

Introduction: Academic Discourse in the Age of Television

The Apparatus of Literacy

This may have been a book after all, although it is too soon to tell. There is a book I have been looking for whenever I go into a bookstore, that I have never found, and now I understand that I never will find it. I keep looking for it, finding many others that interest me almost as much, whose worth I measure against this prototype. These others will be the reserve upon which I draw to define the features of the text I want to make, whose title is "Derrida at the Little Bighorn." Nor is it this text, but its making, and the desire to make that concern me the most.

"Derrida at the Little Bighorn" is not in fact a book. It is a video. Its existence as a tape, however, is immaterial to the present project, the goal of which is to invent or discover a genre for academic discourse that could function across all our media—voice, print, and video. That is one reason why I came away dissatisfied from Goerings Bookstore. (It is owned by my friend, Tom Rider, but it still bears the name, and what a name, of his predecessors.)

I leave each time with a sack of books, but with the desire unsated. That is what makes it a desire. If I say that what I desire is a tape rather than a book, will that change my experience of making a text? No, because the desire, the love of knowledge that drives academic discourse, is not medium specific. The drives of intellectual curiosity do not depend on the object or text, and can function as well with electronics as with print. This desire to speak, write, and perform in the context of knowledge will be treated now as an explicit feature of academic discourse, expressed in teletheory as the work of mourning (achieving detachment from the lost object) that remains to be undertaken collectively.

Besides the regular visits to Goerings, I asked the students in my graduate seminar to write versions of this genre. I had intuited, and found in their experiments the outlines of the pedagogy I am calling "teletheory." The ques-

tion guiding those assignments for a time was the one posed by Jonathan Culler, having to do with the “force” of theory. Culler suggested that “theory” is or has become a new, hybrid genre, recognizable by its peculiar effect and function.

These works exceed the disciplinary framework within which they would normally be evaluated and which would help to identify their solid contributions to knowledge. To put it another way, what distinguishes the members of this genre is their ability to function not as demonstrations within the parameters of a discipline but as redescrptions that challenge disciplinary boundaries. The works we allude to as “theory” are those that have had the power to make strange the familiar and to make readers conceive of their own thinking, behavior, and institutions in new ways. Though they may rely on familiar techniques of demonstration and argument, their force comes—and this is what places them in the genre I am identifying—not from the accepted procedures of a particular discipline but from the persuasive novelty of their redescrptions. (Culler, 1982: 9)

In the seminar we asked ourselves: what is the “force” of theory? How might we construct a practice, a spoken and written performance, that could tap this force? We wanted to think about this practice theoretically, rather than to have information about theory only from the side of scholarship. Could theory be learned theoretically? We did identify some of the features of such an approach which seemed distinctive enough to deserve a different name: “teletheory.” This book is an account of this pedagogy, in at least one of its possible genres, identified provisionally by means of another neologism— “mystory.” “Derrida at the Little Bighorn” is a mystory. My belief is that in the age of television, academic discourse in the humanities will function mystorically.

The “tele” is there to indicate that my concern is with how our discourse might be affected by electronic technology, not only in the sense that it might be important to learn how to use video for educational purposes, but also to account for the possibility that cognition itself might be changing in a civilization switching to electronics. People will not stop using print any more than they stopped talking when they became literate. But they will use it differently—will speak and write differently within the frame of electronics. Teletheory attempts to describe the nature of that difference.

Jack Goody's *Domestication of the Savage Mind* is a useful point of departure for my project, since he argues for a direct correlation between the properties of alphabetic writing and critical, analytical thinking. At the begin-

ning of a chapter entitled "Literacy, Criticism, and the Growth of Knowledge," Goody states his point clearly. The growth of knowledge, he says, is not only a matter of content, but "presupposes certain processes which are related to the modes of communication by which man interacts with man and, more especially, transmits his culture, his learned behavior, from generation to generation" (Goody, 37). In short, pedagogy and the institutionalization of literacy in school are among the areas most sensitive to shifts in the technology of communication.

Alphabetic literacy, he suggests, "made it possible to scrutinize discourse in a different kind of way by giving oral communication a semi-permanent form: . . . It increased the potentialities of criticism because writing laid out discourse before one's eyes in a different kind of way; at the same time it increased the potentiality for cumulative knowledge." Goody's argument provides one of the claims that will inform our research: criticism, critical thinking as we know it, is a function of alphabetic literacy. People reasoned before the invention of the alphabet (whose very invention is proof enough of the fact), and they will reason in a post-alphabetic culture. But this reasoning will not be exclusively "critical." It is a mistake to hypostatize "critical thinking" as an absolute value, transcending specific historical and social conditions. Academic discourse will continue to be "critical" to the extent that it continues—as it will—to exercise the forms of literacy. But that is not all it will be. Against the "critics" of the new technology who charge it with being "uncritical" or incapable of representing critical cognition, teletheory offers this proposition: video can do the work of literacy, but no better than literacy can do the work of speech. It has its own features and capacities that are fully cognitive, whether or not they are "critical." The interest of teletheory is in defining these areas, and integrating them with the critical and rhetorical dimensions of academic discourse.

School is the institutionalization of literacy, writing as an "on-going activity," which does not mean that speech and video are to be excluded. Similarly television is the institutionalization of video in our civilization, which does not mean that the technology is limited to the purposes of entertainment or information. School has experienced previously some profound changes in adapting to changes in technology, as Goody notes. One of the most important such events had to do with the change of memory, with the storage and retrieval of information, in schooled thinking following the appropriation of print. The techniques of mnemonics or artificial memory, that is, were replaced gradually with new ones "based upon 'dialectical order,'" as worked

out by Peter Ramus. "This order was set out in schematic form in which the 'general' or inclusive aspects of the subject came first, descending thence through a series of dichotomised classifications to the 'specials' or individual aspects. Once a subject was set out in its dialectical order it was memorized in this order from the schematic presentation" (Goody, 71). Instead of the association of information with vivid images, the technique of the classic rhetoricians, the students in the age of print organized and memorized information with the aid of tree diagrams, which is to say they brought the particular and the general together in an entirely different way.

Walter Ong noted in his book on Ramus that the shift to print included a new attitude to logic that may well have been suggested by the primers of young students preparing to enter the advanced and prestigious courses in scholastic logic. In the humanistic paradigm the simplified logic of the primers proved to be more powerful than the elaborations of scholasticism. Goody makes a similar observation about the contribution of pedagogical practices to the episteme of a period, this time having to do with grammar. The listing of basic phrases in grammars lent to speech a high degree of formalization. "The decontextualized form of the question ["what are we? what are you? what are they?"] appears to raise issues of greater generality than would occur in most oral contexts where the phrase "what are we?" has a more concrete significance" (127). Goody puts the point cautiously, suggesting the possibility negatively that school practices inform epistemological principles, "that statements of the order, I am what I am, *Cogito ergo sum*, and similar phrases that have resounded down the centuries of written culture were generated as responses to the existential questions posed in a formal manner by academic grammarians instructing their pupils." Extravagant or not, such questions have to be taken seriously in teletheory, working without the advantages of hindsight, without knowing in advance exactly the phrase or its source that will express our *cogito*.

Goody's account, as sensitive as it is to the institutional practices that accompany literacy, needs to be supplemented with fuller attention to the concept of the "apparatus" (Rosen, 1986). Avoiding the technological determination of an earlier generation of grammatologists, such as Marshall McLuhan, theorists of the apparatus approach our question in terms of the relationship among technology, ideology, and institutional practices. In terms of the academic apparatus, we would relate the technology of print and alphabetic literacy with the ideology of the individual, autonomous subject of knowledge, self-conscious, capable of rational decisions free from the influ-

ences of prejudice and emotion; and to the practice of criticism, manifested in the treatise, and even the essay, assuming the articulation of subject/object, objective distance, seriousness and rigor, and a clear and simple style. The “originality” that we require from the students engaged in making such works as well as the copyright with which we protect intellectual property are features of this apparatus.

Part of the project of teletheory is to imagine a different apparatus, beginning with a different technology. My assumption is that to inquire into the future of academic discourse in the age of a new technology we must include the possibility of a change not only in technology, but also in the ideology of the subject and the forms of institutional practice. Psychoanalysis provides us with a useful version of the change in the subject, and the experimental arts (literature as well as film and video) provide an extensive reserve of models for new practices. Poststructuralist theory, especially the texts of Roland Barthes and Jacques Derrida, among others, provide the insights into the paradigm shift that motivated my concern for the academic apparatus in the first place.

The analogy between the shift from an oral to an alphabetic culture and the shift from the present book culture to an electronic one is part of this motivation as well—alphabetic literacy : criticism :: videocy : ? The modification of Goody’s direct correlation between the features of writing and of critical analysis in the context of “apparatus,” however, helps clarify the interdependence of oral, literate, and now electronic forms. As Derrida has pointed out, schools will accept almost any topic or material as objects of study, but they tend to represent this study only in the form of conventional academic writing, a situation that teletheory hopes to alter. My project is assisted by research in discourse analysis, which now assumes not only the commonality of orality and literacy, but that the privileging of the essay/treatise in school is ideological.

Brian Street’s critique of Jack Goody, for example, places Goody’s “formalist” association of critical thinking with alphabetic writing in the context of a “contingent” register of social convention. He rejects the view of technology as neutral and autonomous, productive in its use of predictable effects. Rather, claims made on behalf of literacy “derive from the writers’ own work practice and belief system and serve to reinforce it in relation to other groups and cultures” (Street, 39), which is to say that such arguments have “the qualities of myth in validating shared benefits and providing a charter for social action”; “the particular forms adopted by Greenfield, Hildyard, and

Olson can be related to the social formations and institutions that generated them, in this case specific academic institutions, just as in oral societies statements about truth are expressed and validated in terms of such complex forms and institutions as witchcraft, religion, cosmology and ritual."

Enforcement of the standards of the treatise and even of the essay in academic discourse as the best and highest expression of reason may no longer be taken seriously as "objective" fact, according to the argument of the apparatus, but as the projection of these forms onto writing itself, extending the conventions developed for the specialized needs of schooling to function as the norms of thought itself (76). Street contrasts the peculiarity of the standards of the essay tradition with the multitude of alternative reading practices cultivated in everyday life and popular culture. "Academic tutors not surprisingly experience considerable difficulty in attempting to teach their particular forms of reading and writing to students acculturated in the conventions of these popular uses of literacy. The use of tape recordings and videos adds further elaborations of form and function which are just being recognized and incorporated into this traditional complex of language use."

Street's goal is not to undercut the value of reason, but to suggest that the aims of critical thinking may be achieved in a variety of media and styles. Teletheory is an investigation into this possibility, keeping in mind that the future of video is not determined in advance, is not identical with television (its most visible institutionalization to date). I like to think that there is more at stake than the survival of our own institution through the involvement of academics with electronic cognition. Nor should our interest in video constitute that "law of the suppression of radical results" noted in the history of invention (Winston). The point is not to harness video to writing, the way writing was harnessed to voice at the beginnings of the era of logocentrism, but to intervene in the apparatus of literacy on behalf of video.

The rational use of technology is contingent upon the context in which it is made available. Given my interest in video it is important to pursue the question of the relationship between graphic visualization and knowledge noted by Goody as instrumental to the power of writing. Heidegger's critique of science in "The Age of the World Picture" helps to identify the issue. The essence of science, Heidegger noted, is research, including: 1) a procedure projecting within the realm of nature or history "a fixed ground plan of events" (an object of study); 2) a methodology "through which a sphere of objects comes into representation," clarified by explanation. Explanation, bringing the known and the unknown into relation, takes place by means of

investigation and experiment, controlled in advance by a program of calculation which guides the researcher; 3) ongoing activity, which is the process by which the methodology adapts to its own results over time, which is to say that to be a science a procedure must be capable of being institutionalized (Heidegger, 1977: 118–124). The primary examples noted were physics and historiography, the latter's demand for rigor bringing it closer to physics than to the humanities, which were still clinging, Heidegger said, to mere erudition and the empty Romanticism of scholarship. To think about academic discourse, then, requires a consideration of its institutionalization.

One of the interesting implications of "ongoing activity" is that the scientific way of knowing and the institution of the university are interdependent, if not synonymous, in Heidegger's account. The university as we know it is the institutionalized manifestation of science as ongoing activity, passed from one generation to the next by means of curriculum, pedagogy, and evaluation. A review of what the scientific way of knowing entails helps explain why there is so much controversy about whether or not poststructuralist or postmodernist procedures should or even can be institutionalized.

Knowing, as research, calls whatever is to account with regard to the way in which and the extent to which it lets itself be put at the disposal of representation. Research has disposal over anything that is when it can either calculate it in its future course in advance or verify a calculation about it as past. Nature, in being calculated in advance, and history, in being historiographically verified as past, become, as it were, "set in place" [*gestellt*] . . . Only that which becomes object in this way *is*—is considered to be in being. (126–127)

The object of knowledge implies a subject, Heidegger's point being that in the modern age the essence of man changed, becoming *subjectum*: "Man becomes that being upon which all that is, is grounded as regards the manner of its Being and its Truth. Man becomes the relational center of that which is as such" (128)—an event made possible by the reframing of what is in terms of a "picture." In the age of the world picture (so named because only the modern age grasps the real as picture) thought is organized by the subject/object relation, a relation known as Cartesian dualism, a characterization first formulated in Plato's *eidos* ("idea" as the aspect or view of a form, shape). Modern representing, Heidegger says, "means to bring what is present at hand before oneself as something standing over against, to relate it to oneself, to the one representing it, and to force it back into this relationship to oneself

as the normative realm. Wherever this happens, man 'gets into the picture' in precedence over whatever is" (131).

The relation of subject/object to picturing is a crucial issue for academic discourse in the age of a technology capable of literally picturing the whole world. "Now for the first time is there any such thing as a 'position' of man," Heidegger noted. "There begins that way of being human which mans the realm of human capability as a domain given over to measuring and executing, for the purpose of gaining mastery over that which is as a whole" (132).

Heidegger's discussion of science as the essence of the modern age places in a useful perspective all the critiques of modern culture from the situationist complaint about "spectacle" to the feminist analysis of narrative as structured for the masculine voyeur. In short, knowing in the modern paradigm is scopophilic. Regardless of the gender, sex, class, race, or nationality of the knower, the one who knows, the subject of knowledge in the mode of science, is in the position of voyeur. Such is the impasse of film theory with respect to the apparatus, due to the increasing difficulty in distinguishing the knowledge effect of a text (due to the display of its own production), and the ideological effect (the pleasure of recognition, by which a text reproduces in the spectator the dominant ideology of the society).

The ideology of the visible, related to the problematic of presence, is a major issue in the discussion of cinema as apparatus (a discussion whose very terms are being subverted by television). In teletheory the problematic of the apparatus is applied to academic discourse, to suggest that leverage for change may be found not only in the order of technology, but also in the order of institutional practices (such as the genres of student writing) as well as in the concept of the subject. This context makes it clear that electronic cognition will not come about automatically through a simple change in the technology of inscription.

The cinema machine, which is not essentially the camera, the film projector, which is not merely a combination of instruments, apparatuses, techniques. Which is a machine: a *dispositif* articulating between one another different sets—technology certainly, but also economic and ideological. A *dispositif* was required which implicates in its motivations the arrangements of demands, desires, fantasies, speculations (in the two senses of commerce and the imaginary): an arrangement which gives apparatus and techniques a social status and function. (Comolli, 1985: 122)

The ideology of the visible, the same desire that produced the telescope—the constituting metaphor of analytico-referential discourse—deriving theoretically from the privileging of sight in Plato's forms as idea, is the drive that produced the camera. To the extent that the camera becomes the image for cinema as a whole, as the means to think about filmic or video writing, it is serving this ideology, obscuring the invisible, the unconscious dimension of cinema as institution, which includes the whole technology of production, everything from photochemistry to box office receipts. "Thus is constituted this situation of theoretical paradox: that it is by identifying the domination of the camera (of the visible) over the whole of the technology of cinema which it is supposed to represent, inform and program (its function as model) that the attempt is made to denounce the submission of that camera, in its conception and its construction, to the dominant ideology of the visible" (125).

The result of this role of ideology within the apparatus is that the bias of analytico-referential cognition is imposed on the invention of cinema in the form of machines and genres favoring the codes of realism. A similar process takes place in the academic apparatus. Jean-Louis Comolli's key point is that the camera is an effect, not the cause, of the "depth of field" point of view that dominates Western thought from the Greeks through Freud. In short, all the developments of style and technology in the evolution of cinema up to now have been motivated by what Comolli calls the "ideology of resemblance."

It is possible to counter this ideological presupposition, however, although only a few filmmakers have managed to do so, according to Comolli. The camera may seem to be condemned to repeating the deceptions of the ideology that created it, but it may also do the work of disillusionment, Comolli argues, "to produce in our sight the very blindness which is at the heart of this visible" (141). Sight and the visible, in other words, may be used to think beyond the ideology that controlled thought in the age of the world picture. The use of pictures, images, indeed the entire figurative program, in teletheory is devoted to this project in the academic apparatus, to use the machine of realism operating in our discourse to say something else, something more and other.

Sampling

The problematic of the apparatus makes explicit the contaminated quality of the very terms of my project. As Eric Leed demonstrated, the distinction between “voice” and “print,” between orality and literacy in general, is an explanatory myth (a “theory”). This myth was devised by bourgeois intellectuals, themselves products of literate culture, to define everything they were not—their other. Another case of the analytico-referential discourse constructing a primal order. Oral culture and its opposition to literate culture, then, is a “concept.” The concept originated, Leed says, at the time of the French Revolution, generated by temporalizing the logic of a contemporary situation, “articulating modern divisions of communicative labor as periods in time. Just as Freud analyzed the conflicts and identifications inherent in the bourgeois family, defining the logic of that situation and deploying it in time as the history of civilization, we deploy those alternative forms of communication available to us—whether oral, literate, or electronic—as periods in history and a sequence of cultural norms” (44).

Leed is not contesting the obvious sequence of events in the evolution of technology. Rather, using the logic of the apparatus, he suggests that the qualities associated with orality and literacy are not so much effects as causes—capabilities turned into values. In the myth, then, orality represents the values of social integration into the folk community, while print represents the values of individualism and critical autonomy. The effects of mass media, in a postindustrial culture, are associated with oral culture—as secondary orality—and one’s attitude to the electronic paradigm will tend to be determined by the attitude to these values. One’s assumptions about the human subject direct this evaluation. Humanists such as Jerry Mander or Neil Postman condemn electronic orality because they assume that a free society depends on the subject of individualism as it is defined in the Enlightenment tradition. In this model, the subject produces identity out of the self, and does not derive it through formal relations to an external order. “The emergence of a self-defining subject was early associated with literacy,” not only because it was through books on manners and the like that this model was disseminated, but by setting the situation of learning from books as the model of critical reason. Print is experienced as being neutral, impersonal, which meant that “the press, speech, and academic discourse should be free from domination by any specific cluster of social interests. Only then could these institutions function as a true ‘marker’ of opinion, becoming the structure through which

individuals weave their private attitudes into a public opinion, a democratic version of the truth" (50). The symbiosis between individualism and literacy culminates, Leed says, in the "transmission view of communication: the belief that communication consists of channels for the transmission of information across space" (55). The "distance" afforded by alphabetic script suggests the model of the autonomous individuals "able to hold at a distance their community, tradition, and personalized forms of authority" (49).

In this context the name "teletheory" may seem ironic, since it refers to an academic discourse in which "criticism" must work without this distance, fully immersed in and integrated with community, tradition, and personalized forms of authority. Leed argues that the development of an electronic technology must be conceived in terms of the apparatus—it does not leave everything else in place, but produces what philosophers of science might describe as an incommensurate paradigm in which the issues of identity, freedom, and the like must be completely recast. Leed asks us to think about this situation in a way that draws not only upon criticism but upon invention. "Almost no one whom I know claims that the 'mass media' will create forms of autonomy, individuals who are adept at crafting the materials of popular culture, turning them into 'art.' But this possibility must be taken seriously, if only because of what we know about communications revolutions in the past . . . With writing, the Greeks, and with print, the Humanists were able to become conscious of the logic and the illogicalities of the inherited culture and to draw up the rules for thinking, speaking, sculpting, building, and healing" (60). Leed goes further in stating his hopes for the future based on the historical analogy with previous communications revolutions—the analogy guiding teletheory. "Past communications revolutions have often presaged 'classical' periods of cultural development, periods of intense creativity. These periods were predicated upon the existence of new means for the consolidation and organization of the 'old.' New media always created conditions in which men could address their culture as conscious, rational individuals engaged in the recombination, the reintegration of its elements" (61). In the apparatus of print the Greco-Roman and Judeo-Christian traditions were integrated, an achievement maintained and defended by the contemporary heirs of Humanism. Their heirs do not recognize the opportunity afforded by electronics to include now in this synthesis what might be called the mythico-primitive tradition of oral civilization.

I want to linger over the attitude toward technological change suggested by Leed, since it is the one upon which everything that follows is based.

In teletheory, postprint academic discourse is seen as a primary vehicle for still another renaissance. It is this attitude that informs postmodernism as a remotivating of all the styles of the past, as well as the transgression of the classification system of the modern order. The postmodernist style in architecture is perhaps the most discussed example of this tendency which Fredric Jameson, also viewing it through an Enlightenment defense, describes pejoratively as “the random cannibalization of all the styles of the past, the play of random stylistic allusion, and in general what Henri Lefebvre has called the increasing primacy of the ‘neo’” (Jameson, 1984: 66). In this new culture of the “simulacrum” the past is itself modified, Jameson argues, becoming “a vast collection of images, a multitudinous photographic simulacrum,” whose practice is informed by the emotion of nostalgia.

Jameson, with his typical astuteness, picks out two crucial points for bringing academic discourse into the age of television. First there is the phenomenon of intermedia influence, through which the fundamental and pervasive feature of the audio-visual media—mechanical reproduction of the sights and sounds of the life-world—begins to influence representation in print. Everything now, in its own way, wants to be television. Second there is the emotion experienced with this shift, with the turn away from one pattern of organization in which our cognition is invested to a different pattern. Is Jameson right? Is nostalgia the emotion that informs the representational practices to which he refers? One of my concerns will be to identify the predominant emotion associated with academic writing in this period of transition, while the liberal arts are still resisting the possibility of making films and tapes in addition to books and papers, even though all around us, in many of the other colleges of our universities, video production as well as consumption is a regular part of curriculum and research. Robert Burton, in *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, devotes a section to “Love of Learning, or overmuch Study, With a Digression of the Misery of Scholars, and why the Muses are Melancholy.” Melancholy is an emotion much associated with nostalgia (as in the film *Nostalghia* [1983], by Andrei Tarkovsky). One of the best examples of educational television yet produced, Godard’s *France/tour/detour/deux/enfants* (1978), ends with a sentimental song, stating in its lyrics, “People. It would be advisable to recognize them as available. At certain pale hours of the night. Near a slot machine. With men’s problems. Simply. Problems of melancholy.” Walter Benjamin, whose “Theses on the Philosophy of History” provides the theory of historical time for mystory (to be discussed later), is characterized by Susan Sontag as “born under the sign of Saturn,” possessing

himself the melancholic sensibility he describes in his study of the *Trauerspiel* (Sontag).

Teletheory relates to the nostalgia and melancholy informing contemporary culture in two ways: first, it uses this emotion as a guide to the location of the myths (ideologies) informing the cultural reserve of an individual (using the punctum of recognition outlined by Roland Barthes); second, with respect to the arrested mourning, whose symptom is pathological melancholy, if the academic institution, it counters sadness with humor, with the surprise of the joke, again mounted in terms of a methodology, as an emotional guide to the location of significance. The desire to know, the love of learning, in any case is experienced emotionally, carried not in arguments but in images and stories, at the level of memory. The blockage in the theorization of video is most likely to be found at this level. ??

In contrast to Jameson, John Berger takes a more positive attitude to the effacement of the referent in postmodern culture, in a way that supports the idea (implied by Brian Street) that the new circumstances call for a violation of the boundaries separating academic from popular relations with the arts.

What the modern means of reproduction have done is to destroy the authority of art and to remove it—or rather to remove its images which they reproduce—from any preserve. For the first time ever, images of art have become ephemeral, ubiquitous, insubstantial, available, valueless, free. They surround us in the same way as a language surrounds us. They have entered the mainstream of life over which they no longer, in themselves, have power. (1972)

Yet very few people are aware of what has happened because the means of reproduction are used nearly all the time to promote the illusion that nothing has changed except that the masses, thanks to reproductions, can now begin to appreciate art as the cultured minority once did.

If the new language of images were used differently, it would, through its use, confer a new kind of power. Within it we could begin to define our experience more precisely in areas where words are inadequate . . . Not only personal experience, but also the essential historical experience of our relation to the past. (Berger, 32–33)

Berger thus identifies the nostalgia from which Jameson believes we cannot free ourselves as the attitude to the arts as holy relics, even in their incarnation as simulacra. That nostalgia would be what informs the melancholy of the specialist against the popular use of the information in the arts as a language by means of which to comprehend and intervene in history. The melancholy of the specialist is understandable as a response to the loss of

scholarly "loss"
of privilege

property rights over the collection of representations supporting him. What has been lost in postmodernism, of which experimental video is one of the best example, is the very "object of study" defining the humanities as traditionally conceived:

It is no accident that today, in full postmodernism, the older language of the "work"—the work of art, the masterwork—has everywhere largely been displaced by the rather different language of the "text," of texts and textuality—a language from which the achievement of organic or monumental forms is strategically excluded. (Jameson, 1987: 208)

① The melancholy of mourning arises precisely in relation to this violation of the monumental, the monuments whose function it is to hold together the nation of scholars.

It may turn out, however, that academics are more open to the kind of discourse Berger suggests (he is extremely contemptuous of the academic art historian who treated Frans Hals's portraits of the Governors and Governesses of an Alms House for paupers in terms of their formal features) than either he or Jameson suppose. It may be that as researchers committed to realism of the book apparatus academics are unreceptive to the cognition of mechanical reproduction. As teachers, however, we are in a different relation to knowledge, and this is the relation that will come to predominate in a video age in which teaching as well as research is publishable. Hasn't pedagogy always positioned itself in this "postmodern" way in relation to the past information? Haven't teachers always ransacked the past in order to perform the simulacrum of history, in period courses for which there is no original whose authorship we deny? Haven't we always lived by the quotation in our scholarship and lectures? Postmodernism no longer produces monumental works, Jameson notes, "but ceaselessly reshuffles the fragments of preexistent texts, the building blocks of older cultural and social production, in some new and heightened bricolage: metabooks which cannibalise other books metatexts which collate bits of other texts" (223). The description could be applied equally well to academic discourse, such that this temporary overlapping of scholarly and artistic styles could serve as the means of transduction of academic discourse into the age of television.

Schooling then is a place not at all inimical institutionally to the reinvention of reason and the subject of knowledge, even if this invention does require a transformation of practices and a different technology. We can undertake this invention by dropping the pretense of reference (of realism) and ad

mitting that pedagogy is a discourse. The controversial Springhill (Minnesota) conference on graduate education in English (Spring, 1987) declared that "coverage" is no longer an appropriate goal for our curriculum. Released from coverage, a new curriculum, however, entails an opportunity to adopt alternative pedagogies not constrained exclusively by the poetics of realism. Teletheory, with its invention of mystory, is one response to this opportunity.

Leed provides a clue for how to think about the status of texts in teletheory when he notes that inevitably, within the problematic of the apparatus, not only is technology an effect of ideology, but vice-versa (dialectically). Once available, the technology becomes a metaphor used to think about the psyche (and all mechanisms of social control):

Once we recognize that traditionally the machine has been an objectification of the self-regulating psyche, we can also understand the ambivalence which industrialized man feels toward "technology." Through the metaphor of technology in general, we address questions about our inner state to the outer world. In our images of the machine, we project our attitudes toward those internalized structures of repression which both confine and focus our energies. (Leed, 42)

The machine that perhaps best emblemizes the operations of the academic apparatus in the age of television is the synthesizer, especially in its capacity for "sampling." In sampling a sound is digitally encoded in the memory of the instrument and this data is manipulated so as to provide the sound at different pitches across the span of the keyboard or controller (Crombie, 111). Once recorded in memory, any sound may be imitated and manipulated, leading not only to the possibility of a single player simulating the performance of a symphony orchestra, but to the invention of a new world of sounds and the musicalization of new areas of experience through abstract/imaginative synthesis. Sine waves are the fundamental sound element and the workhorse in many contemporary synthesizers and computer music facilities (15). In teletheory pedagogy is thought of as a sampling of cultural history, which may also suggest a difference between this approach to meaning and the approach formulated by semiotics: the Sine as an alternative to the sign.

Another way to characterize the status of texts in teletheory is to compare it to a photographic archive, as defined by Alan Sekula.

Archives constitute a territory of images; the unity of an archive is first and foremost that imposed by ownership. Whether or not the photographs in

a particular archive are offered for sale, the general condition of archives involves the subordination of use to the logic of exchange. Thus, not only are the pictures in archives often *literally* for sale, but their meanings are up for grabs. New owners are invited, new interpretations are promised. The purchase of reproduction rights under copyright law is also the purchase of a certain semantic license. (Sekula, in Wallis, 1987: 116)

The notion of the archive, then, clarifies the condition of representations as property, commensurate with the position of the university in a capitalist society. The ownership of representations and intellectual property rights is an invention associated with print technology, and is one of the arrangements threatened by and constraining the deployment of the new technology of communication. Teletheory carries into academic discourse the lessons not so much of the deconstructive critics as of the deconstructive artists, who appropriate the stereotypes and conventions of available genres as well as the materials of particular works as part of a didactic inventio. What remains to be developed—the project motivating teletheory—is a genre capable of sampling at once the archives of the family, the school, and popular culture. This genre, in other words, is designed to facilitate the postmodernist process of “crossover,” joining areas of culture that until now have been held apart as if autonomous (Wallis, 1984: xi–xviii).

What does it mean to compose out of an archive? It is not a question of medium, for this project is concerned with the writing of books and conducting of classes as much as it is with the making of tapes. Teletheory is only partially explicable, intelligible in the theories and examples described in the following sections. What remains must be shown, or practiced, with the explanatory exhibits being put to the extra work of allegory, saying something more and other than they mean literally. In teletheory academic discourse becomes figurative, allegorical. How to represent this new genre other than by practicing it? Thus this book could not have been a treatise. Perhaps the one rhetorical innovation in this choice is a greater emphasis on the poetic or associational mode of composition in relation to the narrative and expository modes more typically exercised in academic writing.

I should stress at the beginning, finally, the single most important distinction between teletheory and the current notion of critical thinking directing academic discourse. This distinction was clarified for me by one of William Safire’s columns (“On Language,” in the *Gainesville Sun* [September 20, 1987]) entitled “Herman Eutic’s Original Intent.”

Hermes, the Greek god of speech and travel, commerce and thievery, who also answers to the Roman name of Mercury, zipped into my office the other day, wings flapping on his feet, with a message: he's back in the news.

The chief of the manuscript division of the Library of Congress, James H. Hutson, helped resuscitate him, making headlines in July . . . He is the author of a Texas Law Review article that challenges what some scholars call "the jurisprudence of original intention" from an original angle. He informs me "that the documentation of the Constitution is so corrupt that we cannot certainly know what the framers said; and if we cannot know what they said, how can we know what they intended?"

The historian does not flinch from controversy. Attorney General Edwin L. Meese III, he told reporters peering at the Bill of Rights draft, "has expressed the notion that judges, in interpreting the Constitution, should be close to the original intent of those who wrote it." Then he called in Hermes: "But to try to recover original intent from records that are non-existent or not faithful to actual proceedings may be an impossible hermeneutic assignment."

Hermeneutic is a word that calls for interpretation as well as definition. The word came into English more than three centuries ago as a kind of antonym for *euretic*, which meant "inventive." (Eureka! I found it!) Wrote Richard Burthogge, a 17th-century theological author, "Ratiocination Speculative, is either Euretick or Hermeneutick, Inventive or Interpretive."

Safire goes on in the article to contrast the "neocons" (Meese and other neo-conservatives) with the "decons" (Jacques Derrida's crowd, for whom "this 'original intent' business is a lot of hooey"). It seemed fortuitous that this clarification should come in the popular press, since teletheory works to cross the division of knowledge into popular and specialized versions.

Is there something transgressive in teletheory, related to its shift from hermeneutics to heuristics? There is no need to be against hermeneutics in order to be for heuristics, only that heuristics provides an alternative to interpretation that has been lacking in most of the discussions of the problem. Hermeneutics, in any case, comes after heuristics, applied to the invention as if it came from another, as the discourse of the other, to see what has been made; to note its meaning, value, or beauty. There is as of yet no interpretation of "Derrida at the Little Bighorn."

As Karen LeFevre noted, the contemporary trend in the approach to "invention," supported by the 1971 Report of the Speech Communication Association's Committee on the Nature of Rhetorical Invention, has been to broaden "the territory to which the term 'rhetorical invention' might apply":

[The report] advocates research to develop “a theory of the structures of inquiry, deciding, and choosing” and research “to examine the relationship between rhetorical invention and creativity.” This expanded treatment of rhetorical invention moves it away from its traditionally close association with persuasive discourse dealing with probable matters in a given situation, guiding it toward a more general view. “It is important,” the report concludes, “in an age in which fixed forms—whether in metaphysics, art, poetics, cultural patterns, and so forth—are under attack, to look at the world from the perspective of invention, taken as the generation of something new . . . Invention (used now as the generic term) becomes in this context a productive human thrust into the unknown.” (LeFevre, 3)

Heuretics takes up this convergence of rhetorical *inventio* with innovation, of “rhetorical and aesthetic invention with modes of discovery in all areas,” in the specific domain of academic discourse. My assumption is that it is not at all obvious how to enact such a program; that the means for such a convergence may itself have to be “invented,” and invented more than once.

Why heuretics now? On the same page in the morning newspaper in which I read Safire’s column there was an article by Barbara Vobejda (*The Washington Post*), with the headline “College Presidents want to enhance status of teaching.” Thirty-seven college presidents, the article says, addressed an open letter to 3,300 other leaders in higher education asking them “to act together as persistent and passionate advocates for reform,” in response to a “national emergency” in education. The presidents suggest that what is needed is to enhance the status of teaching, increase the number of minority teachers, and work closely with elementary and secondary schools. “To maintain and enhance our quality of life, we must develop a leading-edge economy based on workers who can think for a living.”

Reading this article I was reminded again of the question of the apparatus. Academic discourse does not occur in isolation from the other discourses in which we conduct our lives. Perhaps it was necessary to keep specialized discourse separate and distinct when it was a matter of orality and literacy. But now that the situation has been complicated by the addition of videocy, this segregation of discourses has become counter-productive. I have my own view of the crisis in education, which is that the time has come to think in positive terms about how to bring academic discourse into the age of television. This may be one way to act upon the appeal from the presidents, even if we were not among those who received the letter.

Chapter 1

Experiment

1. Historiography

Heidegger's discussion of historiography points to a dissatisfaction with both the scientific and humanistic models for the representation of history. What is less clear is the specific practice that might be an alternative to these models. The clearest statement of how to find this alternative is in Hayden White's "The Burden of History." This chapter in *Tropics of Discourse* outlines the project assigned to the seminar in teletheory. Challenging the absolute distinction separating literally truthful (scientific) explanations from purely imaginary (artistic) ones, White proposes an experimental approach to the representation of history. Texts composed in this spirit would not be expected to correspond to some preexistent body of raw facts, "for we should recognize that *what constitutes the facts themselves* is the problem that the historian, like the artist, has tried to solve in the choice of metaphor by which he orders his world, past, present, future" (White, 1978: 47). What are the practical implications of such an attitude toward historical (or theoretical) inquiry?

It would permit the plunder of psychoanalysis, cybernetics, game theory, and the rest without forcing the historian to treat the metaphors thus confiscated from them as inherent in the data under analysis, as he is forced to do when he works under the demand for an impossibly comprehensive objectivity. And it would permit historians 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 have uncovered but which all too frequently they are prohibited from seriously contemplating as evidence. (47-48)

This prospect has held my interest for a decade. I cited it in "The Object of Post-Criticism" (Foster) as the context that best explained the innovations