Gadamer, 'Idea and Reality in Plato's *Timaeus*', in *Dialogue and Dialectic: Eight Hermeneutical Studies on Plato*, trans. P. Christopher Smith (Yale University Press: New Haven & London, 1980), p.159. [Italics in the original].



citizens, in and through which the appetites, the passions, maybe even the seven deadly sins, have an unbridled free rein. [As I write, and in a telling twist of synchronicity, the Australian government has today called on the Australian producers of the reality television program *Big Brother* to axe the 2006 edition of the show because of an alleged sexual misdemeanour perpetrated by two male housemates on one of their female co-habitants]. In this schematic, the hoi polloi are the very living embodiment of pride, covetousness, lust, anger, gluttony, envy, and sloth, or at the very most are constituted in, by and through ignorance and mere opinion; while the philosopher-king remains the maker and keeper of *true knowledge*. In a Timaeian cosmology, these various sins might be another example of the circles of difference brought together under the label of *necessity*. For the philosopher-king, through the actions of the guardians of the state, the citizenry are the *object* of knowledge, always in need of proper ordering through careful instruction, a rigorous pedagogy, or the occasional flogging or incarceration, even hanging or shooting if that pre-ordained order and perfection is violently disrupted. Of course, this ideal method of political and social organisation is inversely disrupted if the head of state, or its guardians and institutions, are themselves the instigators and perpetuators of disorder, and thus become a badly governed polis. Through a polarity inversion perhaps, while the existence of an ideal, well run polis is aimed directly at bringing order to a diversity of citizens occupying a particular space (as well as harmonising their desires as they are expressed in that particular place), that same citizenry will sometimes direct those self-same passions into fervent calls (occasionally with accompanying violence) for a new or a rejuvenated socio-political order; this is a protest that comes out of irreconcilable upheavals that the managers of that particular state may find themselves in as a result of their own selfsame lust for power itself. In this inversion, the forces of necessity that the citizenry usually represent and enact (and which include each citizen's sensate capacities, even the collective dream of an equitable set of relations *among* citizens) are transformed into a force for order directed at that ordering state-entity that has itself become disordered, even corrupt. So when a state becomes corrupt (in any of a number of overt and implicit manifestations) it is itself the object of the re/ordering impulse; it needs to be taught a lesson. This is an inversion which mirror-images the imperfect state with its imperfect citizenry: when one component veers towards the bad, it is possible that the other veers towards the good while recognising that both the ideal state and the ideal citizen are optimistic abstractions devoid of the life impulse; that is, of becoming and change, of chance and necessity, of a corruption of the senses, and of a-knowledge-yet-to-come. Regardless of the apparent disorder in which Timaeus' discourse is presented, this question of the imperfect polis and its imperfect citizenry is one overarching frame through which to analyse it, to *frame* its spoken 'truths'.²⁶

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On narrative 'disorder' in the *Timaeus*, Hans-Georg Gadamer says (in 'Idea and Reality in Plato's *Timaeus*', p.160) that, 'The incoherence is especially obvious in the way the natural sequence in which a narrative would usually unfold is interrupted by regressions, corrections, repetitions, and abrupt new beginnings.' This narrative 'disorder' can now be readily programmed into electronic works.



Verisimilarity

In the metaphor of the mirror image lies a key method of the Timaeian discourse, and that is, as Anne Freire Ashbaugh comprehensively explains, that it is a ‘verisimilar account’ of the cosmos. In a verisimilar account, truth is installed in the second rung as the crucial matrix of knowledge-making, and is a installation that nearly always falls short of full, truthful comprehension; rather, it is the image of truth, a likely or probable account of the truth that is the principle means of constructing knowledge in this kind of account. Although in the realm of necessity (*anake*) where the perceivable world is sensed and experienced by the soul and out of which the multitude of data that initially constitutes the basis for a verisimilar account arises, there is still a *truth affect*, a will to truthful knowledge that connects the world soul to the human soul:

And whenever reasoning that is true, whether about the different or about the same, takes place, being carried on without speech or sound in the self-moved, if it concerns the sensible world, and the circle of Different, running straight, reports it to the whole soul, then there arise opinions and beliefs that are sure and true: but if it concerns the world apprehended by reason, and the circle of Same, running smoothly, declares it, then the result must be apprehension and knowledge. And if anyone calls that in which this pair take place anything but soul he is speaking anything but the truth.²⁷

There is a sense here that each singular human soul (a mirror image of the world soul, and in both Greek and modern day terms the soul and psyche are comparable) and verisimilarity are ingrained together: ‘Thus, the verisimilar *logos* derives from its kindred faculty, the judging-sensing soul, both the power to image truth and the ability to explain physical things. Both powers are actualized simultaneously.’²⁸ A verisimilar account of the physical world then is not the omniscient, God-like observer and chronicler of a static and unchanging objective truth that emerges through and out of Cartesian metaphysics. In a verisimilar account, the body’s sensate capacities logs this multitude of physical data into the soul’s cognitive apparatus where,

The sensed things form a corroborative network which secures the faithfulness of the account to the physical world. Together with the judgements that accompany the affective qualities (what makes the subject matter

²⁷ Plato, *Timaeus and Critias* [37], pp.50-51.

²⁸ Anne Freire Ashbaugh, *Plato’s Theory of Explanation: A Study of the Cosmological Account in the Timaeus* (State University of New York Press: Albany, 1988), p.24. [Italics in the original].



sensible) the qualities can form a second network. This second network links sensations to the motions of the thinking soul. The verisimilar account arises when the soul identifies the nature of the link.²⁹

This linkage simultaneously activates the data of physical things in space, the sensate capacities of the body and the soul's self-same will to goodness and truth in naming, describing, categorising, ordering, cohering, eventually giving number, shape and harmony to the things it so represents. It is the work of affectivity (of feeling or emotion as corralled through the senses) *and* of thought that eventually transforms a verisimilar account into a possible truthful account, although not without various digressions, inversions, returns to a new beginning, false starts, multiple layering of contradictions and disagreements, even lies and falsehoods. The *Timaeus* and chora are, respectively, a work and a methodological practice that are constituted in a corporeal and worldly context and less so in a divine and transcendent one. Conversely, the "truths" that arise out of this method are as much prone to the *unknown* qualities and quantities outside the physical and mental orbit of the knower as to the *known* qualities and quantities constituted in and by that verisimilar account. The chora-logical method here calls to mind that memorable Larson cartoon, one that depicts God in his kitchen taking a baking tray out of the oven, with the tray containing an aromatic globe and the deity's speech bubble saying: "Something tells me this thing's only half-baked." A verisimilar account of any truth is likewise in an almost constant state of incubation, of being always half-baked, and awaiting further consolidation of itself as truth, or more accurately, as a constant iteration of the will to truth-telling rather than eternal, transcendent truth.

In the *Timaeus*, the Godhead is less a transcendental figure bestowing a genesis and an arrangement to or on the cosmos, a combinative act that creates or makes the latter out of nothing at all. Rather, the Demiurge (a god or God?) faces an already extant chaos, as Timaeus says in the following excerpt:

God therefore, wishing that all things should be good, and so far as possible nothing be imperfect, and finding the visible universe in a state not of rest but of inharmonious and disorderly motion, reduced it to order from disorder, as he judged that order was in every way better. It is impossible for the best to produce anything but the highest.³⁰

Still, from on high, the G(g)od rearranges this 'inharmonious and disorderly motion' (is the earth already a part of this previously existing disorder?) into an harmonious order. This arranged cosmos is precisely spherical ('Therefore he turned it into a rounded

²⁹ Anne Freire Ashbaugh, *Plato's Theory of Explanation*, p.22.

³⁰ Plato, *Timaeus and Critias* [30], p.42.



spherical shape, with the extremes equidistant in all directions from the centre, a figure that has the greatest degree of completeness and uniformity, as he judged uniformity to be incalculably superior to its opposite', *Timaeus and Critias* [33], p.45); he endows it with the four basic elements (earth, air, fire and water), it is given geometrical proportion (the universe can now be mathematically apportioned, hence making the *Timaeus* an early text in physics, a story/study of the physical world); and 'made it move with a uniform circular motion on the same spot' (*Timaeus and Critias* [34], p.46). From here the fixed stars produce the 'circle of the same'. From this 'circular motion' (the astronomical component) arises the cosmos' 'circle of the Different', and from which a subdivision of seven accounts for the differential movement of the sun, the moon, and five planets. This is a series of motions that form the arrangement of days, months and years that mortals are accustomed to and which, of course, requires the accompaniment of 'Time' ... 'a moving image of eternity' (*Timaeus and Critias* [38-39], pp.51-54). Crucially (and after dividing the World Soul into the following harmonic intervals: 1, 2, 3, 4, 9, 8, 27, which are thought of as 'two dimensional and three dimensional' entities, 'planes and solids', as well as being suggestive of 'musical scale' [Lee, in footnotes 1 & 2, *Timaeus and Critias*, p.48]), the demiurge

then took the whole fabric and cut it down the middle into two strips, which he placed crosswise at their middle points to form a shape like the letter X; he then bent the ends round in a circle and fastened them to each other opposite the point at which the strips crossed, to make two circles, one inner and one outer.³¹

And after again subdividing the circles of Difference into 'seven unequal circles' and 'keeping the master revolution that of the Same', each revolving in the opposite direction to one another, they simultaneously cross one another at the one spot. This makes the X-function suggestive of the first letter of the word *chora* in its Greek alphabetic variation: χ .³² While the third genre of *chora*, or 'space', or 'land', or 'place', is hinted at in the demiurge's rendering of the World Soul, which itself is an element in/of the 'works of reason', *chora* is here, at this crossing of Sameness and Difference, designated a *place*, if not a definition or a form, for its eventual emergence in the middle section of *Timaeus*' discourse. Even from a pre-cosmic, chaotic place, a place of 'inharmonious and disorderly motion', through all the various rational components of the cosmos' production, to its eventual (though nearly always temporary) stabilisation, *chora* (even if as yet undefined, falling short of absolute definition) is allocated a *place*. At this particular point in the Timaeian cosmology, *chora* is

³¹ Plato, *Timaeus and Critias* [36], p.49. Also, in mathematics x represents an unknown quantity and this is a reminder that the inventor of X-rays, Wilhelm Conrad Röntgen, initially 'dubbed them "X" rays because he didn't know what on earth they might be.' See, Michael Riordan & Lillian Hoddeson, *Crystal Fire*, pp.30-31.

³² Max Statkiewicz says of χ (in relation to his own juxtaposition of 'chora' and 'character') that '... the letter chi (χ , *khei* or *khi*) is not common; it is a mark of a bringing-together (*sumballein*) of a particular kind, a coupling that at the same time entails a separation (*chorismos*) and a necessary displacement.' See, 'Chora and Character: Mimesis of Difference in Plato's *Timaeus*', in James E. Swearingen & Joanne Cutting-Gray (eds.), *Extreme Beauty: Aesthetics, Politics, Death* (Continuum: London & New York, 2002), p.56.



defined by its appearance at the turbulent crossroads of the unitary circle of Sameness and the 'seven unequal circles' that constitute the paths of Difference. Indeed, it might even be probable that chora is not just constituted in and through the crossroads of Sameness and Difference (its X-function) but it might itself be the very epicentre of the sphere, that most perfect shape of the cosmos, remembering that 'all extremes are equidistant in all directions from the centre'. Might it be possible, despite Timaeus' yearning for order and goodness in pre-cosmic space, that in actuality chora and chaos are at the epicentre of this cosmos-to-come and that his mere *thinking* of goodness and order is not enough to put them in their proper place at the centre of this emergent universe?

This placement of chora at the pre-cosmic crossroads is also a reminder that throughout the whole Timaeian discourse the coherence of every single abstract component is in some way or another only produced or comprehended through its relation to a range of other components that the discourse elucidates; an understanding that is, undoubtedly, a key aspect of any method formulated along cosmological criteria. The linkages among these elements formulate a network in which the meaning or definition of a single concept might only be temporarily discerned at that specific node in the cosmology (at this node, for instance, the meaning of *chora* is defined by its placement at the circling crossroads of Sameness and Difference) but that at another point in the discourse its meaning will shift, both in relation itself and to the other conceptual components of the discourse. This at least gives us an inkling of the meaning of the idea of a paradigm, or better, a paradigmatic set, where the definition of a term is prescribed less by any inherited notions of its singular coherence but rather by the particular *place* through, in, and out of which that term is found; in other words, its context. This is the peculiar meaning-making strategy of primal words like chora, especially when used in a cosmological account of the physical world articulated by and through the human body, which, now that the circles of Sameness and Difference are in a semi-ordered place, is not immortal but rather is a corporeal, embodied world where there cannot be a 'view from nowhere' (to invoke Thomas Nagel on objectivity) but rather our view, our verisimilar account of the cosmos is 'implaced', as in Edward Casey's account, or 'situated' in Donna Haraway's account.³³

This 'situated' character of the chora method (in both textual and contextual terms) might also account for the various definitions of the term chora, which for the most part is translated into English as 'space'.³⁴ John Sallis disrupts the assumed ease of these

³³ Donna J. Haraway, 'Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective', in *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (Routledge: New York, 1991), pp.183-201.

³⁴ Francis Cornford, in *Plato's Cosmology*, for instance, translates chora unremarked as 'space', p.192; as does Lee in *Timaeus and Critias* [52], p.71. (Lee also acknowledges the influence of Cornford's translation in the 'Introduction', p.25).



translations, indeed of the term's translatability per se, writing that, 'If ... one proposed to translate $\chi\omega\mu\alpha$ as space, then one would have to set about immediately withdrawing from the word much that we cannot but hear in it. For clearly the $\chi\omega\mu\alpha$ is not the isotropic space of post-Cartesian physics. Nor is it even empty space, the void, as discussed in Greek atomism.'³⁵ Chora then is *not* this sameness in every direction typical of isotropic space, an a priori given, that has sometimes come to characterise our understanding of space, or as Foucault frames a similar point in debates between history and geography, 'Space was treated as the dead, the fixed, the undialectical, the immobile. Time, on the contrary, was richness, fecundity, life, dialectic.'³⁶ Sallis also questions the translation of $\chi\omega\mu\alpha$ as *place*, saying it 'risk[s] assimilating Plato's chorology to the topology of Aristotle's *Physics*' (*Chorology*, p.115). After a detailed discussion of chora's usage in a range of ancient texts (out of which suggestive translations include, from the *Sophist*, for instance, 'the place of the brightness of being'; and from the *Laws*, where, 'Sometimes $\chi\omega\mu\alpha$ is used in the sense of terrain or landscape', and further that, 'There are passages in which $\chi\omega\mu\alpha$ designates country in the sense of farmland to be cultivated'; a text [*Laws*] that even goes so far as to say that, 'the city is to be set as nearly as possible in the middle of the country ...') Sallis, while also suggesting chora is untranslatable, nonetheless recognises that, 'The operation of the word $\chi\omega\mu\alpha$ in the discourses of the *Timaeus* and most notably in the chorology is not independent of the preunderstanding expressed in the translation of $\chi\omega\mu\alpha$ as place, land, and country' (*Chorology*, pp.116-117). Notably absent from Sallis's discussion is the more current designation and usage of the word *chorography*, the geographic discipline detailing the systematic description and analysis of regions, especially given that *chorology* and *chorography* are sometimes used interchangeably.³⁷ Certainly, Sallis's commentary is highly illuminating, opening up definitional precision in translation to multiple meanings rather than closing it down to unitary explanation, saying of this process itself that, 'To propose a translation of $\chi\omega\mu\alpha$ would ... be to say that both words, $\chi\omega\mu\alpha$ and its translation, have the same semantic correlate, the same meaning; translation would consist, then, in moving from one word to the other by way of this common meaning. Inasmuch as $\chi\omega\mu\alpha$ has no meaning – at least not in this classical sense – it is intrinsically untranslatable' (*Chorology*, p.115). Might it be possible, even highly likely given the insertion of a 'paradigmatic set' into the discussion, that *all* these translations: 'land', 'country', 'place', 'city', 'terrain', 'locus', even 'region' (along with other highly specified scales and places like 'self', 'home', 'workplace', 'suburb', 'locality', 'river', 'highway', 'mountain', 'desert' etc.) are gathered together in and through chora? Certainly many of chora's standard definitions tend toward the terrestrially fixated but this kind of grouping could just as easily

³⁵ John Sallis, *Chorology*, p.115.

³⁶ Michel Foucault, 'Questions on Geography', in Colin Gordon (ed.), *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977* (Harvester Press: Brighton, Sussex, 1980), p.70.

³⁷ Nicholas Entrikin, in *The Betweenness of Place: Toward a Geography of Modernity*, assumes this interchangeability between *chorology* and *chorography*. Quoted in Gregory L. Ulmer, *Heuretics*, p.40.



be extra-terrestrially extended into infinite space given that Timaeus constructs the entire cosmos in his own and his interlocutors' imagination.

The confusion (for those who like their classifications and explanations clear cut) might arise out of the definitional ambiguity of the terms 'space' and 'place'. If, as Foucault suggests, since Galileo's discoveries our understanding of space is of an utterly infinite expansion in all directions, but which is only understood abstractly, placial particularity is the correlate to this infinity.³⁸ Whether place is represented, experienced, or sensed, that is qualitatively; or quantitatively in terms of grids, surveillance, maybe numerate or scientific calculation, each of these options is a security against the infinity of the cosmos. Place (and a whole host of actualities it designates) and space must be defined together; they are inseparable objects for analysis, a paradigmatic set. My own predilection is for Brisson and Meyerstein's definition, one I continue to come back to: here chora is 'primordial stuff' (this is likely to be the ever-changing soul stuff the demiurge unsuccessfully tries to completely control and order), going on to say that, 'We translate khora as "spatial medium"', and that this 'spatial medium is at the same time "that in which" and "that from which" the sensible world is made.'³⁹ Obviously, the idea and actuality of *spatial medium* resonates in any discussion on electracy but in the dynamic interchange between 'in which' and 'from which', a wide range of actual places are traversed, many simultaneously, and when those sequentially and simultaneously experienced places move beyond concrete, actual existence, space imposes itself in the abstract, and the medium changes from the body to the mind (although certainly not in any exclusive sense). In the Timaeian discourse, it is even possible to envisage the entire cosmos and the particular ever-changing place of every subject/object within it chora-logically; that is, as both a place and a space in which the globe and its human/physical inhabitants occupy only a very tiny region of the universe, all the while wondering if the abstractly conceived spherical perfection of the cosmos is spatially finite and/or infinite, as well as always wondering if it will die or go on forever?

At almost every crucial turn in the *Timaeus*, wherever there is a delineation of one particular component of its method, an annunciation that at once gives the reader/listener clear evidence as to the direction the discourse is likely to take, and, in one aspect of its interpretation, a cumulative outline of its methodological 'coherence', there appears thereafter (sometimes immediately, sometimes

³⁸ The full text goes: 'For the real scandal of Galileo's work lay not so much in his discovery, or rediscovery, that the earth revolved around the sun, but in his constitution of an infinite, and infinitely open space. In such a space the place of the Middle Ages turned out to be dissolved, as it were; a thing's place was no longer anything but a point in its movement, just as the stability of a thing was only its movement indefinitely slowed down. In other words, starting with Galileo and the seventeenth century extension was substituted for localization.' See, Michel Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces', trans. Jay Miskowiec, in *Diacritics*, vol. 16, #1 1986, p.23. It might also be added here that with Einstein's discovery of relativity, localisation makes a return.

³⁹ Luc Brisson & F. Walter Meyerstein, *Inventing the Universe*, pp.22 & 23.



further on) a sign, a piece of dialogue, disrupting, or unsettling, sometimes even cancelling or correcting this previously mentioned aspect, or its implied conceptual stability. It is a form of rolling destabilisation that amounts to a probable meta-method in which each of these components, rather than being consigned to an arena of intelligibility and coherence within the larger framework of the Timaeian cosmology (or as a set of coherent singularities stabilised under one banner and comparable and contrastable with other cosmologies, like the study carried out by Edwin S. Casey when he juxtaposes the ancient Mesopotamian creation myth — *Enuma Elish* — with the Timaeian discourse),⁴⁰ serves to indicate that the conceptual precision of each of the various ideas it addresses are in fact *imprecise*, shot through with some kind of *other meaning*, to which the discourse will eventually re/turn in order to counter-explain further, to retreat from, or even question again. So when we learn of the Demiurge, or a God, there is also a *demiurge*, or a *god*; if there is contemplation on the most perfect shape of the universe in the form of a sphere, and its instalment in the human head as the epitome of all possible shapes, there is, later, a lengthy discourse on the body's sensate capacities of taste, smell, sound and colour, of its bone, sinew, flesh, hair and nails, of its digestion and respiration, of various diseases of the body; if there is at once the centrality of power accorded to the Father of the universe, later (at another beginning) there is the important power of the matrix (although maybe not equally), the maternal receptacle, 'the nurse of becoming', 'eternal and indestructible'; if there is a mention of the immortal and the eternal, there is also an examination of that which comes to be and passes away; if there is an explanation of the temporal, ('the moving image of eternity'), there is the intermediating importance of space to consider; if there is an alleged superiority of the man, there is also the woman and their offspring to think about; if there is the perfectly timeless and spaceless state of 'being', then there is also the turbulent, chaotic, motion-full world of 'becoming'; if there is the centrality of the craftsman — a *producing, making* god — there is also the procreative god to consider; if there are many beginnings to call upon, there are just as many (or more) middles (or better, intermediations), and (implied) endings to weigh up; if there is the above and below (of the cosmos, the universe, the world *and* of the body's 'immediate perceptual experience'), there is also the right/left, front/back, hot/cold, hard/soft, heavy/light, smooth/rough;⁴¹ if there a physiological body, there is also a psychological body, or better a *psyche-logos*.

Here then is the methodological indeterminacy (sometimes the very measure of reason's illogicality) of the cosmological account in the *Timaeus* (and possibly present in all cosmologies, maybe even in the idea of method itself): by trying to incorporate the widest

⁴⁰ Edward S. Casey, *The Fate of Place*, 'Mastering the Matrix: The *Enuma Elish* and Plato's *Timaeus*', pp.23-49.

⁴¹ Edward S. Casey discusses the body's 'immediate perceptual experience' of up/down, right/left, front/back in relation to its bilaterality in, *The Fate of Place*, pp.208-210. These 'tactile qualities' of the body, including pleasure, pain, tastes, smells, sounds and colours, are discussed in Plato, *Timaeus and Critias* [61-68], pp.87-95.



possible diversity of phenomena into an explanatory whole, and by doing so in/through secular more so than theological means, all of which locates the analysis in an anthropocentric place and less in a divine space; regardless, a cosmology remains still only a partial account. In foregoing a 'proper' methodological demarcation (either of a kind, or a branch of knowledge designated by physics, science, the humanities, or their many sub-disciplines), a cosmology also remains partial, but it is a partiality spread over the ultimate large-scale object: the cosmos. But in the case of the cosmos, it is a scale whose measure and proportion are infinite in extent, especially in relation to the human knowledge that attempts to explain it (and it is reiterated at two places in the *Timaeus* that there is only one cosmos, a point to which I will return).⁴² When chora (the 'spatial medium' that makes reason, the legitimate logos begin again, and again, and again ...) is introduced as an intermediary, as the core of Necessity, an actual body is positioned in a particular *place* (a lounge room, a home, a workplace, a locality, a region), a positioning that remains always in relation to the infinite *space* of the one cosmos. And regardless of whether a body (or more accurately, *bodies*) are cosmologically or theologically summoned into knowledge (rather than being merely petitioned within a much more highly circumscribed human-centred methodology or arena) both domains implicitly recognise that there are many more elements in the cosmos than can be modelled or thought in any single epistemology, or in all epistemology. This *Timaeus* implicitly recognises when he says to his listeners that, 'You must be satisfied if our account is as likely as any, remembering that I and you who are sitting in judgement on it are merely human, and should not look for anything more than a likely story in such matters.'⁴³ By dint of the verisimilar aspect of the chora method, imaging the cosmos is only ever partially achieved (from the human, necessarily *positioned* and chaotic cross-currents of the observer and knower). From this point on, the motility and transformations brought on by sensation, opinion and 'true knowledge' finally bring into sharp relief (into belief?) the probable existence of an infinite cosmos while the chronicler of knowledge remains firmly implaced, and firmly limited epistemologically by that implacement.

If there is one consistency it is that if paradigmatic or verisimilar accounts of the cosmos are foregrounded, realist epistemologies are largely discounted (especially where the objective and the empirical are granted a dominant, one dimensional explanatory force), a point we can infer when *Timaeus* says (just prior to his admission of the 'merely human'): 'Don't therefore be surprised, Socrates, if on many matters concerning the gods and the whole world of change we are unable in every respect and on every occasion to render consistent and accurate account.'⁴⁴ Rather than the *givenness* of the world (or of its social, political, biological, cultural and other

⁴² *Timaeus* confirms the existence of one world in Plato, *Timaeus and Critias* [31], p.43; and at [55], p.78.

⁴³ Plato, *Timaeus and Critias* [29], p.42.

⁴⁴ Plato, *Timaeus and Critias* [29], p.42.



categories), the world of mind, of thought, if thought is understood as a bodily activity where the highest good is towards order but which is a point of view where feeling and sensation are necessary co-operators in this never-completed, even incompleteable search for truth. An a-priori given-ness of the world, the object-ness of the world, only comes about fully-fledged with the advent of Christianity (and given full flight with the progressive arrival of the scientific Enlightenment after Descartes) wherein the demiurge is transformed into the Almighty Father, a transcendental figure who creates the cosmos out of nothing, not even a pre-existent chaos. It is in the subsequent hierarchical elevation of a transcendent God (or the various religions of the book) that universal knowledge comes to be considered the highest order of truth-telling, and in the process, sometimes ridiculing, sometimes displacing, sometimes violently erasing local knowledges and deities that remain forever and ever chora-logically implaced.

Above/Below, Right/Left, In Front/Behind ...

This 'up' and 'down' verticality of the body's spatiality in the *Timaeus* is itself an aspect of its method worthy of further consideration, in part because it pre-empts a transcendental metaphysics that the religions of the book, and science, institutionalise. It is a distinction, at one and the same time, which is both in and of the cosmos, in and of the body, and in and of the method of the *Timaeus*. To reiterate, the schematic breakdown of the *Timaeus* is primarily a tripartite one: after the introductory conversations there are sections (1) the 'Work of Reason' (2) the 'Work of Necessity' and (3) 'Reason and Necessity Working Together'. (Socrates even begins the dialogue with 'One, two, three ...' [Plato, *Timaeus and Critias* [17], p.29]). Cornford makes the point that this concept of *aboveness* is attached to the Work of Reason:

The first [section] is described as containing the works of Reason ... those elements in the visible world, and especially in the heavens, which most clearly manifest an intelligent and intelligible design. Here Plato approaches the world (so to say) from above, from the realm of the benevolent maker and the forms which provide his model.⁴⁵

The Work of Reason is actualised by demiurgic craftsmanship, containing as it does a hint of the artist moulding already available but as yet unformed ingredients, in bringing about the genesis of the cosmos. Given that, 'In Plato's Athens the craftsman is often a slave and as often a freeman working shoulder to shoulder with slaves in the same kind of work', and subsequently becoming a 'victim of stigma by

⁴⁵ Francis MacDonald Cornford, *Plato's Cosmology*, p.32.



association', there is also the probable class-fixated point made by Gregory Vlastos to consider: 'That the supreme god of Plato's cosmos should wear the mask of a manual worker is a triumph of the philosophical imagination over ingrained social prejudice.'⁴⁶ This working the world into existence via the works of reason, via crafting, producing, labouring (as opposed to the cosmos being magically produced out of an unimaginably infinite and transcendental nothingness) indicates that, in the *Timaeus*, the already disordered cosmos puts on hold (momentarily at least) the endless deferral in philosophising (and theologising) of the act of creation itself, possibly best encapsulated in the question: 'If there is a God, by who, what or how was this particular God brought into being?' and so on ad infinitum. The question of who/what invented the pre-cosmic chaos in the *Timaeus* (or the demiurge himself for that matter) is not addressed. And while the goodness, the reasonableness of the cosmos, is the demiurgic ideal in bringing this pre-existing chaos into order is clearly articulated, it might equally be surmised, given the unquestioned pre-existence of randomly available raw materials for the genesis of the cosmos, that the act of invention, of continual production, is itself a major concern of the creation aspect of the Timaeian discourse.⁴⁷

The question that might now be necessarily asked is this: Is this pre-existent chaos in the cosmos' unordered materiality embedded in the subsequently ordered world? The answer must be yes, in that what seemingly has come from above (the rational, intelligent design of the cosmos) also implies and carries with it in the Timaeian cosmology that which is at the heart of what is below, which can be defined as a paradigmatic set of qualifiers like: the elements (fire, air, water, earth); the various qualitative attributes of each of the elements, along with their interdependencies; chance; a multiplicity of worlds; sensation, perception and opinion; and of course, chora ('space', 'spatial medium', 'land', 'country', 'place', 'world', 'home', even 'body space' etc.). In the stated intention of starting again, when it comes to articulating the Works of Necessity as the more 'troublesome' aspect of the cosmos (Timaeus, early on in this section, says: 'We must therefore retrace our steps and find another suitable original principle for this part of our story and begin again from the beginning as we did before'),⁴⁸ the Timaeian cosmology doesn't merely act in sequence, speak from a pre-ordained and temporalised script where reason is the first and foremost, indeed the only methodological principle, benevolently descending into the physical world *below* from its superior position *above*. It seems as if all the components of both Reason and Necessity are put in play concomitantly by this eternal return to a beginning, to differing beginnings, even to *all* potential beginnings. Possibly because the pre-existent chaotically contrived cosmos (everything in 'disordered motion') suggests a plurality of unmentioned (unmentionable?) other beginnings as well as

⁴⁶ Gregory Vlastos, *Plato's Universe* (University of Washington Press: Seattle, 1975), p.26.

⁴⁷ The art and theory of *invention* infuses Gregory Ulmer's work on the chorographic method from *Teletheory*, through *Heuretics*, to *Internet Invention*.

⁴⁸ Plato, *Timaeus and Critias* [48], p.66. Equally, Cornford's remark is pertinent: 'Making a fresh start, the discourse plunges into the obscure region of the bodily and of blind causation, approaching the world this time from below. A new factor, Space, is introduced, as the necessary condition or medium in which Becoming images reality.' See Francis MacDonald Cornford, *Plato's Cosmology*, p.32.



suggesting that both Reason and Necessity (and their sub-categories) are both infused in every beginning account of creation. The underground, the formless, the chaotic, the indiscriminate, the illogical and the uncivilised, even the excremental, indeed all of the paradigmatic set of qualities inherent in the works of Necessity, arise symbiotically, in uneasy union with the divinely conceived works of (unitary?) Reason.

This is a point underscored by the time Timaeus gets near the end of his discourse on Necessity:

For it is quite wrong to suppose that the universe is divided by nature into two opposite regions, one 'below', to which sink all bodies with weight, and one 'above', to which no body rises of its own accord. For since the universe is spherical all points at extreme distance from the centre are equidistant from it, and so all equally 'extremes'; while the centre, being equidistant from the extremes is equally 'opposite' to them all.⁴⁹

Might it be then that each and every body (human, animal, country, polis, planetary, cosmic, or otherwise) exists *spherically* in an equally opposite and proximate state of being and becoming, of reason and necessity, all from every beginning? Here at every beginning, might the sphere instantiate chora at the centre of every time/space conundrum in the cosmos? In every exemplar of chora, imbued as it is in the *below*, and with this *below* also imbued in the *above* from every beginning, there is this located set of specificities that are dependent on what position in the sphere any of its multiple examples in this Down Under world of difference are themselves placed (regardless of their friendliness, antagonism, or otherwise). This worldly, embodied multiplicity (and in the Timaeian cosmology, this is a pre-eminent contrast to a divine oneness) must also consider other methods inherent in a body's spatiality: the left/right, in front/behind, the near/far, heavy/light, the seen/unseen, hot/cold, hard/soft and the felt/unfelt to consider. It is also a necessity to keep in mind that my very own Down Under chora is a potentially overlapping other to every actual existent chora within the sphere, that most 'perfect' shape of the cosmos.

It is now time to leave the cosmos and the Work of Reason behind; after all, *Chora-Logic* is a labour whose centre/periphery is chora-logic and to this extent it is a work of the irrational, of the incompleteness of mind and body, and of incoherent knowledge itself. It will be impossible though to leave behind the demiurge, a God, or a Goddess, the cosmos, or the Work of Reason, or even an image or a verisimilar account of these spectres. In a turbulent, shaking, tumbling, chancy, being-there chora-logical methodology, of an epistemological pell-mell of mostly discordant worldly data channelled through the senses, perception and unsubstantiated opinion, a

⁴⁹ Plato, *Timaeus and Critias* [62], p.88.



benevolent and/or vindictive G(g)od lurks in the shadow of every single aspect of knowledge-making as the allegedly supreme cause of epistemology's coming-into-being, the alleged source of its ongoing becoming. While there is some suggestion that the World-Soul is what imbues the world with motion and thus the continual yearning for knowledge, as well as countenancing an appreciation of oneself as a knowledge-enabled being, it is the demiurge who puts Soul into World and World-Soul into Body. (Also, in this post-Freudian phase in which we live, there is the spectre of this more ancient conception of soul in our current enthusiasm, at least in the West, for psychoanalytic, psychiatric and psychological services).⁵⁰ The erratically un/acknowledged object *and* subject of every act of making, producing and creating knowledge, is a demiurge of one kind or another, mostly as long as that one kind or another is actualised or implied in the work itself, lifting it out of its *mere* commodity form into the realm of divine truth, a truth unswayed by the compromises necessarily inherent in the located, contextualised, everyday world where chora-logic is most comprehensively practiced and 'understood'. After all, worldly 'truth-tellers' can sometimes be *stars* in the globe's secular firmament but who are now better known as 'celebrities' or 'media personalities' and in whom we invest various god-like truths *and* mortal deficiencies. A chora-logically inclined work, on the other hand, might be more disposed to admit its partiality, its close proximity to disintegration, to its unnoticed death as a piece of useless bastard reasoning in the cosmic scheme of things even as it fruitlessly attempts to put a Godhead at the meta-centre of its discourse.

The Work of Necessity

Almost the first point Timaeus makes at the beginning again of the section on the Work of Necessity is a kind of implied acceptance of the Godhead in the 'subordination' of necessity to reason and intelligence:

For this world came into being from a mixture and combination of necessity and intelligence. Intelligence controlled necessity by persuading it for the most part to bring about the best result, and it was by this subordination of necessity to reasonable persuasion that the universe was originally constituted as it is.⁵¹

⁵⁰ This fleshing out of the ghost of soul in psychology is fruitfully examined by one of Freud's antagonists — Otto Rank — in his *Psychology and the Soul: A Study of the Origin, Conceptual Evolution, and Nature of the Soul* [1930], trans. Gregory C. Richter & E. James Lieberman (Johns Hopkins University Press: Baltimore & London, 1998). On the relationship between the 'psy'-disciplines and modern liberal-democratic governmentality see Nikolas Rose, *Inventing Our Selves: Psychology, Power, and Personhood* (Cambridge University Press: London & New York, 1998).

⁵¹ Plato, *Timaeus and Critias* [48], p.66.



For a chora-logical method, possibly the most pertinent phrase here is ‘for the most part’, a qualification that suggests there is an intractable aspect of necessity that escapes the persuasive powers of reason. To explain this escape from ratiocination, the ‘indeterminate cause’ is invoked, or as Desmond Lee says of this phrase in a footnote, ‘More usually translated as ‘errant cause’. The literal meaning of the Greek word is ‘wandering’, and there is an implied contrast between something whose course is regular and predictable and something which ‘wanders’ irregularly and so unpredictably’ (*Timaeus*, p.66).⁵² Why don’t I take the literal, the matter-of-fact, the more prosaic translation rather than the more usual one of ‘errant cause’? A wandering cause leads us in an ambulatory way to Baudelaire’s flâneur, aimlessly walking the streets of Paris, idly looking for an object and its probable causation, and if not, its use as a symptom or a clue. An ‘errant cause’ shows Necessity bowing to the persuasion of Reason by admitting its own error and by dint of this admission it is in a diminished position of power, thus automatically assuming its own irrationality and subjugated place in the ‘proper’ scheme of knowledge-making. A wandering cause, on the other hand, might momentarily listen to the persuasion of reason and intelligence but it is always ready to move off, to elicit and enunciate a differing or a contradictory cause to the one reason and intelligence thinks best and good. A wandering cause is connected to the Timaeian phrase ‘for the most part’ in that it represents that other element (smaller? larger?) that reason just cannot explain. Indeed, it is likely and probable that a wandering cause might just find a differing explanation (even for a universal dilemma) in every region, or place, or locality that it happens to amble into, lingers about in, or travels out of. It is equally likely that in some measure (a measurement that just cannot be expressed accurately, that is, mathematically, quantitatively and scientifically) there is no rational statement adequate to explaining some phenomena, or how it came into being, the recurrence of its episodic bouts of becoming, or how it dies off. Divining then (because space has not yet been mentioned in *Timaeus*’ discourse) chora is thus both the method and the place via which this infra-rationality is exercised, both epistemologically and in practice. And before we get to chora there is the addition of a third subdivision, what could be classified as an introduction to chora, and its most widespread English translation – space.

This third subdivision (‘Two were enough at an earlier stage when we postulated on the one hand an intelligible and unchanging model and on the other a visible and changing copy of it’, *Timaeus and Critias* [49], p.67) is critical in that it is the *site* and the *method* via which turbulent motion is inscribed into both the whole discourse and the cosmos. (A reminder here: the world of intelligibility, of reason, of the eternal forms seems to be perfectly motionless). This third subdivision is first called ‘the receptacle’ ... ‘the nurse all becoming and change’ (*Timaeus and Critias* [49], p.67) and which ‘has a nature of its own, from which it never departs’ (*Plato’s*

⁵² Cornford also translates it as ‘errant cause’. See *Plato’s Cosmology*, p.160.



Cosmology, p.183). But before further clarification of ‘the receptacle’ can proceed, a re-examination of the elements (fire, air, water and earth) is necessary. Previously, in the Works of Reason, when the demiurge’s ‘construction of the world used up the whole of these four elements’ (*Timaeus and Critias* [32], p.44), it can be assumed that they are part of the motionless world of reason and intelligibility, and in whose context they are, after all, static and eternal forms. Now that the Timaeian audience is in the context of the Work of Necessity, the definition of the four elements is also re-cast. This re-casting is not as substantive objects (and being substantive, it might be surmised, numerically and/or scientifically *quantifiable* in any number of dimensions, but most likely the four known dimensions), but rather they are now *qualitative*; they appear to us as constantly changing copies of those previously articulated eternal forms, in other words it is now, once again, the verisimilarity of the elements which is being emphasised. The elements now appear helter-skelter ‘as the contents of the Receptacle’ (*Plato’s Cosmology*, p.178), becoming this, becoming that, becoming something else. This ‘process of cyclical transformation’ (*Timaeus and Critias* [50], p.68) among the elements is now a decisive methodological factor in the Work of Necessity, a factor made doubly important by their essential categorisation in the context of the Work of Reason as eternally unchanging forms. Reason’s persuasive powers (with us from every beginning, rational, necessary or otherwise) still have a probable means of explaining this constant qualitative change and movement in and among the elements.

This explanation pivots on a complicated examination of the triangular, the *almost* sub-atomic structure of the elements, and in whose quantum company it will now be necessary to spend some mental effort. But this would be getting ahead of myself, for if I was to speed ahead to this part of the discourse (to sections 53-55) I might have to miss out examining intermediately important elements of the chora method; fortunately, I can go back to these topics. But on this theme of speeding ahead of myself (as well as of side-tracking, digressing, repeating; admitting there is not enough *room* here for a complete explication of a method or to supply it with a narrative exemplar; of juxtaposing, and/or claiming as comprehensively authentic and true a range of contradictory statements; of questioning and sometimes revising and clarifying earlier articulated statements; of inexplicably going forwards or backwards to the middle, or making a start at a new beginning; or even of posing a range of differing and alternative endings); it is these multiple gaps and fissures in any method or discourse to consider. It is in and through these methodologically discursive gaps, inconsistencies, absences, these disruptive ‘marginal regions’ (both in and outside of a place, a work, a life, and the cosmos), whereabouts Max Statkiewicz says, ‘One is bound to lose the sense of boundaries (*margines, fines*) when entering a marginal region. A margin is, by definition and paradoxically, indefinite. It marks and blurs the difference between the main corpus (text or body politic) and its outside by dissolving the border (*margo*) of separation.’ But when Statkiewicz extends the examination of this separation through the following comment: ‘Margin is the most eccentric of places; far from the familiar and domestic: *unheimlich*. It is hardly a place at all, a non-place: *atopos*; not so much topos



as “chora,” at least the chora of Plato’s *Timaeus*, a marginal region *par excellence*, there is a necessity to pause, reflect and question(?).⁵³ A margin, and a chora-logical method, can also be utterly famil(y)iar, *within* habituation and ‘coherent’ discourse, be utterly *heimlich*.⁵⁴ The chora method can be the unseen, the unfelt, the unheard, the unknown disruption within the commonplace, as much as a method of othering or marginalising, of being othered and marginalised; it can be the very familiar work we all engage in, the kind of work that entails the self-justificatory explanation of the mediocrity of all things contained on the other side of any border and the superiority of one’s own self-centred rationality, a rationality that can sometimes have a veneer of wisdom, of enlightenment. Through this particular lens of understanding, chora might equally be understood as the method that structures various episodes of hyper-reason; that is, a rationality and a rationalisation that more accurately has our own self-interest and myopia (even our own epistemophilia) as its object rather than the topic of debate or the actual enquiry itself.

Thinking inversely once again, chora might even be the form of logic that can explain the apparently chaotic, like the theory of triangulation that Timaeus puts forward and is said to structure the appearance, the image of the four primary bodies in the realm of Necessity. Chora might also be thought of as the internalised method that helps us to accept or reject those theories that come from *elsewhere*, from other bodies, methods or polities, or even the future, as when Timaeus elicits alternative conjectures to his own:

If anyone can tell us of a better choice of triangle for the construction of the four bodies, his criticism will be welcome; but for our part we propose to pass over all the rest and pick on a single type, that of which a pair compose an equilateral triangle. It would be too long a story to give the reason, but if anyone can produce a proof that it is not so we will welcome his achievement.⁵⁵

For in the very process of positing triangulation as the means via which constant motion is achieved (along with the allocation of particular solids to the four elements: earth – cube, air – octahedron; fire – pyramid, water – icosahedron; as well as the cosmos being encapsulated by a dodecahedron, a solid often associated with ‘the whole (spherical) heaven’ and ‘with the spherical earth’ [*Timaeus*, p.77]), the Timaeian discourse articulates a process that is right *under* the very image of the primary bodies and their transformations in and through one another (but which is a motion that, as yet, lingers unseen by the observer/knower). It is in and through this triangulation of the microcosmic structure of the elements (and their various transformations) that awaits our constant re/discovery, a

⁵³ Max Statkiewicz, ‘Chora and Character: Mimesis of Difference in Plato’s *Timaeus*’, p.56. [Italics in the original].

⁵⁴ Brian Massumi says that ‘Habit is an acquired automatic self-regulation.’ See *Parables for the Virtual*, p.11. [I would add that it is through this ‘automatic self-regulation’ that the irrational, the chaotic chora can sometimes seep into ‘legitimate’ knowledge].

⁵⁵ Plato, *Timaeus and Critias* [54], p.74.



discovery most often wrought by the Work of Reason, but whose articulation is ‘permitted by the willing consent of necessity.’⁵⁶ While there is some suggestion that Plato was arguing against the Atomists of his era, more importantly, in positing the very idea of a constantly moving sub-atomic under-structure attached to a verisimilar account of the world, he makes sure that, through the demiurge, ‘the operation of Reason is carried, so far as may be, into the dark domain of the irrational powers’, that is, the domain of Necessity (Cornford, *Plato’s Cosmology*, p.210). Even if we now know (if only provisionally) that the sub-atomic motion of protons, neutrons and electrons around the nucleus of an atom (not to mention the more recently discovered quark) is circular rather than triangular (modern physics can now provide the ‘proof’ that Timaeus was opening up his discourse to in the abovementioned invitation where he welcomes criticism and a better explanation),⁵⁷ this sub-atomically articulated rationality in/through necessity, *and* these constantly moving sub-atomic particulates that necessity works in/through reason, further illustrates chora’s ambiguous but intertwined metaphysics. One thing is more than likely though: the single circle of sameness and the five circles of difference that Timaeus earlier perceives at a cosmological scale (located in the stars, the heavens, and/or the whole universe) are also differentially present (in size, direction, shape, speed, and texture) at a microcosmic scale. This reiterates Cornford’s point that ‘The parallel of macrocosm and microcosm runs through the whole discourse’ (*Plato’s Cosmology*, p.6). In the Timaeian dialogue, and in a range of differing ways – material, spiritual, corporeal, spatio-temporally and epistemologically – the two scales are not separate entities; they resonate in, through, about, and out of each other, inseparably entwined in the being, space and becoming of both the human body and the cosmos. It might also be noted that with our advancing knowledge of the quantum, or the nanological cosmos, chora-logic will once again become increasingly relevant.

The Microcosmos

Here in this microcosmic scale we need to unsettle ourselves for a period. For indeed this is the scale at which every body’s chora dwells, even (and especially) if that body considers itself a world or a universe unto itself, delusionally thinking itself free of the encumbrances of other micro- and macro-scale entities. Plainly, in the Timaeian discourse, and elsewhere, there is no such thing as a

⁵⁶ The full transcript of this sentence goes: ‘We must, of course, think of the individual units of all four bodies as being far too small to be visible, and only becoming visible when massed together in large numbers; and we must assume that the god duly adjusted the proportions between their numbers, their movements, and their other qualities and brought them in every way to the exactest perfection permitted by the willing consent of necessity.’ Plato, *Timaeus and Critias* [56], p.79.

⁵⁷ A narrative of the post World War II discovery of the sub-atomic world in the solid state electronics of transistors, especially in their elemental base of silicone and germanium, is detailed in Michael Riordan & Lillian Hoddeson, *Crystal Fire*. See also Frederick Seitz & Norman G. Einspruch, *Electronic Genie: The Tangled History of Silicon* (University of Illinois Press: Urbana & Chicago, 1998).



micro- or a macro-scale whose operation is completely independent of surrounding, or even sometimes of remote forces. We are all entwined in cosmic forces: take electromagnetic force, for instance, about which Sander Bias says, 'Of the other forces in nature [i.e. other than gravitation] the electromagnetic force is of paramount importance, because it is the force that keeps atoms and molecules together. To a large extent this force is responsible for the properties of ordinary matter in all its diverse manifestations, from solids to nerve cells.'⁵⁸ While Plato (and Timaeus) might not have been aware of atoms (while at the same time disagreeing with the Atomists), or molecules and the attraction and repulsion of electrons, it is now clear that through microcosmic logic demiurgic reason has decisively entered the realm of Necessity; while equally and/or sometimes more accurately, the chaotic, micro-cosmically interchangeable potentiality inherent in the Work of Necessity (extant before the cosmos is brought into order by the demiurge and still going strong after its genesis), is a method that has itself infiltrated the macrocosmically 'perfect' structure of the universe, in part via mathematical, harmonic, even quantum articulation. Now that the elements of fire, air, water and earth are not substances, or eternally unchanging forms, but are 'a flux of shifting qualities, appearing and vanishing in a permanent Receptacle' (Cornford, *Plato's Cosmology*, p.181), this process of triangulation needs a little further description and analysis. But before triangulation is named as the means of representing true knowledge in the realm of Necessity, the Receptacle is named as *space*, the in-between medium, in and through which the verisimilar copies of the eternal forms (as they appear to the senses) are thought and/or brought into existence in the body. On the particular choice of triangularity vis-à-vis this sub-atomic structure, Timaeus says, 'In the first place it is clear to everyone that fire, earth, water and air are bodies, and all bodies are solids. All solids are bounded by surfaces, and all rectilinear surfaces are composed of triangles.' And a little further on, 'Of the two basic triangles, then, the isosceles has only one variety, the scalene an infinite number' (*Timaeus and Critias* [53-54], pp.73-74). In the process of change, movement and becoming, all the micro-components of the elements that proceed through space have a possible fixed triangular value (the isosceles) or an infinitely variable one (the scalene), both quantitative fixity and qualitative motility.

Both the fixity and motility of this triangularity are what produces the particular element/solid relationship, that is, earth – cube, air – octahedron; fire – pyramid, and water – icosahedron.⁵⁹ (It must also be noted here that in designating the cube to earth, Timaeus says that 'it is the most immobile of the four bodies and the most retentive of shape' [*Timaeus and Critias* [55], p.78] and, as such, doesn't henceforth partake of the turbulent world of becoming, leaving change assigned to the triangulating variations among fire, air

⁵⁸ Sander Bais, *The Equations: Icons of Knowledge* (Harvard University Press: Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2005), p.28.

⁵⁹ For a more detailed examination of this complex part of the dialogue [53-55], see Francis MacDonald Cornford, *Plato's Cosmology*, pp.210-219.



and water, thus leaving earth as fixed and static).⁶⁰ It is through the largely unseen quantification of triangulation within the ongoing change of the elements that number, measure, harmony and proportion are made available to ratiocination as the means of expressing eternally true knowledge, a point which once again leads us back to the perpetuity of the Same that the demiurge thinks the best possible mode of Being in the cosmos. In the meantime, the triangularly configured sub-atomic constituent parts of the now mobile elements (the whole nano-corpus of which underpins the art and science of becoming) grow larger, grow smaller, go this way and that, become smooth or rough, solidify, evaporate, get thicker or thinner, become colder or hotter, weaker or stronger, grow coarser or more refined, or any of an infinite number of variations between a whole host of qualitatively arraigned change descriptors and categories. However, the sub-atomic components remain *unseen* in a verisimilar account, only becoming representable at such time as they mass together in a significant amount to form a sensible entity of some kind or another (*Timaeus and Critias* [56], p.79). And it is this sensate amenability, this proximity of the body's senses to a constantly changing panorama of conglomerating, simultaneously present and moving micro elements that chora finally emerges in Timaeus' discourse.

That the body's capacities and its spatial co-ordinates in a given place are the focus of chora-logic should by now be emerging into some kind of rational understanding. (And here at this primal *mise en scène*, this meeting place of a body and its space, its chora, the corporeal capacities which are being referred to here are the physiologically experienced sensations of sight, smell, hearing, touch and taste that Timaeus deals with at the conclusion of the section on Necessity; it is only later, after this primordial meeting of mortal and space, that both the singular and collectivised data this sensorium consciously or unconsciously registers undergoes various kinds of transformation and are consequently inscribed in an assortment of representative practices). A verisimilar account of the cosmos relies almost exclusively on this human sensorium, on an almost infinity of potential sensations it reproduces in the body, while it is also prudent to repeat Massumi's point that, 'The vast majority of the world's sensations are certainly nonconscious.'⁶¹ Equally, by the time Timaeus comes to positing how Reason and Necessity work together (in the third section of *Timaeus* [69-90], pp.96-122), it is the broader physiological and psychic union of body and soul as it 'harmonises' with the cosmos, all from its position in a particular place, that is the [inter]±[mediating] function of these two pillars of the discourse (Reason and Necessity). It *seems* true enough to say that Timaeus assumes a discernible bias on the side of ratiocination, of order, and spiritual harmony, all of which are usually implied or explicit givens in a cosmological myth. This is a point illustrated, for instance, when Timaeus says towards the very end of his discourse:

⁶⁰ See also, *Timaeus and Critias* (footnote #1, p.75), where Desmond Lee writes: 'The exclusion of the earth from the cycle of transformation seems to be due solely to the assignation to it of the cube, and not to be based on facts of observation', p.75.

⁶¹ Brian Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual*, p.16.



We should think of the most authoritative part of our soul as a guardian spirit given by god, living in the summit of the body, which can properly be said to lift us from the earth towards our home in heaven; for we are creatures not of earth but of heaven, where the soul was first born, and our divine part attaches us by the head to heaven, like a plant by its roots, and keeps our body upright.⁶²

This is an assumption, however, that surreptitiously acknowledges the fact that there is almost no specific mention in the *Timaeus* of corruption, of the demonic, of violence and slaughter, of sexual proclivities beyond the hetero-erotic norm, of the poorly conceived and/or the ineptly operated polis, of the will-to-power; in short, the underground of actual (and usually implaced) unscrupulousness and evil. This is possibly because Reason and Necessity (and their concomitantly variable but elemental qualities and quantities) are parallel phenomena; they are always beginning again together, even when antagonistic to each other's purpose.⁶³

Certainly, almost any cosmological myth foregrounding such chaotic topics would not fit the conventions of the genre, especially if it were to elevate chaos over rationation in narrative or methodological importance. But here, in this omission, the ideal is clear: in the darkest moments of depravity and disorder, of chaos and happenstance that an implaced method produces and actualises, the will to reason is the pre-eminent mode of being and becoming that sorts out the 'this' and 'that' of the elements and remains an important aspect of the genre's conventions. Indeed, the will to reason almost always remains contingent on this bedlam that arises in the context of actuality and necessity, and which haunts the very foundation of the will to truth-telling. Moreover, this contingency of reason on chora-logically implaced necessity is so profound that the hyper-elevated idealism often attached to reason's own hierarchical stature epitomises the highest aspirations of epistemology, and of philosophy itself, and is especially apparent in the field of political, social, cultural and psychological affairs more so than scientific matters. For the chora-logical method this implaced bedlam (directly experienced by the body/politic as an almost infinity of compounding and refracting sensations and infra-rational opinions) is its *raison d'être*, the critical mode of its everyday existence; it is a bedlam that doesn't always have, no matter how well intentioned, the will-to-reason as its ideal method of epistemological order. On the contrary, the application of Reason to a necessary circumstance (or inversely, Necessity's ambivalent yearning for rational order) can inexplicably produce further epistemological derangement and a sometimes-violent incision, in both the body *and* the body politic. This is especially apparent if a rational, or rationalising episteme is recast in axiological terms (that is, as either ethically and/or theologically sanctioned knowledge); an outcome that might occur where a *belief* in

⁶² Plato, *Timaeus and Critias* [90], p.121.

⁶³ Cornford analyses this 'abstract picture of the physical world without the guidance of Reason ...' within the context of ancient philosophy in *Plato's Cosmology*, pp.206-208.



textual evidence rather than the evidence of contextual circumstance forms the primary basis on which that knowledge is judged, argued about and acted on. Stepping back again then, in a chora-logical method the will-to-reason remains open to the further, and always on-going motility of contextual relations in conjunction with perennially receivable bodily sensations because while Reason is the abstract ideal, Necessity (centred in the Timaeian discourse in the form of chora-as-the-spatially-intermediating-middle) is the best method for dealing with the always fragmentary and uncompleted actuality critical to the body's survival value, a value directly related to curtailing the death instinct or at least holding it in abeyance. A purely abstracted rationality will nearly always be overridden, or ignored in practice, by a spatially implaced Necessity, most pertinently when the actual realia of that body/politic is at stake.

And so at the beginning of the section on Necessity Timaeus returns to that pre-originary moment, that moment wherein the demiurge *locates* the helter-skelter of the elements in a chaotic universe of disorderly motion, the moment just *before* this benevolent practitioner-god brings order to this disorderly motion and finally the cosmos emerges. It is this pre-originary helter-skelter (a medium *par excellence*) that continues with its life-giving force in the realm of Necessity by dint of its insertion of chora into every discourse and actuality, albeit now it is amenable to the persuasion of Reason. As mentioned, chora is first referred to as 'the receptacle and, as it were, the nurse of all becoming and change.' But of course this pronouncement 'needs a great deal of further clarification' (*Timaeus and Critias* [49], p.67). Part of this clarification details the triangular, qualitative/quantitative nature of the sub-atomic elemental world that has already been referred to. But even before launching into this clarification Timaeus pre-empts another critical proviso pertinent to the helter-skelter of the elements:

Whenever we see anything in process of change, for example fire, we should speak of it not as *being a thing* but as *having a quality*; water, again we should speak of not as a *thing* but as *having a quality*. And in general we should never speak as if any of the things we suppose we can indicate by pointing and using the expressions 'this thing' or 'that thing' have any permanent reality: for they have no stability and elude the designation 'this' or 'that' or any other that expresses permanence.⁶⁴

In the receptacle of space, it is likely and probable that the sub-atomic, the *unseen* components of the elements are mathematically, and thus numerically calculable and are then able to become an object of ratiocination through their stability; but 'whenever we see anything' in the process of change, this mode of calculation must then be spoken of 'as having a quality.' In the tumult of change and happenstance characteristic of a spatially configured chora-logical method, a stabilised, quantitatively convened 'thing' can only be more

⁶⁴ Plato, *Timaeus and Critias* [49-50], p.68. [Italics in the original].



comprehensively understood by adding qualitative methods, methods that are themselves constantly open to re-articulation. This qualitative proviso of Timaeus (another critical component of chora-logic) is an ancient precursor to Brian Massumi's comment that 'The world is in a condition of constant qualitative growth.'⁶⁵ It is this 'constant qualitative growth' and change that marks out a verisimilar account of the cosmos from a universal, or a scientifically static objective account. As new sensations accumulate from an almost infinity of spatial and temporal dimensions (both implaced and meditated, real and virtual), the methodological frame must also constantly re-adjust to these changing circumstances.

Chora Shaking in the Regions

What remains to touch on in the Timaeian account of the chora is this central question of the region, while also keeping in mind that in any cosmological account every topic, idea or aspect of method is thinkable and/or representable within its purview. How is it then that this turbulent, constantly shifting multiplicity of the spatial method that is here characterised as chora-logic is made amenable in and through the regional scale, or at least the way this question of the region might be represented in Timaeus' discourse? Once again, I might invoke Timaeus as a guide and as a reference point, and to whom I might speak back, implicitly questioning the 'truth' of his monologue but also recognising that he has earlier relayed an invitation to those of us with the interest and the know-how to expand upon and extend his discourse, maybe even refute aspects of it in the light of new knowledge or current but always morphing sensibilities.

While Timaeus is clear throughout his discourse that there is only one universe and that its selfsame circularity is the ideal Form, unchanging and indestructible, as mentioned on at least two occasions he raises the possibility of a plurality of worlds. The first instance occurs at the beginning of the section on the 'Work of Reason': 'Are we then right to speak of one universe, or would it be more correct to speak of a plurality or infinity?' (*Timaeus and Critias* [31], p.43). The second instance is invoked just after that segment of the discourse detailing the mathematical and geometric order of the elements in the middle part of the section on the 'Work of Necessity': 'With all this in mind, one might properly ask whether the number of worlds is finite or indefinite' (*Timaeus and Critias* [55], p.78). While Timaeus supplies a decisive no to both these suggestions of a plurality of worlds, Cornford recognises that in the latter instance, 'This passage is

⁶⁵ Brian Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual*, p.12.



extremely puzzling'. This puzzlement may arise, according to Cornford, out of Plato's 'disapproval for the Atomist's philosophy', possibly because 'The Atomists believed in innumerable coexistent worlds, not because bodies are composed of atoms, but because atoms are unlimited in number and void is infinite in extent' (*Plato's Cosmology*, p.220). In the demarcation of only one cosmos, are we to assume that it encompasses an infinite expanse in all directions? Timaeus has already informed us that the ideal shape of the cosmos is spherical: As part of the Work of Reason, the Demiurge 'turned it [the cosmos] into a rounded spherical shape, with the extremes equidistant in all directions from the centre, a figure that has the greatest degree of completeness and uniformity, as he judged uniformity to be incalculably superior to its opposite' (*Timaeus and Critias* [33], p.45). Is there an *outside* to this unitary, perfectly spherical cosmos, an outside that marks the existence of multiplicity, and one that influences the now ongoing rationalised uniformity of the spherical cosmos? The fact that Timaeus feels the need to ask, not once but twice, and then twice deny, must at least make us interrogate these one-cosmos assertions a little further.

There are a host of indicators impaling some doubt into Timaeus' certainty. Almost immediately after the perfectly spherical one-world model is posited in the Work of Reason, it is torn into strips comprised of an outer circle of the Same moving left to right as a master revolution, and a series of seven inner circles moving in the opposite direction and at varying speeds.⁶⁶ As soon as the Work of Reason is posited as the ultimate means of organising the universe, the Work of Necessity takes us back to the pre-cosmic chaos. As soon as the human head is posited as the closest a body can get to the perfection of the world soul, there are the diseases of the physiological body to consider. And if there is true intelligibility and true knowledge, there is also a visible copy of this Eternal Form, but it is a copy that is only a verisimilar representation enacted in and through the fallibility of the body's senses, of its opinions and irrational sensations. At every turn in the Timaeian cosmology there are nearly always disruptions to the perfect unitary order brought into ratiocinated tranquillity by the demiurge. It is entirely likely and possible that the many worlds scenario that Timaeus twice denies is another potential candidate for inclusion in the Work of Necessity as an important component of its pre-cosmic, unordered state, and subsequently, of Necessity's post-cosmic inauguration as integral to the Work of Reason but also amendable to the latter's persuasive powers. John Sallis makes the point that, 'It is as if in the transition from intelligible to visible something like place came into play, letting things be set apart as they are gathered into a comprehensive visible cosmos. As the *χώρα* [chora], which seems like place, will

⁶⁶ See Cornford's *Plato's Cosmology*, pp.72-93, for a more detailed analysis of this section. Furthermore, this pattern duplicates 'what the ancients called an 'armillary sphere' ...', p.75.



prove always to have come into play in the very opening of the difference.⁶⁷ Leaving aside the possibility of another cosmos, as Timaeus does, his own unitarily conceived cosmos must not only be a 'paradigm ... comprehended by intellection but also, indeed primarily, that it comprehend, include within itself, all other living beings, that all other living beings be *parts* of it, individually and generically ...' (*Chorology*, p.59, italics added). This inclusion of all the differentiated parts of the cosmos could be further clarified through the logic that every organically conceived mortal entity (and their various collectivised scalar arrangements) cannot be considered alone: a mortal and its place, or any group of mortals and their place/s and space/s, is the minimum paradigmatic set in any chora-logical method.⁶⁸ A cosmos then is composed of a multiplicity of variously implaced scales and becomings: subatomic, psyche/body, domestic, local, regional, national, global, universal, cosmological (amongst other in-between categories), each of which is simultaneously layered in and through one another until a set of coordinates is reached where the limits of the cosmos itself might be arrived at and from which we could look back upon the whole edifice and audio-visualise the totality of all the previously mentioned scales, especially if we conceive of scales as organic entities, as themselves open to the varying motions of becoming.⁶⁹ In any form of one-ness (from an atom to a single body, from a nation to the limits of a unitary cosmos) multiplicity is in place. Doreen Massey sound-bites the point much more elegantly: 'Without space, multiplicity would be impossible.'⁷⁰

Up until the advent of the most recent bout of globalising fervour this multiplicity in the cosmos (of places and scales, even of irrational opinions and substantiated rationales), might have been conceived of as unchanging worlds unto themselves, existing in an absolute state of separation from each other. This is a brand of regional place-making characterised by Wendell Berry as a kind of 'regionalism as nationalism', and a 'perspective narrowed by condescension and pride so that a man is unable to bring to bear on the life of his place as much as he is able to know.'⁷¹ A sensibility that allows for 'as much as one is able to know' of his/her place helps to relegate that knowing body to the realm of becoming, and to constant motion (even if one dwells in the one place all the time because it is a

⁶⁷ John Sallis, *Chorology*, p.60.

⁶⁸ While this methodological combination of body/place is implied in Timaeus' discourse, it is also made explicit in Gregory Bateson, *Steps to an Ecology of Mind: Collected Essays in Anthropology, Psychiatry, Evolution, and Epistemology* (Chandler Publishing Co.: San Francisco, 1972), see especially 'Cybernetic Explanation', pp.405-416, wherein he writes, 'It may (perhaps) be true in physics that the explanation of the macroscopic is to be sought in the microscopic. The opposite is usually true in cybernetics: without context there is no communication', p.408.

⁶⁹ This theme of regions as organic entities, or space as relational, is a recurrent concern in the work of Doreen Massey and her colleagues. See, for example, John Allen, Doreen Massey, Allan Cochrane et. al., *Rethinking the Region* (Routledge: London & New York, 1998). And, Doreen Massey, *For Space* (Sage: London, 2005), pp.100-101 & 188-189.

⁷⁰ Doreen Massey, 'Spaces of Politics', in Doreen Massey, John Allen & Philip Sarre (eds.), *Human Geography Today* (Polity Press: Cambridge, 1999), p.279.

⁷¹ Wendell Berry, 'The Regional Motive', in *A Continuous Harmony: Essays Cultural and Agricultural* (Harcourt Brace & Co.: San Diego, 1970), p.67.



constant becoming to *know* that place, to *know your multiple self* in that unitary place). With all these elements in mind, it is now time for Timaeus to more explicitly name this third component – the Receptacle is now renamed as Space for the first time – but it is also a peculiarly intermediating factor in-between the unchanging Form and its Copy:

third, space which is eternal and indestructible, which provides a position for everything that comes to be, and which is apprehended without the senses by a sort of spurious reasoning and so is hard to believe in – we look at it in a kind of dream and say that everything that exists must be somewhere and occupy some space, and that what is nowhere in heaven or earth is nothing at all.⁷²

This is peculiar in that space is delineated as ‘eternal and indestructible’, much like the Forms themselves but is not part of the Work of Reason; it is ‘apprehended without the senses by a sort of spurious [bastard] reasoning’, which hints at the possibility of it being out of the range of reason’s persuasive powers; and ‘we look at it in a kind of dream’, implying that contradictory, impressionistic, phantasmatic, even hallucinatory factors dictate how a body *knows* space, and by implication, its specific place in the cosmos. And here in this ‘dream state’, where ‘we are not awake to the distinctions we have drawn’, where ‘an image ... needs to come into existence in something else if it is to claim some degree of reality’, and ‘so long as two things are different neither will come to be in the other and so become at once both one and two’ (*Timaeus and Critias* [52], p.72), space, or ‘the Receptacle does not owe its existence to the Demiurge, but is represented as a given factor limiting his operations by necessary conditions’ (*Plato’s Cosmology*, p.193). Space, given these ‘irrational’, pre-cosmic elements, is the object par excellence of the persuasive powers of reason once it is installed in post-cosmic order. Nonetheless, there will always be a component of this irrationality that escapes these persuasive powers and so becomes the possible implaced epicentre of the chora-logical method.

However, even in this pre-cosmically spatialised chaos, even before the cosmos is ordered, Timaeus provides a clue to the idea that there is at least a hypothetically homogeneous space where those elements most like each other settle into a region:

There were, before the world came into existence, being, space, and becoming, three distinct realities. The nurse of becoming [chora] was characterized by the qualities of water and fire, of earth and air, and by others that go with them, and its visual appearance was therefore varied; but as there was no homogeneity or balance in the forces that filled it, no part of it was in equilibrium, but it swayed unevenly under the impact of their motion, and in turn communicated its

⁷² Plato, *Timaeus and Critias* [52], pp.71-72.



motion to them. And its contents were in constant process of movement and separation, rather like the contents of a winnowing basket or similar implement for cleaning corn, in which the solid and heavy stuff is sifted out and settles on one side, the light and insubstantial on another: so the four basic constituents [the elements] were shaken by the receptacle, which acted as a kind of shaking implement, and those most like each other pushed together most closely, with the result that they came to occupy different regions of space even before they were arranged into an ordered universe.⁷³

This is also not to say that these incessantly shifting elements remain perpetually within the one region: 'It should be added that during the process they all change their places; for owing to the motion of the receptacle the main bulk of each constituent collects in its own separate place, while any part of it which loses its own form and takes on another's is drawn by the shaking to the place of the one whose form it has taken' (*Timaeus and Critias* [57], pp.80-81). In the relentlessly shaking realm of implaced Necessity brought so redolently to the imagination in the Timaeian cosmology, and about which Cornford says 'The qualitative alterations perpetually going on are inaccessible to any kind of scientific knowledge' (*Plato's Cosmology*, p.206), it's *true* enough to say that the region, as a twinned placial/spatial scale, exists both before *and* after the ordering of the cosmos and as such brings these 'irrational' elements with it in the demiurge's rational transformation of the cosmos into an ordered world. Again, this is not to say that this irrationality present in and through the region is completely immune to the persuasive powers of reason, especially its scientific varieties, what it does suggest is that if persuasion is to be successful it must take into account a region's local physiographic conditions and knowledge, and of that specific body/politic's multi-dimensional co-ordinates in and through which those local conditions and knowledges collaborate to create a particulate reality, of which even each single mortal residing in that particular region can only be partially aware. This is a ceaselessly particulating realism, one that continues chaotically and perennially, recurring differentially again and again in a wide range of scales, no matter how primeval and debased this idiosyncratic localism might be considered by any cosmological, theological, or even a secularly scientific or a socio-political program wrought from the centre. A chora-logical method brings a/n un/measurable calibration of 'knowledge' to the senses, to the instinct, to the feeling and thought endemic to any utterly motile particularity.

⁷³ Plato, *Timaeus and Critias* [52-53], p.72.



The Chor[a]±[e]±[i]±[o]±[u]graphy of Gregory Ulmer

Chorography could offer only subjective records of ephemeral reality.

Lucia Nuti⁷⁴

One of the recurring themes of the *Timaeus* is that *chora* (as much a psychological space as an informational space, as well as a real space in which knowledge production is *implaced*) is that of an ‘imprint’ zone, or as Max Statkiewicz puts it, Plato introduces *chora* into the *Timaeus* ‘as a necessary medium — a mirror, a movie or television screen, *camera obscura* — supplementing the mimetic schema of the demiurgic (re)production of the world. As such, it has to be manageable, malleable as plastic (*ekmageion*), as gold or as a perfume base.’⁷⁵ Through this juxtaposition and occasional synthesis of imprint, medium and implacement, and largely because the body’s sensate capacities are involved, knowledge of the cosmos, the world and a specific place is created and co-ordinated through a variety of communicational modes as they are available and amenable to these senses. If we keep in mind that Plato was himself writing in the period when the more mythically orientated traditions of oral knowledge were themselves being transformed into the more chirographic, literate, logocentric, and thus the more introspective and abstract knowledge traditions of the Greeks, there is an obvious correlation to the epoch we are currently engaged in: the transformation of ‘literacy into electracy’.

It is out of this frame of understanding of *chora* as the site of the body’s symbolic inscription (the actual place where the construction of the self through this inscription is in an ambiguous relationship with the wider socio-political order, if the latter is considered as the sum total of all power and knowledge regardless of its form) emerges the work of Gregory Ulmer. Indubitably, it might even be helpful to think of the totality of Ulmer’s oeuvre as itself a kind of *chora*-logical space, one wherein there is provided a means for thinking in, through, out, and about *electracy*, conceived as an emergent epistemological order coming into being in the present and the future: ‘Electracy does not already exist as such, but names an apparatus that is emerging “as we speak,” rising in many different spheres and areas, and converging in some unforeseeable yet malleable way.’⁷⁶ It seems clear from reading this oeuvre that it is not a

⁷⁴ Lucia Nuti, ‘Mapping Places: Chorography and Vision in the Renaissance’, in Denis Cosgrove (ed.), *Mappings* (Reaktion Books: London, 1999), pp.99-100.

⁷⁵ Max Statkiewicz, ‘Chora and Character: Mimesis of Difference in Plato’s *Timaeus*’, p.62. [italics in the original].

⁷⁶ Gregory L. Ulmer, *Internet Invention*, p.7.



manifesto, nor even a disciplinary or methodological bible of electracy. As an oeuvre, it is an aesthetic, philosophical and a practical technology for thinking and feeling, acting and making *through* a possible future-envisioned electracy receptacle, and has less to do with disciplinary coherence or methodological rigour. As a body of work it can be examined through Foucault's point that, 'in every *oeuvre*, in every book, in the smallest text, the problem is to rediscover the point of rupture, to establish, with the greatest possible precision, the division between the implicit density of the already-said, a perhaps involuntary fidelity to acquired opinion, the law of discursive fatalities, and the vivacity of creation, the leap into irreducible difference.'⁷⁷ In short, as an oeuvre it attempts to uncover a possible fatalistic epistemology – literacy – and its catastrophic endgame: psychic, nuclear or environmental annihilation, all the while creatively suggesting literacy's differential extension into electracy.⁷⁸ Ulmer goes so far as to say (after referencing the joke and the anecdote as key aspects of the mystoriographical method underlying this approach to electracy) that '... (mystory is not science).'⁷⁹ Neither can the mystoriographical method be a wholehearted dismissal of a rigorously articulated scientific procedure, a line of thought that sometimes romantically elevates the poetic and the aesthetic over and above the rational and the empirical. Rather, at its broadest level, the various aspects of method discussed from here on in are attempts to synthesise (even offer up as a tripartite series of contradictory *and* intersecting interlopers) personal, popular and disciplinary aspects of knowledge-making. It is the flows and blockages among these three levels of discourse (among others) that seems to be of most interest to Ulmer.

It is in and through this oeuvre that *chora* is explicitly reconfigured as an electronically focussed semiotic process, or rather, as Ulmer puts it (invoking a pun from the vocabulary of electronics and electricity), 'the Sine [wave] as an alternative to the sign' (*Teletheory*, p.14). Ulmer also implies that this transformation from 'literacy into electracy' is not just a change in surface effect; many literate dependent methodologies underpinning the production of scientific, social and humanities knowledges are also being transformed by this shift. While not only is the dominance of language to the more abstract forms of reason being challenged, the very way these forms of reason arrive at their conclusions is also under scrutiny (and an elliptically orientated electronic method also questions the value of conclusions). As already suggested, Ulmer calls this tentative first step towards an electronically configured methodology 'chorography', and from another closely related tangent, 'mystoriography', where chorography is focussed on the *embodied place* of the production of knowledge, mystoriography is engaged in the meta-physicals of an actual body, or a citizen-subject producing

⁷⁷ Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. A.M. Sheridan Smith (Routledge: London, 1972), p.142.

⁷⁸ While Ulmer doesn't seem to explicitly connect a literate epistemology with the catastrophe of nuclear or environmental annihilation it is an implied suggestion: 'Indeed, it is possible to say now that the organizing center of culture, bringing into communication the expert systems of theory and the common sense of lived experience, is the scene of the H-Bomb and its associated explanatory systems (physics and politics)'; see Gregory Ulmer, *Teletheory*, p.189.

⁷⁹ Gregory Ulmer, *Teletheory*, p.86. The mystoriographical aspect of the *chora* method will be discussed at length in due course.



knowledge in that particular place. And it is here that any examination of chora-logic within the porous boundaries of my own discourse is also entwined with Ulmer's speculative, conjectural attempts at clarifying an electronic methodology. In an electronic methodology there is no separate chapter on method, and in the spirit of this statement, *Chora-Logic's* own methodology is helically embroidered with its content, with its 'argument', the latter also an aspect of the literate method that will itself require re-examination in that spatial forms of logic may be incompatible with unilinear and sequentially coherent forms of reasoning that posit definitive answers to highly circumscribed problems or objects of analysis. It might just be that this highly enculturated and politicised artefact of the PhD thesis is now the only form that requires a separate chapter on method as a mandatory inclusion.

There are a number of general points to be made about Ulmer's challenge to literate focussed methods before proceeding to its specifics. At various points his discourse is convoluted and difficult to understand.⁸⁰ Where any orthodoxy, routine procedure, or the 'already-said' comes under critical examination, automatically there is a necessity to conceptualise an alternative mode of address that both challenges these established procedures and launches a formal framework through which this alternative discussion might proceed. After all, 'Poststructural theory, of course, predicts this very problem – that it is easier to change the content of our thinking than its form.'⁸¹ Ulmer's project is quite explicitly not a coherent, or a cohering discourse, nor a finalised thesis: 'The point to emphasize here is that the text that follows is an *experiment*: it is offered not as a proof or assertion of truth but as a trial or test. I offer it as a version of a practice whose value will be determined by those who choose to try it. The experiment might be replicated at any one of several levels.'⁸² As an ongoing experiment in discerning the various lineaments of an electronic method it is a project under continuing and ongoing discussion, for both Ulmer himself and that broader global community interested in developing such ideas. It might also be extrapolated from Ulmer's last statement that any electronic method so conceived by this project might just well be an *always-ongoing experiment*, the latter which is itself often just a stage in the scientific method that is passed through on the way to a finalised thesis. In a characteristically scientific methodological schema, the successful experiment is one where a hypothesis is tested and is conducted in such a way so that it can be repeated exactly the same each subsequent time. Of course, as Ulmer says, 'As the history of science shows, experiment teaches as much or more by failure as by success' (*Heuretics*, p.39), a highly pertinent point for *Chora-Logic* itself. In

⁸⁰ Ulmer's articulation of an electronic method might even be considered an 'anti-method'. In an edition of *Space and Culture* devoted to 'Anti-Methods: Expressive Forms of Researching Culture', Ulmer has published an essay entitled 'The Genealogy of Ascetic Ideals: A Remake', in *Space and Culture*, vol. 6, 2000, pp.103-114. Paul Feyerabend's, *Against Method: Outline for an Anarchistic Theory of Knowledge*, is also a specific influence on *Teletheory*, see especially pp.26, 28, 31, 47.

⁸¹ Gregory Ulmer, 'Deconstructing the Family Album', in Amitava Kumar (ed.), *Class Issues: Pedagogy, Cultural Studies, and the Public Sphere* (New York University Press: New York & London, 1997), p.285.

⁸² Gregory L. Ulmer, *Heuretics: The Logic of Invention*, pp.38-39. [Italics in the original].



Ulmer's proposed method, it is 'those who choose to try it' that brings the methodological experiment to, if not its completion, then at least to the stage where it is a satisfying learning/rhetorical experience even if it fails. It is this "I", so named as Terrence Maybury in *Chora-Logic*, that makes this heuristic experiment possible, especially if that heuristic experiment is considered as an 'artistic/creative' experiment as much as a 'critical-interpretative' one (*Heuretics*, p.3). Indeed, this making of the "I" so named is a constantly oscillating, never finalised experiment, always in the process of re-making itself, and its sometimes stationary, essentialist character may well just be a wayside stopover on the road to Glenn Gould's musically inspired utopia: 'In the best of all possible worlds, art would be unnecessary ... The audience would be the artist and their life would be art.'⁸³ While this is a utopia that may be blind to the sometimes incestuous and destructive character of artistic methods and practices, in the experimental ken of both Ulmer's 'critical-interpretative' version of chorography and the pattern-making tendencies of art-making there is at least an equal, sometimes even a more than equal berth in framing electracy's methodological particularity. The method so framed here (and its application in 'Rough Grid') is quite deliberately creative *and* critical, artistic *and* academic, personal *and* collective, subjective *and* objective. As a method, chora-logic attempts to dispense with this either/or conjunctivitis.

In some ways though electracy *does* 'already exist', more as a latent set of possibilities than as a coherently conceived program, consciously, collectively, artistically or even scientifically agreed upon. In light of this assertion it hardly needs saying that there is no extant state- or corporate sanctioned program in electracy or its methods at least as far as I'm aware. Given both the extensive popularity and the now historical longevity of information and communication technologies (ICTs), ranging over photography, Morse code, telephony, radio, television, cinema, video, WWW/Internet, gaming, computing, iPods, etc. along with their various sub/genres and interrelations, there is now an extensive pattern of usage in electrate practices, techniques, technologies and strategies (not to mention widespread theorisation) with those who have been using them on a regular basis for a lengthy period of time. In the wake of millennial change both the theorisation of, and the practical uptake of ICTs have now more than ever reached a critical mass. This thinking and usage has been carried out on the basis of production, distribution and consumption protocols, or their often-variable admixture. Also, this extensive popular usage has only intensified, often in the face of a hostile and derogatory critique from literate or state sponsored entities.⁸⁴ Given the attraction of forbidden fruit, this derogatory critique from the nanny state and others has most likely intensified the

⁸³ Glenn Gould, 'The Prospects of Recording' [1966], in *Classic Essays on Twentieth-Century Music*, selected and annotated by Richard Kostelanetz & Joseph Darby (Schirmer Books: New York, 1996), p.86.

⁸⁴ As one example among this vast galaxy of negative critiques, Ulmer examines Jerry Mander's *Four Arguments for the Elimination of Television*. In response to Mander's prognosis that television/video is a form of madness, Ulmer ripostes with, 'The point is not that video causes schizophrenia, but that descriptions of schizophrenic cognition provide the best outline of the logic specific to video.' See, *Teletheory*, p.70.



pleasure associated with popularly focused but latent forms of electracy thereby further developing it as an instance of 'paleologic', or to put it more directly, 'primal thinking' (*Teletheory*, pp.41, 44, 58, 66, 193). Ulmer's long-term task is to bring this primal (chora) logic, as it is electronically configured, into the realm of theoretical and artistic scrutiny, a scrutiny that in the context of a more tightly constrained academic pedagogy sometimes finds difficult to decipher and accept.

This difficulty the academy has with more poetic, creative and inventive methods of research might be traced back to Plato's overt banishment of poets from the 'ideal state.'⁸⁵ This is of course curious to say the least given the sometimes poetic quality of the *Timaeus*. More broadly, it is worth keeping in mind this disconnection between the 'dominant analytico-referential model of cognition' (*Teletheory*, p.33) characteristic of the academy and the poetic-creative impulse, as it is located in Plato's discourse, is often considered the very beginning of Western rationality, or equally Western philosophy. Oral-mythic epistemologies don't seem to make such a distinction in cognitive styles. It is a disconnection that is thoroughly institutionalised within a university-located pedagogy by the time of the Renaissance and only recently has it again come under further intensive questioning. Ulmer's oeuvre then is a questioning of this broader problem that has separated and made a hierarchy out of this distinction, that is between the 'analytico-referential' and the poetic-creative, a disjunction about which Ulmer says, 'A culture that has split the two sides of its intelligence the way ours has is seriously disabled' (*Teletheory*, p.66). Certainly the question of whether or not the poetic-creative impulse will benefit from its industrialisation and institutionalisation in, for instance, the 'creative industries' sector of the universities is a serious one. Given the embedded idiosyncrasy and individuality, not to mention the distrust of institutional structures surrounding the whole notion of inventiveness and creativity within the poetic turn of knowledge in electronic contexts I have my doubts but that's a question for another time and space. While I will make occasional reference to the debate on the cultural industries my primary interest is in how these largely latent electrate epistemologies operate in and through everyday life, especially how these still evolving forms of knowledge-making relate to the still developing nature of citizen-subjecthood and the politics into and through which they congregate and move. My own view is that given the extensive uptake of these epistemologies in the wider popular imagination, an understanding of them cannot be limited to or by the institutional rigidity of the academy (or of strictly limited academic cognitive styles), or to corporate or industrial structures, or even the mentality of arts/science bureaucracies, or various other state apparatuses. So while Ulmer's self-proclaimed intention is primarily limited to pedagogical concerns centred on the various humanities/social science disciplines within the university,

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It will be remembered that Socrates opens the *Timaeus* with a condensed account of the 'ideal state' taken largely from *The Republic*; see *Timaeus and Critias* [17], p.29. Max Statkiewicz says of this ironic yearning for the 'ideal state' that, 'The deficiency of the ideal State seems to be paradoxically its "stately" perfection. ... In order to live it has to be incarnated, has to enter the region of corruptible matter, to face death. The timeless and immutable being has to face the time and motion of becoming.' See, 'Chora and Character: Mimesis of Difference in Plato's *Timaeus*', p.58.



it is also clear from his oeuvre's projections that a deeper understanding of electracy and its methods cannot be limited to that context. Indeed, the culture of analytico-referential intellection forged in the academy may actually limit a more thorough going understanding of electracy, in part because as dual institutions, literacy and the academy are inseparably twinned in their historical, social, economic and political development.

Once again, doubts can be raised about whether this opening up of the academy to poetic-creative methods is possible given this densely literate-centric history of the university as an institution in part because, as Freud says, 'Science is, after all, the most complete renunciation of the pleasure principle of which our mental activity is capable.'⁸⁶ The deprivation of pleasure (and the occasionally concomitant elevation of the death instinct) in some forms of scientific rationality is a corollary of the deprivation of its 'parochial particulars':

A long-standing tradition in the West was the idea that retiring from society was a precondition for securing knowledge that was of universal value. Prophets and seers withdrew into solitude and returned with insights devoid of parochial particulars. Ironically, to acquire knowledge that was true *everywhere*, the seer had to go *somewhere* to find wisdom that bore the marks of *nowhere*.⁸⁷

If the seeking out, the understanding and the production of knowledge is pleasurable or erotically conceived, its acquisition is an expansionary, socialising activity and less a solitary, aloof or distanced one. Finally, in another of David A. Livingstone's investigations – *The Geographical Tradition: Episodes in the History of a Contested Enterprise* – there is yet another reminder that not only is the pursuit of knowledge a sometimes dangerous pleasure, it is also a highly dangerous contextualised pursuit, a point especially apparent in his historical analysis of the internecine intellectual debates that shaped the regional question in the discipline of geography, debates that occurred across America, Europe and Great Britain from the mid 19th century onwards.⁸⁸ These various methodological debates and shifts in the production of knowledge then cannot simply be limited to the pedagogical arena; they have, and are having, considerable influence on the way polities and societies are shaping and reshaping themselves, changes that are more easily categorised as

⁸⁶ Sigmund Freud, 'A Special Type of Choice of Object Made by Men (Contributions to a Psychology of Love I)' [1910], in James Strachey, Anna Freud, Alix Strachey & Allan Tyson (eds.), *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. 11 (Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis: London, 1954), p.165.

⁸⁷ David N. Livingstone, *Putting Science in its Place: Geographies of Scientific Knowledge* (University of Chicago Press: Chicago and London, 2003), p.21. [Italics in the original].

⁸⁸ David N. Livingstone, *The Geographical Tradition: Episodes in the History of a Contested Enterprise* (Blackwell: Oxford, 1992), see especially 'The Regionalizing Ritual: Geography, Place and Particularity', pp.260-303.



qualitatively delineated than objectively calculable. Whether it is pleasure, death, dreams or fantasies, as in Freud's method, or the 'particularity of place' in Livingstone's, the various methods framing the electronic production of knowledge are also, variously, socio-political, cultural, sometimes even religious artefacts.

More pertinently, it must also be added here that in Ulmer's oeuvre the poetic-creative impulse isn't merely considered as an embodied cultural artefact like a novel, a work of philosophy, a painting, a movie, a piece of music, a web-site, or a television program. Certainly, a variety of these artefacts are engaged with as points of departure and mediation. A related criticism here is from Niall Lucy's *Beyond Semiotics*, wherein Ulmer is taken to task for relying too heavily on high cultural or avant-garde cultural artefacts rather than pop cultural ones: '... the Ulmer of *Teletheory* seems more at home reading Derrida than watching telesoap, more comfortable with John Cage than Johnny Rotten.'⁸⁹ At least by the time *Internet Invention* is published though, 'Entertainment Discourse' (pp.125-178), in which popular culture (or the 'popcycle') is central, and is an important plank of the mystoriographical/chorographical method. This kind of critique though elevates the artefact over the process. For Ulmer, and likewise for *Chora-Logic*, the poetic, the creative and the inventive are a set of immanent and affective possibilities latent within each and every citizen-subject, not simply accepted practices taught in art school and embodied in cultural artefacts. The extent to which these latent potentialities become explicit manifestations of character and/or culture depends, of course, on a whole host of forces. Social sanction is one such force, or to put it somewhat differently – acceding to the demand to "Don't give up your day job!" – the kind of wage slavery that Marx described and analysed so well is sometimes a detour around the creative element of the psyche, because rather than being indentured to the owners and managers of the means of production, citizen-subjects with creative bents are enslaved by and willingly enthralled in their own selves, or rather, in the self's own *making*; as such, they are possibly the very archetype of the sole trader. The products and processes that emanate out of creative activity (and not just electronic creativity) rely heavily on self-making, on 'knowing thyself' intimately, on the very act of a body becoming itself, or becoming something else it dreams or fantasises of. In scientific/objective epistemologies, officially speaking at least, this subjective/autobiographical realm is sometimes a source of unease. Ulmer's project is aimed directly at propagating a methodological recognition of this highly malleable subjective/autobiographical domain; one that electronic forms of creativity and inventiveness considerably help to circulate at both an intensive personal level and on the global stage.

⁸⁹ Niall Lucy, *Beyond Semiotics: Text, Culture and Technology* (Continuum: London & New York, 2001), p.129; the broader critique of *Teletheory* is 'Gilligans Wake', pp.116-132.



My own interest, in *Chora-Logic* at least, is less pedagogical and more socio-political, even psychic. Like the nascent national citizen entering into the usually patriarchal symbolic order through the initial acquisition of a literate-centric ‘mother’ tongue, we all remain childlike (given the distinct lack of any state, corporate or pedagogically institutionalised formula for electracy) in relation to becoming electrate citizen-subjects of a global/regional polis. Indeed, Julia Kristeva invokes Plato’s concept of the *chora* to indicate the very first, approximately six-month stage the human infant goes through, before even abjection and the mirror stage to begin her discussion on ‘poetic language’. In this earliest of stages (before a mirror-image of the self takes hold on our self-knowledge, before language structures our entrance into the symbolic order), a self is incapable of distinguishing between categories (world/self, mother/child etc.), and is ruled by drives not reasons. And, as Kristeva says,

Although our theoretical description of the *chora* is itself part of the discourse of representation that offers it as evidence, the *chora*, as rupture and articulations (rhythm), precedes evidence, verisimilitude, spatiality, and temporality. Our discourse – all discourse – moves with and against the *chora* in the sense that it simultaneously depends upon and refuses it. Although the *chora* can be designated and regulated, it can never be definitively posited: as a result, one can situate the *chora* and, if necessary, lend it a topology but one can never give it axiomatic form.⁹⁰

We can take from Kristeva this pre-symbolic, indefinite projection of the choric self as an ill-defined destination of eternal return, a perennially present going-back to the beginning-stage for every citizen-subject, a stage ‘analogous only to vocal and kinetic rhythm’ (p.26), ‘a piece of music or a work of architecture’ (p.126), or equally, ‘a fragmented and reorganised *chora* is best realized in dance, gestural theatre or painting, rather than in words’ (‘The Subject in Process’, p.165). *Chora*, in this schema, is the constant and on-going refurbishment of the creative/poetically inclined psyche via the recurrent unearthing of the a-structural dynamic from this primal stage of development, or in Ulmer’s reading of *Revolution in Poetic Language* (*Heuretics*, pp.175-177) a possible focus for bringing out into the open unconscious modes of reasoning. And if unconscious modes of reasoning are more open to the already discussed idea of multimodal coding (that is, an idiosyncratic mix of text, sound and image, their subcategories and affiliate capacities) then Niall Lucy’s following critique of *Teletheory* is the more valid one:

For all that Ulmer is undoubtedly well-intentioned, then, it may still be that his remains a distinctly *literary* account of a domain of knowledges, practices and pleasures that it never quite understands and must be destined

⁹⁰ Julia Kristeva, *Revolution in Poetic Language*, trans. Margaret Waller (Columbia University Press: New York, 1984), p.26. [Italics in the original]. Further elaboration of Kristeva’s use of *chora* in subject formation is in ‘The Subject in Process’, trans. Patrick ffrench, in Patrick ffrench & Roland-Francois Lack (eds.), *The Tel Quel Reader* (Routledge: London & New York, 1998), pp.133-178.



to get wrong. It's one thing for the English Department to know how to 'appreciate' Bob Dylan (though never as a recording artist), but it's quite another to know where to begin knowing what to do with Prince!⁹¹

Certainly Ulmer's continuing emphasis on how to write in an electrated fashion, or how to write in 'wide-images', shows this kind of literate bias, a bias amplified in the use of the suffix '-graphy' in *chorography* and *mystoriography*. And it is perhaps through this literate reserve that Ulmer's oeuvre fails to take the 'the leap into irreducible difference' that electronic communication brings to self- and polity formation.

Ulmer's brief reference to Kristeva's work also doesn't quite adequately acknowledge the importance of this 'primal word' – chora – to both that body of work or to feminism more generally. Alluding to the definitional ambiguity of chora, Ann Bergren has suggested the earlier 'pre-cosmic' chora (to which reference has already been made, and through which the 'winnowing basket' shakes similarly disposed elements into their proper region before and maybe even after creation takes place) is contrasted to a later definition of chora as maternal.⁹² In the *Timaeus*, this maternal quality of space is evident in the following remark:

We may indeed use the metaphor of birth and compare the receptacle to the mother, the model to the father, and what they produce between them to their offspring; and we may notice that, if an imprint is to present a very complex appearance, the material on which it is to be stamped will not have been properly prepared unless it is devoid of all the characters which it is to receive. For if it were like any of the things that enter it, it would badly distort any impression of a contrary or entirely different nature when it received it, as its own features would shine through. So anything that is to receive in itself every kind of character must be devoid of all character.⁹³

That time is masculine and space is feminine is an enduring shibboleth that has been interrogated by feminists for some time now. As Sue Best points out this dichotomy has feminised a range of differing spaces: homes, cities, and countries, even the globe and nature itself.⁹⁴ The very success of feminism has been in pointing out the d/effects of this dichotomisation both to the continuing dominance of a patriarchal order and the subordination of women and others within that order. Nonetheless, Kristeva's work (in *Revolution in Poetic*

⁹¹ Niall Lucy, *Beyond Semiotics*, pp.129-130. [Italics in the original].

⁹² Ann Bergren, 'Architecture, Gender, Philosophy', in John Whiteman, Jeffrey Kipnis & Richard Burdett (eds.), *Strategies in Architectural Thinking* (MIT Press: Cambridge, Massachusetts & London, England, 1984), p.23.

⁹³ Plato, *Timaeus and Critias* [50], pp.69-70.

⁹⁴ Sue Best, 'Sexualizing Space', in Elizabeth Grosz & Elspeth Probyn (eds.), *Sexy Bodies: The Strange Carnalities of Feminism* (Routledge: London & New York, 1995), pp.181-184. See also, Elizabeth Grosz, 'Women, Chora, Dwelling', in Sophie Watson & Katherine Gibson (eds.), *Postmodern Cities and Spaces* (Blackwell: Cambridge & Oxford, 1995), pp.47-58.



Language) marks out the continuing ambiguity of chora as a category (either psychoanalytically, spatially or temporally) and Kaja Silverman's point that 'the contradictions inherent in Kristeva's account of the *chora* can never be entirely ironed out, since they are the discursive marks of a profound psychic ambivalence' is itself maybe a misplaced one, largely because contradiction is never absent in any discursive form but in a chora-logical method and practice the active inclusion of contradiction, rather than its unconscious eradication, is one of its methodological centrepieces.⁹⁵ If one of the primary offences of a literate epistemology is the implicit expression of contradiction (and which only the gifted critic is able to discern and correct) a contradiction-riddled chora-logical method required of an electrated epistemology is one of the preconditions for its expression. Certainly, *Chora-Logic* attempts to stress that every/body's specific chora is a one-off means via which each of us establishes our own chorically contrived, spatio-temporally implaced method regardless of social or demographic demarcation, but with its author being masculine there is no escape from pre-existing ideologies which, in an osmotic loop or relay, themselves become part of my own (and your) self-same contradictory implacement. Far from being a maternal zone of safety, with the womb providing the first place of an amniotically-enclosed security and order, and where the mother gives up her own self-making capacities to nurture the infant; more importantly, chora is a place of risk, of madness, indeed where it is sometimes impossible to tell the difference between safety and threat, male and female, self and other, or any other of a range of dichotomies or categories, a place of 'formlessness' par excellence.⁹⁶

At the present moment (and given the widely held view that chora lacks 'axiomatic form') the electrated person might even be considered the bearer and disseminator of a deeply individuated patois; wherein each and every one of us who is so inclined solipsistically comes to (and through) the almost infinite global retinue of electronic data and technology via a variable cross-pollination of our own psychic idiosyncrasies, our social/cultural/political pre-destinies, our technical capacities, already existing methodologies, and the gridded co-ordinates of our specific implacement and their constant movement across time and space. This is a patois framed primarily by the relations of self and self, and cosmos and self, more so than by a self and its collective identification, self and family, self and community, self and work, self and nation; although most certainly these latter relations are not excluded from the mix but are now a potential sub-set of the labyrinthine interconnections between the globe and "I", or co-equally, the globe's electrated infrastructure that make possible these myriad interconnections.

⁹⁵ Kaja Silverman, 'The Fantasy of the Maternal Voice: Female Subjectivity and the Negative Oedipus Complex', in *The Acoustic Mirror: The Female Voice in Psychoanalysis and Cinema* (Indiana University Press: Bloomington, 1988), p.104.

⁹⁶ Formlessness is a continuing theme in Ulmer's work on electracy. See, for instance, *Internet Invention*, pp.322-323; and in a differing vein, 'Formless Emblems (Testimonial)' in *Electronic Monuments*, pp.115-145. I would add though that from my point of view this formlessness is not adequately structured into the literate form of Ulmer's work.



The socio-political, the psychic and the pedagogical are not separate, or separating institutions though: I was taught endlessly from mother's milk and a father's slap; through primary, secondary and tertiary schooling levels; along with commercial, media and intersubjective entreaties; that I *was* a citizen of Australia. The 'proof' of this nationality was recorded on my birth certificate: Terrence Shaun Maybury, born 25/6/1957, Wagga Wagga Base Hospital, New South Wales, Australia. In this critical recording of Australian nationality something is lost forever (in literate/national representative practices at least). That lost something is an official recognition that that personal identity so marked "I" is national rather than local, regional, or even global. If I were to be Born Again I would insist on the event being audio-visualised live on the WWW as follows: Terrence Shaun Maybury, born 25/6/1957, Wagga Wagga Base Hospital, Riverina/Wiradjuri Region, the World, somewhere in the Cosmos. After all, the Wiradjuri people (long before the colonising Europeans named it as such) had previously framed the Riverina region as a possible regionalised polity, culture and society.⁹⁷ And it is these obliterated pasts of the specific places I tread and have trod on (sometimes made invisible by political, economic, cultural and military expediency), which also constitute the sources of any unconscious elements different to my own solipsistic concerns. The mystoriographical method can also take into account these other meanings, expulsions and repressions, the unsaid of any officialising discourse.

Mystoriography

With this background in place it is now time to turn to the detail of the mystoriographical element of the chora-logical method. Ulmer's invention of the neologism 'mystory' arises out of Hayden White's critique of historiography, a critique wherein 'White proposes an experimental approach to the representation of history' (*Teletheory*, p.18). If classical historiography was circumscribed by 'an impossibly comprehensive objectivity', White wonders if it is possible for historians to 'plunder ... psychoanalysis, cybernetics, game theory and the rest' in order 'to conceive of the possibility of using impressionistic, expressionistic, surrealist, and (perhaps) even actionist modes of representation for dramatizing the significance of data which they had uncovered but which all too frequently they are prohibited from seriously contemplating as evidence' (Hayden White, quoted in *Teletheory*, p.18). Here then there is a hint that, as the

⁹⁷ Peter Rimas Kabaila's three volume, *Wiradjuri Places: The Murrumbidgee River Basin*, vol. 1; *Wiradjuri Places: The Lachlan River Basin*, vol. 2; and *Wiradjuri Places: The Macquarie River Basin*, vol. 3 (Black Mountain Projects: Canberra, 1995, 1996 & 1998) gives a post-contact account (via an extended use of oral history mixed with archaeology and architecture) of its confluence (for the most part) with the geographical entity known as the 'Riverina' as it has come to be named by Europeans. I have been very much influenced by these three works (and others) in relating the Riverina to Wiradjuri country. Also, Ulmer, speaking of his own 'home town' of Miles City, Montana, writes, "Miles City" is "anywhere" (it is where I happened to be, and "I" am "anyone")', *Heuretics*, p.51.



historian collects various pieces of historical data, other methods (that is, other than the historiographical one) can be induced to cohere that data into some kind of order, or rather, an alternative speculation could be brought to bear on that same set of data. Indeed, it might just be that this juxtaposition of historical data within the ambit of a differing method other than historiography, or within a range of differing methods, constitutes a key aspect of the experimental or the speculative method. And it is the arts of experimentation that, in part, motivates Ulmer to make this neologistic transformation of *historiography* to *mystoriography*. Facts, or data, the very elemental base of any research project (artistic or scientific), are themselves brought into question here by their transference across various methods, possibly re-jigging their meaning as they do so. Similarly, if historiography was the method that underpinned the way a collective (a family, a town, a region, a nation etc.) told its story, how it explained its own meaning to itself, then a mystoriographical method is a feasible transformation of history (collectively understood) as a means via which I (any “I”) can explain itself to itself (and subsequently to others). Mystory then follows ‘herstory’, a feminist appropriation of the term ‘history’, in order to illustrate both the impact and the continuing importance of the slogan ‘the personal is political’. While the exercise of power is involved in every domain of human activity, the mystoriographical method, while also inheriting many concepts from historiography, further illustrates another ‘feminist critique of method’, and that is, that this political personalisation of the construction of knowledge fully acknowledges ‘the emotional foundations of reasoning.’⁹⁸ The mystoriographical method then is an attempt not just to politicise the personal, and to frame this idea in the context of an electronic epistemology, but also to make abundantly clear, to elevate in importance, the notion that within this electrated field of knowledge, the personalised affectivity of any citizen-subject (rather than some collectively articulated distancing mechanism that literacy usually frames via an objective process), is its key arbitrator in the act of knowledge-making. Affect in a mystoriographical method (considered here as ‘feeling’, ‘emotion’, ‘sensation’, ‘passion’ and ‘sentiment’), is a serious augmentation, although it doesn’t replace, the literate propensity to objective distance.

If the greater good of the collective was the beckoning call of the literate propensity for a remote, measured and objective articulation, willing itself to an unchanging and universal form of knowledge, the affective energy of the singular/collective body now more than ever augments the commonality of the body-politic as both the subject and object of electrated knowledge. It is this shift that also elevates a collective’s affective intelligence more so than its rational intelligence, making desire itself the object of electrated knowledge rather than reason. The mystoriographical method creates an arena in which this shift can be brought to light, discussed and

⁹⁸ Ulmer discusses the influence of this feminist critique on the invention of the neologism *mystory* in *Teletheory*, pp.83-86.



debated, argued through, possibly even in a 'scientific' way. At this method's rearguard stands the whole Postmodern project,⁹⁹ one element of which is the transformation of the Modernist notion of a fixed subjectivity (the essential self argument) to a subjectivity whose malleable re-inventiveness many now take for granted.¹⁰⁰ This shift from a fixed subject to a more motile one most likely would not have arisen without the help of psychoanalysis, Freud's invention of a 'scientific' study of the psyche. One key aspect of Ulmer's reading of psychoanalysis is from Freud's *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*, saying that, 'One point to emphasize is the relation of the joke to logic – the joke as false reasoning, resulting in a form capable of evading the inhibitions and compulsions of reason and criticism. This evasion applies in everyday life to the inhibitions of common sense, a feature that teletheory adapts to an evasion of the inhibitions of expert systems' (*Teletheory*, p.53). This use of the joke to evade the restrictions of reasoned logic works in a number of ways. Condensation and brevity are two related features of jokes that attach easily to an electrate epistemology.¹⁰¹ The ability of a single word or image or sound (or a simple compound of these modes) to condense a complex debate or argument is encapsulated in the idea of the 'sound-bite', a phenomenon not necessarily restricted to oral/aural data. Some forms of joke-work are also very much tied to their context, a feature Freud calls its 'topicality' (*Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*, pp.171-173). In this case, context refers to those persons who are engaged in the joke-work itself, and/or the socio/political/cultural conditions in which those persons circulate, and being contextually specific, a joke's mortality is its defining hallmark: 'a great number of jokes in circulation have a certain length of life: their life runs a course made up of a period of flowering and a period of decay and it ends in complete oblivion' (p.172). This, of course, compels the never-ending tendency of joke-work to reinvent itself on a continuing basis, something that most likely will also become an entrenched aspect of a broadly conceived chora-logical method as it structures electronic communication. Also, in joke-work there is an intense elevation in the pleasure of nonsense, play (especially within and across the various forms of representation), and a revelling in a kind of conceptual gaming whose aim is sometimes to bask in the psychical 'attraction of what is forbidden by reason' (p.175). It is through jokes (and dreams, even fantasies, or slips of the tongue) that the very process of representation itself is opened up out of the

⁹⁹ I consider the Postmodern project itself to be a paradigmatic set of sorts, a categorisation that includes a wide range of differing methodologies – feminism, psychoanalysis, psychology, political economy, phenomenology, structuralism, post-structuralism, cultural studies, new historicism, deconstruction, among others – whose conscious or unconscious intention was to question the foundations of the Modernist project.

¹⁰⁰ This move to a malleable subjectivity also has its critics, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak writing that, 'The theory of pluralized "subject-effects" gives an illusion of undermining subjective sovereignty while often providing a cover for this subject of knowledge.' See 'Can the Subaltern Speak?', in Cary Nelson & Lawrence Grossberg (eds.), *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* (Macmillan: London, 1988), p.271.

¹⁰¹ Freud himself discusses 'condensation' and 'brevity' (with examples) at a number of points in, *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious* [1905], trans. & ed. James Strachey, ed. Angela Richards (Penguin: Harmondsworth, 1976); for instance, 'condensation' at pp.50-66, 76-79, 222-223, 226-228; and 'brevity' at pp.77-80, 167-169.



strictures of some forms of rigid reasoning. Indeed neologisms themselves (*mystory* and *electracy*, for instance) are a kind of joking reference to this pre-established order of things, a reference both reverential and irreverent to that already established rationality.¹⁰²

Freud's specific articulation of the actual methods of psychoanalysis may in some ways be secondary to the objectification of his own life, or rather, of the anecdotes that are invoked to mark out this life as an object within the psychoanalytic method. A specific instance of this idea is the *fort/da* game Freud was a witness to after visiting his daughter Sophie and grandson, Ernst. The game involved a bobbin on a string that Ernst would toss away and then drag back towards himself in a series of repeated gestures. Taking a cue from Derrida's point that this *fort/da* anecdote isn't merely used to illustrate Freud's life, an element in an autobiographical schema, Ulmer says it is a part of a 'structure of embedding known as the *mise en abyme*'. The anecdote serves as a means via which it becomes 'part of a "speculative" organization, the *mise en abyme*, a double take in which the narrative development of the event has formal, conceptual, explanatory consequences (the movement of the bobbin, away and back, is the organizing cadence of the pleasure principle, repulsion and attraction)' (*Teletheory*, pp.91 & 92). *Mise en abyme* means, in this case, that the image of the bobbin, pushed away and pulled back by Freud's grandson, is the moving image within the heart of the theoretical structuring of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, a big image within a small image, a movie within a movie, a positive/negative feedback loop. Clearly this introjection of personal, cultural and abstract knowledge structures into the psychoanalytic process of making thyself, a moving virtualisation of that constantly recurring patter/n in inner and outer forms of speech, always representationally re-making themselves across a range of modalities, is a critical aspect of an electrate epistemology, part of a process Ulmer refers to as 'oralysis', a cross-pollinating 'discourse in which are merged the oral and literate modes of thought and representation' (*Teletheory*, p.93). Equally, and in an associational relay to the neologism *electracy*, Ulmer says of Freud's *anecdote* that they are 'conceptual conductors' (*Teletheory*, p.92).

Conductance, at least within the purview of *The Art of Electronics*, is the level of current surging through a device (current also being a kind of positive attractor, as well as a measure of a device's power quotient, maybe even the push-out action of the *fort/da* game); but as a measure of both psychic and technical energy, it is always in an inverse relation to resistance (a potential negative attractor measured in ohms, and possibly the pull-back action of the *fort/da* game).¹⁰³ Resistance is also a socio-political feature of modern life

¹⁰² Freud discusses neologisms as a feature of condensation in dream-work in *The Interpretation of Dreams* [1900], trans. & ed. James Strachey, ed. Angela Richards (Penguin: Harmondsworth, 1976), pp.403-408, 411-413.

¹⁰³ Paul Horowitz & Winfield Hill, *The Art of Electronics* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1989), pp.7 & 79. Also, Paul N. Edwards views actual electronic technology as the 'lowest' level in the discourse on artificial intelligence, *The Closed World: Computers and the Politics of Discourse in Cold War America* (MIT Press: London, England & Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1997), p.244.



under capitalism, a representative example being the S-11 anti-globalisation movement.¹⁰⁴ Here a technological sublime is mirrored in the conceptual field of psychoanalysis and in a socio-political reality. Mind and technics, psyche and power are nearly always interrelated in method and technique. In the technics and discourse of electronics, conductance is always a constantly shifting movement of energy, less capable of being observed in fixed or static accounts. Conduction, for Ulmer, is ‘a new term ... to replace induction, deduction, and even abduction in order to identify the electronic properties of differential reasoning’ (*Teletheory*, p.63); ‘an electronic mode of reasoning that is already available’ (p.71); and in a later publication Ulmer says, ‘Conductive (electronic) logic, that is, *supplements* the established movements of inference between things and ideas (abduction, deduction, induction) with a movement directly between things (unconscious thought)’ (*Heuretics*, p.127, italics added). While it is difficult, maybe impossible to make a clear-cut conceptual taxonomy out of the terms *conduction*, *abduction*, *deduction*, *induction*, this supplementation of conduction in the field of logic (with its propensity to dramatise the motile play of dreams, jokes, yearnings, desires, childhood memories, the family romance, everyday actions and events, even fear, loathing and the death drive – that diverse totality of affective energy circulating feverishly in the mind and body) is what foregrounds and produces associational logic, a logic connecting up differential circuits of meaning by the method of the ‘relay.’¹⁰⁵ Aided and abetted by the associationally-centric qualities in the brain’s architectonics, its ‘100 billion connected cells’ and their interrelations with the broader nervous, and other systems of the body,¹⁰⁶ conductive reason marshals this hyperkinetic network of associations, this chaotic infinity of unconscious data, if not into rational order, then at least making it available to reason’s call to order in the realm of consciousness and representation, and thus as a database in the making of meaning. This is a corporeal and cognitive process that resurrects chora’s adjudication of reason and necessity noted earlier.

Curiously, conductive logic might not seek out an end, or a grand explanatory scheme to its discursive energies; rather, its aim is *endless capacity*, ongoing through any faintly associative data-node to which it might impulsively be attracted to or repulsed from. Lisa Gye puts this quality succinctly: ‘Where abduction, deduction and induction all involve a relation between the general and the particular, conduction remains at the level of the particular. The mystoriographer is not concerned with getting to the bottom of things, in the

¹⁰⁴ Resistance is the object of a continuing interest in, for instance, Sean Cubitt’s, *Digital Aesthetics* (Sage: London, 1998), pp.22, 60, 98, 106, 132, 136, 143-146. From a differing perspective in electrate discourse Katie Salen & Eric Zimmerman, in *Rules of Play: Game Design Fundamentals* (MIT Press: Cambridge, Massachusetts & London, England, 2004), discuss ‘Games as Cultural Resistance’, pp.556-569. Resistance is also an ongoing theme in Foucault’s oeuvre.

¹⁰⁵ ‘Relay’ is a term used throughout Ulmer’s oeuvre as a means of activating this associative movement between various discourses and methods. See, for instance, *Teletheory*, pp.166-175; *Heuretics*, pp.4 & 197; and *Internet Invention*, pp.43 & 47. Although unacknowledged explicitly in the foregoing, a relay is also a component in the electronic infrastructure.

¹⁰⁶ John Parnavelas, ‘The Human Brain: 100 Billion Connected Cells’, in Steven Rose (ed.), *From Brains to Consciousness: Essays on the New Sciences of the Mind* (Penguin: London, 1998), pp.18-32.



manner of Sherlock Holmes, but rather in seeing the possibility of connections between things without having to expand or reduce particularities to general principles.’¹⁰⁷ Sometimes camouflaging itself in artistic methods, conductive logic has, at various times, also thrived in cultural, political or pedagogic contexts;¹⁰⁸ but it is electronic technics, along with the body’s affective and cognitive facilities, and a beneficially broader cultural and politico-economic climate, that marshals this epistemological force-field into both global and implaced prominence. One could cite Monica Lewinsky, 7/11, even Elvis the Pelvis, and his many impersonators (*Internet Invention*, pp.148-149), as exemplars of this affective capacity igniting itself here and there, now and then, around and about, in a this-and-that-kind-of-a-way, seeking no form of finalisation, no denouement. Conductive logic only has to justify the validity of its propulsion to the next associational connection, sometimes not even then; it is a concept usually foreign to the taxonomic imperatives of the grand meta-narratives that marshalled the literate imagination into methodological order. Even if conduction’s associationally expressed logic is perceived as madness or irreconcilable to those outside the arena or the space of its specific occurrence, or through its materialisation in a culture, society, or polity, it is still able to cross the borders created by those arenas and discourses. Devoid of epistemological givens, in that there are very few globally common pre-arranged structures in the formation of conductively articulated knowledge, global space (in a range of senses), and its interconnecting electronic technics, sanctions the cognitive, pedagogical, and socio-political work of conduction. Conduction, finally, could be the ‘logical’ means of intervening in the exponentially potent quotient of data in the electrosphere as the body weighs itself up against not just the knowledge implicit in its own locality, region or nation, but to the whole of the globe itself, or better, to the globe’s data storage and broadcast/networking capacities. Conductive logic is less prone to circumscribing a specific domain of knowledge, or a specific method that structures that knowledge, but is more adept at creating a potentially contagious relay between specific components of all disciplines of knowledge. And in this conductive ‘alliance’ between ‘analysis and pattern’, ‘mystory emphasizes precisely what *I happen* to unearth’ (*Teletheory*, p.83, italics in the original).

Faced with an understanding of epistemology as infinite but everyday extent, an observation that implies literate measurability might be on the wane, what ‘I happen to unearth’ in the process of research and discovery takes on an added depth of meaning and is itself the pragmatic form conductive logic takes under the predominant conditions generated by a global/regional electrated polis and

¹⁰⁷ Lisa Gye, ‘Halflives, A Mystory: Writing Hypertext to Learn’, in *Fibreculture Journal*, Issue #2 – ‘New Media, New Worlds’, 2003, available at <http://journal.fibreculture.org/issue2/issue2_gye.html>. [Accessed 3/4/2004].

¹⁰⁸ Examples here are the work of the Situationists and Ezra Pound, as well as the *I Ching: The Book of Changes*; all being exemplars Ulmer discusses as pre-existing variants of chorography in the entry on ‘Chora’ in Julian Wolfreys (ed.), *Glossalalia: An Alphabet of Critical Keywords* (Edinburgh University Press: Edinburgh, 2003), pp.35-49.



society. More than ever knowledge now has an oceanic quality, a quality that now *touches* us in intimate and personal ways.¹⁰⁹ One can rarely come to electronic knowledge now from a position of remote spectator, of the disembodied “I” of the Cartesian persuasion, of an “I think therefore I am” absoluteness and certainty, although these attributes still linger. A great deal of the work in re-imagining method in an electronic epistemology is a working against this Cartesian mindset, or what Ulmer calls ‘Counter Cartesian’ and “A Discourse *against* Method” (*Heuretics*, pp.11-15, italics added). *Against* the shibboleths of the Cartesian mindset, Ulmer proposes a ‘contrary’ reading as the way to develop this ‘anti-method’. So instead of the Cartesian command to be wary of fictional dictates there is, for example, Ulmer’s anti-methodical injunction to ‘*Rely on fictional extravagances as sources of invention*’; instead of a ‘Unity of style’, there is the point that ‘*plurality is better than unity*’; instead of ‘Analyze ... Break issues into smallest parts’, there is ‘*Take the problem as a whole; treat it as a gestalt; cast it in the form of an image*’; instead of the urge to ‘Synthesize ... Order items from simplest to most complex’, there is ‘*Juxtapose this gestalt with other images at random*’; instead of ‘Check your work to be sure nothing is omitted’, there is the call to ‘*Assume that any given part suffices, that completeness is not necessary*’; instead of Descartes’ moral call to ‘Obey the customs of one’s country; reject all excess’, Ulmer advises us to ‘*Mock and parody the customs of one’s country*’; instead of ‘Act[ing] resolutely ...’, ‘*Wander aimlessly (vagabondage)*’; rather than ‘Accept only reason, not imagination, in the proof’, there is ‘*Cogito: I am without importance, therefore I play. Imagination and dream are more reliable than reason*’; and the last two exclamations of Ulmer’s anti-method are critical: (1) ‘*The body is the source of value and the ground of action. There is no distinction between human and machine, between living and dead or artificial memory and mind. Take the machine as a model for mind*’. And the penultimate (2) ‘*Abandon all attempts at mastery and renounce the ambition to master nature*’ (*Heuretics*, pp.13-14, italics in the original). A great many of these ‘Counter-Cartesianisms’ already have a wide circulation across an eclectic variety of critical methods and discourses. There is one aspect of this pervasive protest though that particularly interests me, in part because a digression on the footnoting aspect of method takes us back to Descartes’ era itself.

Anthony Grafton’s *The Footnote* advances a convincing argument that the initial reception to Descartes’ work is at the ‘origins of the modern footnote’. For Grafton, ‘Descartes dismissed history and the humanities as a pastime no more informative or rigorous than travel (both showed only that human opinions and customs diverged endlessly).’¹¹⁰ In a great many humanities/social science departments Descartes’ sometimes still-influential mind/body split has come under increasing scepticism. However erroneous or not, it

¹⁰⁹ In using the term ‘touch’ I’ve been influenced by Laura U. Marks, *Touch: Sensuous Theory and Multisensory Media* (University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis & London, 2002); wherein she uses the haptic sense not just as the act of touching itself but also as the visceral quality of being *touched* by a range of media.

¹¹⁰ Anthony Grafton, *The Footnote: A Curious History* (Harvard University Press: Cambridge & Massachusetts, 1997), p.206. More broadly, see ‘Clarity and Distinctness in the Abysses of Erudition: The Cartesian Origins of the Modern Footnote’, pp.190-222.



is both a laughing and crying point as the split of all splits in that it remains influential in the production of knowledge across both the sciences and the humanities, in either literate or electrated forms, in the sense that it has become widely institutionalised beyond the universities. *The Footnote's* major achievement, though, is to demonstrate that even during Descartes' own time there was resistance to his authoritarian method: 'French thinkers of the late seventeenth century' found 'in footnotes a refuge from the intellectual dogmatism of Descartes' (p.222). Dogmatism, self-righteousness, claims of infallibility, and the fascism of neatness and order in epistemological concerns and the socio-political arena are the very antithesis of chora-logic as a framing methodology. *The Footnote*, along with the critical engagement with the topic of footnotes in George P. Landow's *Hypertext*,¹¹¹ suggests that *Chora-Logic* addresses its own use of the footnote as a significant element of its meta-physique, of what 'I happen to unearth'.

Maybe like Walter Benjamin 'unpacking his library', the wide range of disciplinary citations in *Chora-Logic* indicates a certain disposition.¹¹² From one angle, it might be an indication of an insecure intellectual frame of mind, the self-doubting need to cite anything that might stay still on a page, moves on a screen, or envelopes the body with a pleasing sound. Philosophers/artists who are secure about their presentations, it seems to me, are themselves guilty of one of chora's major crimes: that a specific thinker sets themselves up as being the unassailable authority on a given problem or issue. As *The Footnote* says, 'no one can ever exhaust the range of sources relevant to an important problem – much less quote all of them in a note' (p.16). The literate imperative to be across all the sources of a particular hypothesis remains as much, or more, a question of power as it does of epistemological rigour and exactitude. Descartes was clearly right: 'human opinions and customs do diverge endlessly', a point that could be made about one's own sources, and if the multiple referencing protocols of *The Simpsons* are anything to go by, a point becoming more pertinent as the electrated imagination intensifies. The heterogeneous nature of the sources in a given work, or a life for that matter, is as much about the question of memory (of memorialising?) and mimicry as much as it is taken up in the analytical purposes of primary and secondary verification to which even the footnoting system is often held captive.

This cross-fertilisation imminent in and among the footnotes is not so much about providing 'proof' for the rhetorical assertions made in the main body of the text.¹¹³ In varying degrees, they may still carry this lingering imperative. They can also be viewed as a

¹¹¹ George P. Landow, *Hypertext: The Convergence of Critical Theory and Technology* (John Hopkins University Press: Baltimore, 1992). See especially, 'The Status of the Text, Status in the Text', pp.64-69.

¹¹² Walter Benjamin, 'Unpacking My Library', in *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn, ed. Hannah Arendt (Fontana Press: London, 1973), pp.61-69.

¹¹³ Anthony Grafton makes the point that, 'A hundred years ago, most historians would have made a simple distinction: the text persuades, the notes prove.' See *The Footnote*, p.15.



means of moving around the whole body of *Chora-Logic*, almost as pathogens that can leap from one section to another, from one assertion to another, either by direct inference, but mostly by an osmotic or a conductive form of reasoning, feeding the reader into the many obvious and not so obvious contagious pathways that criss-cross *Chora-Logic*. While setting up a meeting at a particular suite of crossroads might seem an authorial responsibility, in *Chora-Logic* it is equally, if not more fundamentally, a responsibility of reader/audience interaction. Like the process of electronic gaming itself, there is in *Chora-Logic* a more fluid interaction between each of its various levels and the defining interpretation one has of them as a completed and substantiated argument, which clearly it is not. Footnotes, as they are used herein, are also a means of free-ranging over all the presented material as well as partial reference to a pre-existing body of knowledge on which *Chora-Logic* draws its influences. In chora-logic it is the heuristic value rather than hermeneutic value of footnotes that is of primary consideration.

The footnoting aspect of the chora method, as it is utilised in *Chora-Logic*, isn't merely a rallying cry against the methods deployed in a Cartesian framing of knowledge. A critical distinction Ulmer makes in his project is this one between heuristics – '(heuristics is a heuristic approach to theory)' – (*Heuristics*, p.8) and hermeneutics – a disciplinary method focussed on interpretation, usually of already extant knowledge. The foundation of this distinction lays in Ulmer's realisation that 'The modes of academic writing now taught in school tend to be positioned on the side of the already known rather than on the side of wanting to find out (of theoretical curiosity) and hence discourage learning how to learn' (p.xii). Broadly speaking, a heuristic approach to knowledge-making is directly concerned with what 'I happen to unearth', fuelled by curiosity, sometimes even epistemophilia, and the survival or intuition instinct; in short, mainly by the body's affective capacities and inclinations. Alternatively, hermeneutics develops in a master/apprentice model of knowledge-making; that is, where the apprentice interprets the works of the master/s before being fully incorporated into the community either as a scholar or a citizen. While in practice the two domains operate simultaneously if not always equally, Ulmer is aware of the cynicism at the heart of interpretative reason: 'We have been aware for some time, after all, of the limitations of the finest institutional instantiations of logical and conceptual reasoning – of critique and hermeneutics in the human sciences, and of empiricism in the natural sciences – to the point that critique has become cynical' (p.19). An element of this cynicism can be detected in the hermeneutic approach to knowledge-making: for instance, in the poststructuralist and the deconstructive methods there is the notion that the text is all there is, that as we scrap away (deconstruct) the various layers of a self, or a society, or a polity, indeed of any idea itself, all there is are other texts, other inscriptions, other representations to which those initial layers are directly or indirectly connected. In this view 'the real', or a 'context' is just a simulation of that textual representation, or a set of representations, inevitably marking out



implication as textual.¹¹⁴ As Massey further illustrates, the pretension to textual closure, of a supposed and internally holistic and interconnected textual structuring of knowledge, leaving little or no room for change and symbiosis, is organised mainly around a temporal and thus a more fully historicised schematic of knowledge. This is, of course, a loud and complex debate, one which I don't want to rehearse at any length here except to say that if a hermeneutic approach to knowledge is historically and temporally contingent, a heuristic approach is more spatially contingent. A heuristic epistemology unearths its sources (primary, secondary and auxiliary) principally from within its context both real and virtual, sources that may be textually specific but may also be sourced in nature, psyche, culture, entertainment, and family, indeed in a range of discursive formations and disciplines.¹¹⁵ While classifying all these discursive arrangements as *texts* might be an unwarranted simplification, it is rather that these discursive forms themselves mark out, as a 'paradigmatic set', a range of constitutive elements all of which are potentially substitutable and transferable across and between one another, in part because the 'The chorographer ... writes with paradigms (sets), not arguments' (*Heuretics*, p.38). Considering that the syntagmatic generally refers to the sequential and diachronic relations of meaning-making, it is the paradigmatic element that is synchronic, spatial even. A wide variety of differentiated texts, discourses and *actualities in context* operate simultaneously as sources for an electronic epistemology. And it is this paradigmatic quality that helps to give chorography (considered as an electronic method) its spatial, even its placial quality.

The [a]±[e]±[i]±[o]±[u] Relation

Let me start again, this time from another set of co-ordinates, another mixture of an effort to imagine and enact a motile and contingent array of epistemological boundaries and contents for chora-logic. The word *chora*'s alpha point is the inflected 'a' (or in the Greek α) that ends its literate signage. Seemingly indiscriminately in Ulmer's oeuvre, specifically in the transformation of *chora* into *chorography*, the 'a' sometimes morphs into an 'o', a transformation reminiscent of the idea that 'the gender of the noun "*khora*" is

¹¹⁴ Doreen Massey, for instance, makes the point that 'Deconstruction has throughout been strongly concerned with textuality; with speech and writing, and with texts'. See *For Space*, p.50.

¹¹⁵ Ulmer (*Heuretics*, p.196) traces these various discursive forms in his own usage of them back to Louis Althusser's discussion of 'ideological state apparatuses' (ISAs), which for Althusser included 'religious', 'educational', 'family', 'legal', 'political', 'trade union', 'communications' and 'cultural' ISAs. See Louis Althusser, 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes Towards an Investigation)', in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, trans. Ben Brewster (New Left Books: London, 1971), pp.136-137.



feminine', rather than 'chora' (feminine, masculine or gender neutral?).¹¹⁶ In making an oblique exhibit of this morphing, Ulmer notes that, 'While *chorography* as a term is close to *choreography*, it duplicates a term that already exists in the discipline of geography, thus establishing a valuable resonance for a rhetoric of invention concerned with the history of "place" in relation to memory', a comment worth following up as much for the vowel-specific media of the invisible 'a', and the visible 'e' and 'o' in 'choreography' as much as for its 'resonance' with chorography as a geographic discipline.¹¹⁷ In my own idiosyncratic reading of this morphing, it is within the ambit of this revelation that a "miss"-spelling, or perhaps a "re"-spelling has occurred;¹¹⁸ or maybe, in a different rendering again, that in-between 'chora-' and '-graphy' a vocally-induced *magic spell*, or some kind of incantation might have been initiated. Or further, that this vowel-like ambiguity invokes a third meaning of the word 'spell', one that might be defined in the following way: I will *have a spell* at connecting 'chora-' and the word element '-graphy' through the mobilising pentangle of these same vowels, or that broader collection of vowels usually understood in English as 'a', 'e', 'i', 'o', 'u'. There *and* here at this new beginning, and in between 'chora-' and '-graphy', a place and its inscriptive potential, there is an [a]±[e]±[i]±[o]±[u] relation and a further way of understanding these multiple connections between 'chora-' and '-graphy', connections that in this case are phonetic as much as alphabetic as well as a means of intensifying a body's relation to its implacement in a region and a locality rather than supplanting it.

In this other version of chorography's definition, the five vowels form a paradigmatic set constituting a conductive node for an oral/aural matrix justifying the insertion of sound forms (not just dance forms) in-between the two word elements of 'chora-' and '-graphy', forms that might further connect a body's specific implacement (its chora) to the multiple processes of representation as they are energised by that particular body/politic's implacement in a world both small and large. Remembering oracy educator Basil Harvey's point that, 'The vowels of the alphabet are five in number (*a, e, i, o, u*); but there are over twenty vowel *sounds*', reminds us that there is no easily self-contained correlation between alphabetic vowels as they written on the page and the way/s they are sounded out, in and

¹¹⁶ Max Statkiewicz, 'Chora and Character: Mimesis of Difference in Plato's *Timaeus*', p.62. [Italics in the original]. Also, Thomas Dutoit, in introducing the English translation of Derrida's essay, 'Khora', says that, 'Derrida has, in keeping with recent French practice, preferred to transcribe the Greek letter χ (*kh*) with "kh" instead of "ch" (thus *khora* for $\chi\omicron\rho\alpha$, instead of *chora*, as it has customarily been transcribed). Moreover, *khora* is a feminine noun, and in Derrida's text the pronoun that replaces it is the feminine *elle* or "she." Indeed, rather than writing "the *khora*" as commentators have always done, Derrida writes simply "*khora*," as if "*khora*" were a feminine given name.' See, Thomas Dutoit, 'Translating the Name?', in Jacques Derrida, *On the Name*, Thomas Dutoit (ed.) (Stanford University Press: Stanford, 1995), p.xii. [Italics in the original].

¹¹⁷ Gregory L. Ulmer, *Heuretics*, p.39. [Italics in the original].

¹¹⁸ This particular reading has been influenced by Paul Carter's essay, 'Ambiguous Traces: Mishearings and Auditory Space', 2001, available at the Australian Sound Design Project website: <<http://www.sounddesign.unimelb.edu.au/site/papers/mishearing.html>>. [Accessed 23/11/2004].



through the body.¹¹⁹ Indeed, as well as invoking chorography as a geographic discipline, might I also suggest that *choreography* (conceived of as an imagined, and/or represented record of the body's movement in a given dance routine) is an equally appropriate counterpoint for defining *chorography* as a placed-based method merely by dint of a choreographer's inventive ability in thinking, structuring and possibly notating a body's specific spatio-temporal movement through a given dance work ... with the work in the case of *chorography* being the dynamic dance embodied in, through and by the lived-life of the body or citizen-subject under consideration?¹²⁰ By invoking all five of the vowels I am also invoking the vowels' propensity for an open, an interlocutory, a merging and synaesthetic understanding of meaning-making and placing this epistemological ordering on a roughly equal footing with its bodily implacement. Vowels, after all, emerge in oral culture as a way of sounding out language not only into speech but also into singing, or incantations, or funereal wailings, for instance. This is an understanding that links us back to the technology of the vocal chords and, 'If the muscles of the larynx are contracted so that the vocal chords are tensed and brought nearer to each other, the breath forced through this narrow aperture sets up a vibration.' Subsequently, 'the noise of vibration is immensely amplified in the hollow spaces [of the breath's passage] called resonators.' 'The three chief resonators are ... the *pharynx* ...', 'the *mouth* ...', and 'the *nasal cavity*.'¹²¹ This sounding out isn't merely a procedural technicality of the body frozen in a primal act of oral communication:

Breath makes us resonate; we feel our body's edges even as we extend into space. Air vibrates us such that we stream outwards; it moves between us as breath; and within us, it disperses through the complex communicative network that we call the lungs. Lungs are the site of a two-way transport — of oxygen towards the tissues and carbon dioxide from them.¹²²

Although not normally included within even a phonetic understanding of knowledge, the production and interpretation of environmental sound (or what in electrate contexts are sometimes called sound effects, or FX) is also critical in helping locate (visually and/or aurally, and thus spatially) the multiple elements of data that surround and inhabit a given set of co-ordinates for a particular body, the

¹¹⁹ Basil Harvey, *The Scope of Oracy: Teaching Spoken English* (Pergamon Press: Oxford, 1968), p.135. [Italics in the original].

¹²⁰ This suggestive matrix of thinking was influenced by Rudolf Laban's project to develop a comprehensive system of dance notation. See, for instance, *Choreutics*, annotated & edited Lisa Ullmann (Macdonald and Evans: London, 1966), especially 'Principles of Orientation in Space', pp.10-18. Also, Ann Hutchinson Guest examines Laban's place in the history of 20th century dance notation in *Dance Notation: The Process of Recording Movement on Paper* (Dance Books: London, 1984), pp.81-88.

¹²¹ Basil Harvey, *The Scope of Oracy*, pp.134-135. [Italics in the original].

¹²² Ruth Barcan, 'Breathing Space', in *Cultural Studies Review*, vol. 6, #1, 2000, p.135. In a Buddhist sense, a body's breathing might also be viewed as the in-and-out passage of knowledge.



multiplicity of its specific but always moving positionality.¹²³ In another interminable return to the beginning, this realisation takes us back once again to the *Timaeus*, itself conceived of as a dialogue, as a verbal act of annunciation, possibly located in the agora, but coming down to us in written form and once again extended in Ulmer's written rather than electronic oeuvre.

Conceived of in this phonetic, dance-like way, the relations between 'chora-' and '-graphy' might better be able to be unlocked from any singular reliance on one system of representation (writing, for instance), and is limited only by the availability of a variety of inscriptive practices (and/or the pertinence of their particular usage, both singular and multiple, in specific contexts). The insertion of a suite of optionally available vowels in-between 'chora-' and '-graphy' then indicates an openness to, or better, a *desire* for the availability of *all* forms of knowledge in electronic memorising, in part 'because it is largely through the manipulation of vowel sounds that everyone has an individual voice, and that pronunciation 'families' exist.'¹²⁴ Certainly the word element – '-graphy' – is malleable enough to mean oral/aural, visual, and written systems of representation (for example, photography, cinematography, cryptography), but chora is what philosophy cannot name in language, to reiterate Niall Lucy's point that chora's 'singularity – and this is the point – is its very resistance to being identified; it is what philosophy cannot name.'¹²⁵ Chora's methodological beginnings (and its conceptual foundations in spatial thought) may well be more oral/aural, even imagistic, possibly gestural or gait-orientated given this sometimes-presumed hierarchy of naming through writing in philosophy. This modal ambiguity is also a reminder of Susan Stewart's point that, 'What disappears in writing is the body and what the body knows – the visual, tactile, and aural knowledge of lived experience.'¹²⁶ At the very least all this suggests a multimodal approach to the production of electronic knowledge rather than relying on a single representational mode or even a hierarchically conceived set of modes.

The variability of this epistemological relation, where a taxonomic regime has little or no hierarchical value but rather forms a collective, set-like potential, instantiates a *heterarchical* value, or where the organic context determines taxonomic demarcations rather

¹²³ A fine example of the analysis of environmental sound in-situ is Steven Feld's, 'Waterfalls of Song: An Acoustemology of Place Resounding in Bosavi, Papua New Guinea', in Steven Feld & Keith H. Basso (eds.), *Senses of Place* (School of American Research Press: Santa Fe, New Mexico, 1996), pp.91-135.

¹²⁴ Stephen Murray-Smith, *Right Words: A Guide to English Usage in Australia* (Penguin Books: Melbourne, 1990), p.420. It might also be added here that every body has a distinctive gait and smell.

¹²⁵ Niall Lucy, *A Derrida Dictionary*, p.68. This point also seems to be the epicentre of Derrida's essay on chora, 'Khora', trans. Ian McLeod, in Thomas Dutoit (ed.), *On the Name* (Stanford University Press: Stanford, 1995), pp. 87-127.

¹²⁶ Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Duke University Press: Durham & London, 1993), p.44.



than any top-down universalising principles, is its crucial attribute.¹²⁷ And in using the term ‘resonance’ (indicated here by the positive/negative, push/pull, in/out, the almost fractal attribution: \pm), I take it to mean that these multimodal relations are wave-like, vibratory, and occasionally febrile in their intensities; they are not merely one-on-one, cleanly articulated proclamations.¹²⁸ This is as it has always been: the purpose of this articulation — the object, the world, reality, a particular social or personal problem, the ‘truth’ etc. — and the representational means via which this articulation comes about, courtesy of the body’s centrality, are in a constant state of dynamic interchange. This tripartite dynamism (body, system/s of representation, context) is reflected in our understanding and usage of electronic technologies and epistemologies in the phrase and actuality of the *personal* computer, a key mnemotechnical apparatus of electracy.¹²⁹ Certainly, there might be some definition somewhere that could argue for chora’s fixity in relation to various systems of representation (after all, chora-logic is a method where any kind of bastard reasoning might be argued) but *Chora-Logic* will not be that place. *Chora-Logic* takes it as axiomatic that these relations are eternally renavigated on a minute-by-minute, hour-by-hour, day-by-day, year-by-year basis and that they are not ruled by a state or institutionally sanctioned program of knowledge, nor by any simple or easy chronological coherence characterised for the most part in the phrase, ‘beginning, middle and end’, or that other glorious absurdity — *closure*. Almost certainly, it is in and through this gap between the word elements of ‘chora-’ and ‘-graphy’ (a gap conceived of as the sum total of all the available systems of representation available to the body’s sensate capacities arising in any given place) that ‘infralanguage’ is located and practiced and through which a theory of electracy might further develop.¹³⁰

Roland Barthes reminds us of this phonetic, body-up approach to meaning-making when he says that, ‘by returning to the fundamental categories of language, such as person, tense, and voice, we place ourselves at the heart of the problematics of interlocution,

¹²⁷ Heterarchical power is a localised, divergent power network, describing an understanding of politics and culture from the ground up. It is an important feature of the emergent, self-organising, pattern-making, and decentralised behaviour of localised contexts. For an introduction to these ideas see Steven Johnson, *Emergence: The Connected Lives of Ants, Brains, Cities and Software* (Penguin: London, 2001), see especially ‘Street Level’, pp.73-100.

¹²⁸ It was only after I started emphasising this term ‘resonance’ that I came across William E. Connolly’s point about ‘Causation as resonance’, whereby ‘causality, as relations of dependence between separate factors, morphs into energized complexities of mutual imbrication and interinvolvement, in which heretofore unconnected or loosely associated elements *fold, bend, blend, emulsify and dissolve into each other*, forging a qualitative assemblage resistant to classical models of explanation.’ See, ‘The Evangelical-Capitalist Resonance Machine’, in *Political Theory*, vol. 33, #6, 2005, p.870. [Italics in the original].

¹²⁹ I was led to thinking about the ‘personal’ in ‘personal computer’ after reading Klaus Bruhn Jensen’s essay, ‘One Person, One Computer: The Social Construction of the Personal Computer’, in Peter Bøgh Anderson, Berit Holmquist & Jens F. Jensen (eds.), *The Computer As Medium* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1993), pp.337-360. [I’m indebted to Terry Dolling for this reading].

¹³⁰ As previously discussed I’ve adapted this concept of an ‘infralanguage’ from José Gil, *Metamorphoses of the Body*, trans. Stephen Muecke (University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis & London, 1998).



for such categories are precisely the ones where we may examine the relations of *I* and of what is deprived of the mark of *I*.¹³¹ Categories such as first, second and third person (as well as the omniscient viewpoint); past, present and future tense; masculine/feminine; as well as active, middle and passive voice, are the ones Barthes is most likely referring to. Among these categorical re-examinations, brought about in part by the gradual advent of an electrified mentality since the invention of chemical photography and Morse code, it is through this notion of the 'middle voice' that Ulmer characterises as an important component of a mystorographical method (*Teletheory*, pp.86-87). It seems clear what the passive voice is: it comes about as a consequence of the action of the verb being perpetrated on the subject. As far as the active voice is concerned, it is a subject who enacts an action on an object. In both cases it can be thought that the subject is somewhat abstracted from the action by dint of being outside of it in both instances. Drawing on work in linguistics (especially Meillet, Benveniste and Sanskrit grammar) Barthes makes the point, in relation to modern writing, that '... the middle voice corresponds exactly to the modern state of the verb *to write*: to write is today to make oneself the centre of the action of speech, it is to effect writing by affecting oneself, to make action and affection coincide, to leave the *scriptor* inside the writing – not as psychological subject ... but as agent of the action.'¹³² Regardless of whether the action is active or passive, in the middle voice the author/'egent' is in a continuous movement,¹³³ a movement registered by the unremittingly disjointed amalgamation of simultaneously being acted on *and* acting in the world.¹³⁴ Through the a-agency of the middle voice one can be both inside and outside the action, both inside and outside the knowledge-making capacities of world and self, a point clarified by Hayden White:

In the case of both the active and passive constructions ("I hit"/"I am hit"), the subject ("I") is *exterior* to the action that is completed, in the first instance, in the effect this "I" has had on some object and, in the second, in the effect that another subject may have had on a "me." So, too, in both the active and the passive, the tenses of the verb express a relation of diremption or separation between the time of the inauguration of the action and the time of its completion. In the middle voice, it is quite otherwise, here actions and their effects are conceived to be simultaneous; past and present are integrated rather than dirempted, and the subject and the object of the action are in some way conflated.¹³⁵

¹³¹ Roland Barthes, 'To Write: An Intransitive Verb?', in *The Rustle of Language* (Hill & Wang: New York, 1986), p.20. [Italics in the original].

¹³² Roland Barthes, 'To Write: An Intransitive Verb?', p.18. [Italics in the original].

¹³³ In order to give this category of the 'agent' an electronic quality, Ulmer has coined the neologism 'egent'. See *Electronic Monuments*, pp.xiii, 72, 108, 117, 155.

¹³⁴ Jacques Derrida also makes the middle voice an attribute of *différance* in his essay 'Differance', in *Speech and Phenomena and Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs*, trans. David B. Allison (Northwestern University Press: Evanston, Illinois, 1973), p.137.

¹³⁵ Hayden White, 'Writing in the Middle Voice', in *Stanford Literature Review*, vol. 9, #2, 1992, p.185. [Italics in the original].



Many of these debates centred on the middle voice are well rehearsed. Perhaps the middle voice, as a functional aspect of an electrated method, is a decisive shift in the way knowledge is constructed, moving Ulmer to note that ‘Mystory works in the middle voice’ (*Teletheory*, p.87). Multiple warnings about simple binary opposites like subject/object, past/present, nature/culture, above/below etc. are heeded in the elevated importance of the middle voice. Equally significant is Chela Sandoval’s inclusion (under the influence of a polymathic range of influences, including the above mentioned sources) of a ‘reflexive middle voice’ into an oppositional praxis she labels ‘differential consciousness’, one wherein those who seek socio-political change and who do this work utilising the ‘reflexive middle voice’ do so in an effort to promote conceptual linkages among disparate groups disenfranchised by top heavy national and global power bases. Characterised as ‘reflexive’ and ‘differential’, Sandoval (invoking White’s discussion) speaks of the middle voice as a ‘reflexive mode of consciousness [that] self-consciously deploys subjectivity and calls up a *new* morality of form that intervenes in social reality through deploying an action that re-creates the agent even as the agent is creating the action – in an ongoing, chiasmic loop of transformation.’¹³⁶ And when an agent/action, or a citizen-subject and its representative practices are united in this ‘loop of transformation’, the universalising tendencies that marshalled the active/passive, past/present dichotomies into methodological order melt into their placial particularity.

And, in another ‘loop of transformation’, a summarising bridge can now build over this enigma of chora-logic, and of Ulmer’s conception of chorography. It is in my own designation of the subject matter as *chora-logic*, rather than as *chorography*, or *choragraphy*, or *choreography*, or *chorigraphy*, or *chorology*, or some other vowel-inspired permutation of the term, that I can lay a resonating foundation for this bridge. (Like Derrida’s differential ‘a’ and ‘e’ in ‘Differance’ it might be useful to constantly keep this variable spelling in place, a process reminding us of how indigenous languages are translated into English. But this conceit of variable respellings might also point to the difficult idea that the chora-method is remade in every different context). Invoking ‘-logic’, as opposed to ‘-graphy’ though, is done in order to emphasise another transformative loop, one between thought itself and the various physical acts of inscription. The suffix ‘-graphy’, as already suggested, refers to that group of representative practices that an electronic device is capable of utilising in the service of communication: including, writing, painting, drawing, speaking, listening (or the oral/aural), music, colour, editing, sound effects, lighting, programming, layout, etc. It is axiomatic that these clusters of inscriptive practices themselves form a paradigmatic set of sorts, along with the technate possibilities they engage with in the act of electronic communication, all of which collectively constitute the possible limits in which meaning can be articulated by and in the form of an electrated artefact. These

¹³⁶ Chela Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed* (University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis, 2000), p.156. [Italics in the original].



inscriptive processes are not simply God-given; they are themselves engaged in a series of loops one of which is with thought itself. The thought of an agent, agent, or citizen-subject, if we are to take Sandoval's insights on board, is in a constant state of engagement with the multimodal nature of this disparate collection of data, technologies and techniques. This loop between the body, the cognitive domain and the multimodal nature of electronic communication, something that could also be fruitfully analysed from a cognitive science perspective not just a digital communication perspective, indicates a similarity in structure.¹³⁷ The term '-logic' in the title *Chora-Logic* is invoked to indicate the multimodal possibilities of thought itself, along with its interlocutory possibilities in relation to thought's contextual engagement and in its application to textual production, distribution and consumption. *Chora-Logic* is as much a 'thought experiment' as an actual textual experiment, attempting to more fully emphasise the roles of synaesthesia-style thinking and emotion have in the production and consumption of electrified-centred material culture.¹³⁸

In placing both thought and knowledge-making in context there is also another important attribute of chora worth elucidating. If there is a first and last attribute of chora, it is lexically defined as the 'area (chora) *in which genesis takes place*'; or for my part, where *genesis is continually taking up its place*.¹³⁹ Already I've noted how Timaeus invented the third genos – space – to complete the triumvirate of the sensible and the intelligible, where space is used to indicate the cosmological place in and through which genesis takes place. In a more prosaic, everyday fashion, chora considered as context or setting is critical to the way thought remembers its subject/s and object/s. Placing these objects in-situ, and the re-remembering of those objects in that place, is the means via which specific particulars are re-entered into discourse and are thus brought once more into the field of contemplation, and for a possible re-working into electronic works of one kind or another. A particular object or idea is nearly always in its place, and its ongoing genesis continues to be found again and again in that place, or places: think here Dublin, *Ulysses* and James Joyce, about which Joseph Frank says, 'For this is what Joyce demands: that the reader have at hand the same instinctive knowledge of Dublin life, the same sense of Dublin as a huge, surrounding organism, that the Dubliner possesses by a birthright'.¹⁴⁰ In the Australian context, mention could be made of the Monaro

¹³⁷ A pertinent reading from the cognitive sciences is Paul Bertelson & Béatrice de Gelder, 'The Psychology of Multimodal Perception', in Charles Spence & Jon Driver (eds.), *Crossmodal Space and Crossmodal Attention* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2004), pp.141-177. Another is Greg Boiarsky, 'The Psychology of New Media Technologies', in *Convergence*, vol. 3, #3, 1997, pp.109-126. The relationship between cognitive multimodality and electronic forms of multimodality, though, is a fruitful area of research.

¹³⁸ Ulmer makes a similar point about Derrida's work in 'The Post-Age' where he says, 'In short, he proposes a writing orientated towards thought rather than information, a pedagogical writing rather than a scientific discourse', in *Diacritics*, vol. 11, #3, 1981, p.45.

¹³⁹ F. E. Peters, *Greek Philosophical Terms: An Historical Lexicon* (New York University Press: New York, 1967), p.197. [Italics in the original].

¹⁴⁰ Joseph Frank, 'Spatial Form in Modern Literature', in *The Widening Gyre: Crisis and Mastery in Modern Literature* (Rutgers University Press: New Brunswick, New Jersey, 1963), p.19.



regional setting of *All That Swagger*, Miles Franklin's epic fictionalisation of her Irish squattocratic forebears in Australia's high country.¹⁴¹ For Ulmer and *Chora-Logic*, 'In the practice of Emotional Recall, the significant part of the narrative is not in the story but in the physical details of the scene, the setting that supports the action' (*Heuretics*, p.138). This 'remembering' of every raw physical detail in-situ is of course impossible, keeping in mind a body can record infinitely more detail than it can consciously remember; but there are, nonetheless, particular re-memorisations abutted to these settings that arise out of this mystoriographical storehouse and continue to come up again and again.

Ulmer's own example is from the time he was working in his father's 'gravel plant ... at the Miles City Sand & Gravel Company', during which time father and son witness 'Red Cryer', the 'village idiot', continuing to throw a 'large piece of cardboard into the wind'; finally, the father shouts into his son's ear: "There's a lesson in that!" (*Heuretics*, pp.133-139). In a 'eureka' moment Ulmer connects this gravel plant to Plato's chora: 'The sand and gravel plant is *chora*, down to the smallest details of Plato's description – not just the winnowing device but the receptacle swaying and vibrating as it sorted out the four basic elements, Earth, Air, Fire, and Water, which matched the three sizes of rock (oversize, half-inch, pea gravel) and of sand in the Family discourse' (p.139). This storehouse of memory (affective, recoverable, and re-readable from across a wide range of bodies and discourses) provides for the work of 'Intuition' to proceed, which 'in contrast to analysis, operates in a global or Gestalt mode, crossing all the sensory modalities in a way that may not be abstracted from the body and emotions' (p.140). And finally, 'Eureka insights are said to arise out of the peculiar way memory stores information in "emotional sets," gathering ideas into categories classified not in terms of logical properties but common feelings, feelings that are based in eccentric, subjective, idiosyncratic physiognomic perceptions' (p.142, paraphrasing the work of Tony Bastick). The mystoriographical component of the chora method is now intimately partnered to the chorographical, actively working together, sometimes even against each other, but inextricably linked to both the settings of where the chora-logician has been (one's own retinue of 'landscapes and memories'), and even to imaginary or fictional landscapes and memories. Certainly, alphabetic techniques are not immune to representing intuitive processes but with the advent of electratic techniques and practices 'there is a technology in which cross-modality may be simulated and manipulated for the writing of an insight, including the interaction of verbal and non-verbal materials and the guidance of analysis by intuition, which constitute creative or inventive thinking' (pp.140-141). Possibly, Ulmer's error might be to continue to *think* grammatologically, that is, electracy's potentiality is itself constituted as a multimodal technology

¹⁴¹ Miles Franklin, *All That Swagger* (Angus & Robertson: Sydney, 1936). See also W. K. Hancock's regional history of the area, *Discovering Monaro: A Study of Man's Impact on His Environment* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1972). *Discovering Monaro* is an early Australian example of a work that puts the human/environment nexus on the regional agenda.



and practice thus allowing us to *image* and *sound* out an intuitive insight as well as to *write* it (or some idiosyncratic combination of these three systems of meaning-making and their sub-categories). This is an error though that may only be discernible after a retrospective analysis of what might be too easily classified as a failed experiment. It is to Ulmer's credit that the central question of what constitutes the lineaments an electronic methodology are at least on the design table and that they are not cemented into place. Hence, grammatology, considered in a narrow sense as a history of writing theories and practices, can be only one conduit feeding into an electrated methodology.

The complexity of Ulmer's ongoing experiment has already been alluded to; and so it is with *Chora-Logic*, it is as heuristically defined "experimentation" rather than hermeneutics' that it is imbued with and committed to (*Teletheory*, p.140). As also suggested, this is a one-off, unrepeatable experiment and one whose guiding rationale is to explore the emerging lineaments of an electrated epistemology in relation to regional place and space in a global polis. The various sub-methods alluded to here: the cosmological, even theological question at the heart of all knowledge, the intrusions of necessity on reason and reason into necessity, the spatial axis of methodological concerns, the family romance, jokes, dreams, digressions, fantasies, aphorisms, the paradigmatic gestalt, memory, imagistic and oral/aural forms of logic, subjective/emotional reasoning, popular culture, as well as erotic methods, are many that are often shunned by narrowly conceived 'analytico-critically' defined literate epistemologies. Crucially though, according to Ulmer's chorographic method, disciplinary forms of knowledge (at least those disciplines located in the humanities, social sciences and the arts) are not subjugated in this methodology; rather, chora-logic allows for a possible productive cross-fertilisation between 'analytico-critical' methods and 'artistic/creative' methods. There are, equally, forces afoot working against the development of a more comprehensive understanding of electrated knowledge, its methods and practices. A continuing and ongoing nostalgia for the book, and for the traditional literate print domain more generally, still periodically erupts in both the public domain and the academy. It is nonetheless critical to press on with these experiments in electrated knowledge, in part because mystory and chorography (the "I"-making and place-making capacities considered as a complementary dyad in the production of electronic knowledge) help reorient both history and geography to the future: as an experiment it forces us to ask the question: how are we (collectively and individually) going to orient ourselves to this future, with its dystopian, heterotopian and utopian variables? An experimental, productivist orientation seeks out possible answers in the spirit of hopeful potentiality, while a deeply critical, even cynical frame of knowledge is orientated to a continuation of things as they are, thinking nothing is broken or using that criticality as a means of self-entrenchment. And it is this question of the future and its problems that Ulmer also happens to address (along many others not mentioned here) in this search for a method underpinning an electronic epistemology.



As a boy hanging out at the family farm on the flat landscapes of the Weja Plains, a remnant of an old colonial squatting lease called Bygalorie Station in between the northern Riverina towns of Lake Cargellico and West Wyalong, I too came across the future. This is where my maternal grandfather Herbert Harry Berryman and his wife Kathleen Elizabeth Berryman (nee Bourke) took up a Soldier Settlement block in the early 1920s. Herb Berryman was a returned soldier from the Great War, serving on the Western Front, a manic landscape of blood and guts and mud and guns and shrapnel, and a catastrophic inferno that still resonates today. Here on the Weja Plains, in this uncanny simulation of Gerald Murnane's highly mythic *mise en abyme* synthesis of mindscapes and landscapes in his novel *The Plains*, I discovered dowsing, and in a peculiar way dowsing invented "me". According to the filmmaking narrator of *The Plains*, 'Anyone surrounded from childhood by an abundance of level land must dream alternately of exploring two landscapes – one continually visible but never accessible and the other always invisible even though one crossed and recrossed it daily.'¹⁴² Accompanying my uncle out on the plains we called paddocks he showed me by doing rather than telling the rudiments of dowsing for water, using the forked branch of a tree to establish a shimmering connection between the invisible water underneath the ground and his dowsing body above it. This 'ancient practice' of dowsing (known as 'Rhabdomancy, divination by means of little pieces of stick')¹⁴³ helped locate the precise point at which to sink a bore and erect a Southern Cross windmill and so extract the underground water for the sheep and cattle to drink.

That divining communiqué between this possible future potential of elemental matter and its interaction with nerve endings is one of those family scenes Ulmer utilises in the chorographical method, scenes that can also stack up as childhood, ideological, cultural and politicised scenes as well, and are what he calls (drawing on work by Howard E. Gruber) "an image of wide scope" (*Teletheory*, pp.38-39); ('the core image guiding [our] creativity') (*Internet Invention*, p.10). As a resource for thinking and for making, this scene (or another landscape and another scene for every different citizen-subject) is ontologically constitutive, eminently re-readable, translatable, and is now potentially globally active in a representational sense. Encompassed by the sheer monumentality and variety of electronically codified databases, divination (considered now from a computational point of view as the ability to process large amounts of parallel and digitally encoded data across a wide range of domains and methods, and subsequently, modelling and producing various future-envisioned scenarios based on these readings), is one of those discourses emerging into legitimacy in the framework of electrated epistemologies. Ulmer calls this electronic form of divination 'choramancy' (*Electronic Monuments*, pp.213-215); I like to call it

¹⁴² Gerald Murnane, *The Plains* (Penguin Books: Melbourne, 1984), p.38.

¹⁴³ Gregory L. Ulmer, *Electronic Monuments*, p.163.



electromancy. Divining an understanding for a possible future (for oneself, or for some problematic aspect of society, or culture, or politics, or knowledge) using electronically codified data, framed by a massively computerised cosmos-replicating, matrix-like, and parallel configured technical infrastructure, frees cognition for some meta-thinking and feeling about the particular problem at hand. A recent example of this phenomenon of electromancy at the highest politico-economic level is the Business Council of Australia's 2004 report, *Aspire Australia – 2025*.¹⁴⁴ Given this report's provenance, it is a fascinating account, backed up by extensive research, of three possible future scenarios for Australia. One of the report's future-scenarios posits the possibility that by 2017-20 Australians (fed up with economic, political, cultural, military and environmental upheavals at home and across the globe) recognise the now 'unworkable' constitutional arrangements of the three tier level of governance as it was constituted at Federation in 1900 and finally demand change, with one possible outcome a two tier, national and regional form of governance which might then constitute the basic structure of an Australian regional republic. This kind of future-thought – futurology – is now rarely possible without the mnemotechnical assistance of electronic technologies and, it might be added, a cognitive/corporeal epistemology of the kind a more sophisticated understanding of electracy might help develop. Also, it should not escape our attention that in positing this notion of choramancy as a component of the chorographical method, Ulmer is possibly only reorientating history to its actual but mostly subterranean object of focus: the future.

'Rough Grid': The 'Real' Beginning

With chora's meta-physique approximately in place, it is now the timespace coordinate to introduce 'Rough Grid', the section where this one-off experiment in the relations between self and place/space, and between electronic forms of knowledge and regionality, are opened up, or alternatively, where the method so discussed herein is 'applied'. It would also be unwise to think at this pre-emptive stage that this application of a chora-logical method to the represented material has an unproblematic transfer. The first disruptive issue is in the mainly written form that 'Rough Grid' is presented in. As Ulmer's own mystory "Derrida at the Little Bighorn" (*Teletheory*, pp.212-243) foregrounds, writing for electrated conditions suggests *scriptwriting* rather than book, essay, or other differing print-based forms of writing. Jean-Claude Carrière – Luis Bunuel's sometime scriptwriter – makes the pertinent comment that, "The screenwriter must bear in mind at all times, and with almost obsessive insistence, that what he is writing is fated to disappear, that a necessary metamorphosis

¹⁴⁴ Business Council of Australia, *Aspire Australia – 2025*, available at <<http://www.bca.com.au/content.asp?newsid=94443>>. [Accessed 8/4/2004].



awaits it', and further that, 'A screenplay is always the dream of a film.'¹⁴⁵ *Script-writing* reacquaints inscriptive practices with the mobile, never-ending project of *showing* and *displaying* knowledge rather than the sacred act of truth-telling central to more traditional forms of literate meaning-making.¹⁴⁶ It is the very prototype of a verisimilar, set-like and affective rendering. The script is a deferral of that epistemological stasis constituted by writing proper (of which Carrière says, 'The very act of writing is dangerous, for it carries with it a kind of time-honoured prestige which is very often its only justification. It is written, therefore it is true; therefore I will do nothing more to it', p.158), a deferral that takes meaning-making further along to the point of its actual production as an audio/visual/textual artefact which even then will remain more an act of positing an open structure rather than any act of closure, truth-telling, or argumentative finalisation.

It is also in this representational shift from the exclusively grammatological to the scriptural, from truth-telling to showing, that marks a modification in emphasis from that given to the causal, temporal, or sequential relationships among represented phenomena, to one of a display or a design of their spatial arrangements, or to the variety of represented forms as they are simultaneously presented in the frame or in some sonic or textual arrangement. Since at least the publication of Yvette Biró's *Profane Mythology* we've known of the audio/visual frame's potential for encouraging the development of spatial perception.¹⁴⁷ Drawing on a wide range of work from Piaget, Vygotsky and Eco (among others), Biro's insistence on the mythical depth of this *showing*, at least in 'film-thought' which includes 'primitive', 'mad', or 'childlike', 'imagistic' conceptions of knowledge, as well as abstract forms of reasoning, and of which she says, 'The foremost means of film-thought is physical action' (p.26). These framed and simultaneously represented gestures, movements, editing juxtapositions, lighting arrangements, acting protocols, and I would add colour arrangements, sound (both diegetic and non-diegetic) and even textual and graphic inclusions, help constitute the 'Means and Potential of Film-Thought' (pp.11-53), all of which make it possible for the subsequent evolution of 'film-thought' into 'electronic thought' – a categorisation that both *Chora-Logic* and Ulmer might plausibly term the basis of an electrated epistemology. The concomitant development of an interest in space as a geographic medium with the arrival of a critical mass in the use of electronically articulated information and communication technologies and practices can be no

¹⁴⁵ Jean-Claude Carrière, *The Secret Language of Film*, trans. Jeremy Leggatt (Faber & Faber: London & Boston, 1995), pp.151 & 154.

¹⁴⁶ The injunction to 'show' (or for 'action') rather than to 'tell' is an ongoing staple of nearly every scriptwriting handbook. See, for instance, Linda Aronson, *Scriptwriting Updated* (Australian Film, Television and Radio School/Allen & Unwin: Sydney, 2000). Also, on the question of displaying knowledge see Edward R. Tufte, *Visual Explanations: Images and Quantities, Evidence and Narrative* (Graphics Press: Cheshire, Connecticut, 1997), especially 'Visual and Statistical Thinking: Displays of Evidence for Making Decisions', pp.27-53, a chapter micro-analysing the 1854 cholera epidemic in London and the Space Shuttle Challenger disaster in 1986 from a visual display of evidence perspective.

¹⁴⁷ Yvette Biró, *Profane Mythology: The Savage Mind of the Cinema*, trans. Imre Goldstein (Indiana University Press: Bloomington, 1982), see especially 'Development of Space Perception', pp.47-53. *Profane Mythology* is also an influence on Ulmer's thinking (see *Teletheory*, p.60).



mere historical coincidence. Electronically articulated and spatialised forms of knowledge encourage us to think more profoundly about the distance and multiple connections in between represented objects and ideas as much as the causal, sequential character of their temporalised and/or sequentially coherent interactions. It is in this way that Einstein's discovery of the curved and relative quality of timespace (as opposed to a hierarchically inclined notion of time *and* space) has crept into psychological, cultural and socio-political zones of understanding. *Rough Grid*, the chora-centred, mystoriographical experiment to come is concerned with this question of how spatially contingent, or actually implaced knowledges, might correlate with the spatial character of electronic thought and practice, or equally, how each phenomenon might, or might not constitute the other. *Rough Grid*, then, while mostly a work of necessity, of opinion and irrational sensation, and less a work of reason or logical coherence, is always struggling with this idea that both reason and necessity (and necessity and reason) are ceaselessly intruding on each another, always beginning-again together, and as a layer finds itself utterly incapable of an autonomous and sovereign existence as a work of necessity, of wild opinion and irrational sensation.