8. Performance: Joseph Beuys

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Lacan provided an example of how to lecture in a way adaptable to applied grammatology. What we need now is an example of how to perform in a grammatological classroom in a way that fulfills the possibilities outlined in Derrida’s notion of the Mime, including the use of mnemonics and models. Examples of what an applied grammatology might be like—of a picto-ideo-phonographic Writing put to work in the service of pedagogy—are already available in the intermedia practices of certain avant-garde artists. Contemporary movements such as conceptual art, performance art, and video art may be considered from our perspective as laboratories for a new pedagogy, since in these and other movements research and experiment have replaced form as the guiding force. “Now, as art becomes less art,” Allan Kaprow maintains, “it takes on philosophy’s early role as critique of life.”¹ In short, there is a general shift under way, equally affecting the arts and the sciences, in which the old classifications organizing the intellectual map into disciplines, media, genres, and modes no longer correspond to the terrain. The organizing principle of the current situation is the collapse of the distinction (opposition or hierarchy) between critical-theoretical reflection and creative practice. Derrida’s promotion of a fusion between philosophy and literature is just one symptom of this hybridization. One lesson of these circumstances, which have increased the normal disparity in the schools between invention and pedagogy, is that models for reform are as likely (perhaps more likely) to be found outside as inside our own discipline.
It is not possible in the space of one book, of course, to survey all the pedagogical materials and procedures available in the intermedia arts. Rather, I shall focus on one example of an artist-pedagogue—Joseph Beuys—to examine in detail one version of Writing beyond the book. My point in discussing Beuys in the context of grammatology is not to suggest that he represents a norm for a new pedagogy but that, in his very extremity, he demonstrates more clearly than anyone else the full implications and possibilities of Writing. Working in the spirit of Foucault’s observation—that in our era the interrogation of limits has replaced the search for totality—I find in Beuys someone who is as extreme, as singular, as exemplary in the field of performance art as Derrida is in philosophy. Together they form a paradigm that may serve as a point of departure for a new pedagogy.

I should orient my approach to Beuys as explicitly as possible, given the potential unfamiliarity of his work (at least for students of literature and criticism). Beuys has been widely discussed in art journals as perhaps “the greatest living European artist of the post-war period.” Having received considerable attention from the popular media in Germany (including lengthy appearances on television and a cover story in Der Spiegel), he has become there the symbol of avant-garde art, the way Andy Warhol was for a time in the United States. An international art dealer who ranks the hundred leading contemporary artists according to market factors (sales, showings, etc.) rated Beuys number one in 1979, replacing Robert Rauschenberg. In other words, Beuys is anything but a marginal figure.

Outside of Germany, Beuys is perhaps best known in the United States. His one-man show at the Guggenheim Museum in New York, 1979, marked his third visit here. As Caroline Tisdall reports, Beuys’s first visit consisted of a lecture tour to New York, Chicago, and Minneapolis (winter 1973). He spoke of his Energy Plan for Western Man, which contained his ideal of “Social Sculpture”: “First of all the extension of the definition of art beyond the specialist activity carried out by artists to the active mobilisation of every individual’s latent creativity, and then, following on from that, the moulding of the society of the future based on the total energy of this individual creativity.” Reminding his audience that humanity is still evolving and that, as “spiritual” beings, our thought, will, and emotions take an active part in (and are themselves altered by) the dynamics of change, Beuys described how we must link our “organic instinctive feeling powers to our thinking powers,”—“our vision of the world must be extended to encompass all the invisible energies with which we have lost contact” (Tisdall, 37).

The second visit, a “one week performance on the occasion of the opening of the René Block Gallery, New York, May, 1974,” was designed to extend and present in a dramatic form this Energy Plan. Entitled “I
like America and America likes me," the Action consisted of Beuys sharing a caged room in the Gallery with a coyote for three days:

The action as such began when Beuys was packed into felt at Kennedy airport and driven by ambulance to the gallery. In the gallery in a room divided by a grating a coyote was waiting for him. The Texas wolfhound represents pre-Columbian America, which still knew the harmonic living together of man and nature, in which coyote and Indian could live with one another before they were both hunted down by the colonialists. During the action Beuys was at times entirely covered in felt. Out of the felt only a wooden cane stuck out. One is instinctively reminded of a guardian, a shepherd. Beuys talked with the coyote, attempted to find an approach to him, to establish a relationship. From time to time Beuys rang a triangle which he carried around his neck. Sounds of a turbine from a tape recorder disturbed the atmosphere, bringing a threatening nuance into the play. Fifty copies of the "Wall Street Journal," the leading economic newspaper, lying strewn about the floor, completed the environment. The coyote urinated on the newspapers. 7

As for the Guggenheim exhibition, Beuys himself took "creative responsibility" for the organization and display, making it not just a presentation (in fact, a retrospect of his career) but "an autonomous work of art that validates already existing objects," although many of the objects originated in performance pieces and hence were not intended to stand alone as "art objects." Beuys placed the following statement in the introduction to the catalogue:

My objects are to be seen as stimulants for the transformation of the idea of sculpture, or of art in general. They should provoke thoughts about what sculpture can be and how the concept of sculpting can be extended to the invisible materials used by everyone: Thinking Forms—how we mould our thoughts or / Spoken Forms—how we shape our thoughts into words or / SOCIAL SCULPTURE—how we mould and shape the world in which we live: Sculpture as an evolutionary process; everyone an artist. That is why the nature of my sculpture is not fixed and finished. Processes continue in most of them: chemical reactions, fermentations, colour changes, decay, drying up. Everything is in a state of change. 8

My interest in Beuys, similar to my interest in Lacan, concerns not his ideology or themes so much as his strategies of presentation, his Writing, his Style as itself an idea. There is no concern for "influence" in either direction in my discussion. Derrida did visit the Guggenheim exhibition, choosing to ascend the museum's famous spiraling ramps. After climbing from station to station (as the display sectors were called), Derrida remarked
to his son Jean that the exhibit experience replicated nicely the "Stations of the Cross." In any case, placing Beuys's work in the context of grammatology has the virtue of addressing at least one of the problems associated with the reception of his work, which is that commentators thus far have tended to confine themselves to descriptions of his work, venturing by way of explanation little more than paraphrases of Beuys's own statements. But, as Lothar Romain and Rolf Wedewer stress in calling for analyses that bring to bear other categories and contexts, Beuys's interviews and lectures do not constitute interpretations but exist at the same level as, even as part of (verbal extensions of), the art. Not that this chapter is an interpretation, either, since I am interested in borrowing some of Beuys's procedures exactly as he explains them (I want to learn from him, not account for him). The fact that Beuys's Actions lend themselves so readily to grammatological terms—indicating the convergence at a theoretical level of two radically different idioms—I take as evidence supporting the feasibility and fruitfulness of a "general writing."

My argument will be guided by the principle of the post card—I have found in Beuys's works more post cards (he does in fact use the post card as a medium) for Derrida's texts, providing the verso for the texts' recto, similar to Derrida's own discovery with respect to Adami's drawings or Titus-Carmel's Tlingit Coffin. My approach to Beuys, then, will be in terms of Derrida's principles, performing the transition from a theoretical to an applied grammatology. The following list, anticipating the more specific discussion in the rest of the chapter, indicates the areas of relationship between Derrida's theory and Beuys's performance:

1. **Teaching.** A shared point of departure is each man's status as a professor of a specific discipline within the traditional academy—Derrida as professor of the history of philosophy at the Ecole normale superieure in Paris, Beuys as professor of sculpture at the Academy of Art in Düsseldorf. Their educational projects, however, extend well beyond the boundaries of their respective disciplines and institutions, not only in the direction of interdisciplinary theory and intermedia practice (the Cerisy-la-Salle colloquium, for example, included workshops exploring the implications of Derrida's texts for philosophy, literature, education, politics, psychoanalysis, and the visual arts) but also to organizations designed to intervene deconstructively in the educational system as a whole—GREPH and the Estates General of Philosophy in Derrida's case, and the Free International University for Interdisciplinary Research in Beuys's case.

2. **Creativity.** Summarized in the term *apeiron*, Derrida's theory of Writing is an *inventio*, a new rhetoric of invention. Translated into
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a pedagogy, Writing becomes a research into creativity, into all processes of innovation and change. Beuys's sculptural practice similarly constitutes not only a self-reflexive theory of sculpture but also a theory of the very notion of creativity as such in all human productivity, as indicated in his slogan, "everyone an artist."

3. Models. Derrida's exploration of a new hieroglyphic writing, supplementing verbal discourse with ideographic and pictorial elements, is practiced by Beuys on a scale ranging from the abject to the colossal. The point is not simply that Beuys's works include objects and images, since the same could be said of any visual artist, but that his objects are specifically models, employed in a kind of allegorical writing.

4. Mime. Derrida's account of the "teaching body," in conjunction with his discussion of the Mime and the theater of cruelty, offers a theory of performance which corresponds to Beuys's performance art. Beuys's object-models are generated as elements of Actions, performance Events, or "rituals," in which Beuys mimes both science and mythology in a didactic exploration of the creative process. In both cases, theater and theory merge into one activity (which perhaps could be dubbed "theorter").

5. Autography. The question of the place of the subject of knowledge, which informs Derrida's work and poststructuralism in general, is especially complex because it includes a "deconstructed self," decentered, disseminated, a condition or status manifested in Derrida's notion of the signature. The place and function of the deconstructed self is especially important to the new pedagogy in which the teacher must sign for the lessons. Beuys's use of shamanism offers a way to demonstrate the autographical character of poststructuralist, postmodernist knowing—idiomatic and impersonal at once—since the shaman draws on the most subjective, private areas of experience for his handling and treatment of public affairs and objective problems. The shaman, to use Lacan's terminology, is an example of the embedding of the Imaginary (one's personal mythology) in the Symbolic (the system of language and culture).

Fortunately, two excellent, thorough surveys of Beuys's oeuvre are available in English (Tisdall's catalogue for the Guggenheim exhibition and the chronologically organized survey by Adriani, Konnertz, and Thomas), so there is no need for me to enter into a general description of his career. Nonetheless, before discussing specific examples, I would like to point out at least some of the features of Beuys's program which are relevant to grammatology.
SHAMANISM

The most salient feature of Beuys's work is his adoption of shamanism as his presentational mode and even as his lived attitude. Beuys is unusual in this respect only because of the extent to which he has integrated his art and his life into the shaman's role. The artist as shaman, however, turns out to be descriptive of a major trend in modern art, beginning with the "primitivism" of the early modernists (Gauguin, Picasso) and extending through to contemporary "abreaction" and "ritual" modes of performance and body art (Vito Acconci, Dennis Oppenheim). Whether or not there is any connection between this shamanistic tendency in the arts and the much-disputed "tribalizing" effect of the electronic media (as described by McLuhan) is a matter of conjecture. More immediately relevant is the proposition that "performance," if not shamanism itself, "the unifying mode of the postmodern, is now what matters." So says Michel Bennamou in his introduction to the volume collecting the proceedings of an international conference on performance. "One might ask," he states, posing the question that motivated the conference, "what causes this pervading need to act out art which used to suffice by itself on the page or the museum wall. What is this new presence, and how has it replaced the presence which poems and pictures silently proffered before? Has everything from politics to poetics become theatrical?"

The strategic paradox of the shamanistic performance most significant for the contemporary shift is its displacement of the subjective-objective, private-public opposition. Thus, what may seem to be the apotheosis of egotism and narcissism is in fact something quite different. As Jack Burnham notes, we are confronted with a situation in which, "as our mythic structure deteriorates, the archetypes vanish and it is the trials and psychodramas of the individual that provide us with our sense of direction... At this most crucial and sensitive point the artist focuses upon the primal aspects of his own creative motivation." But these psychodramas are not the romantic or expressionist glorifications of the self that they might appear to be. Rather, as Burnham explains in a comment that is relevant to the educational research implicit in the decompositional, oral writing of Glas,

Various forms of post-painting and post-sculpture now being practiced by artists relate to the earliest stages of infant development. Here, first attempt at interpersonal relationships, measuring of spaces, exploring the body, making discrete and random piles of objects, and other preverbal activities mirror the artist's striving to reach the seat of the unconscious itself. Just as alchemists understood the return of chaos (mental oblivion) as an essential part of the Great Work, the role of the shaman in ritual activity was to neutralize
and realign the individual ego, replacing it in part with a balanced and complete superego. In a parallel fashion, we are witnessing the destruction of signature art as artistic behavior becomes increasingly archetypal and ontological. (Burnham, 154)

The essence of the paradox has to do with a shift in the interaction between the particular and the general. As noted earlier in the case of mnemonic systems, in shamanism the personal self is used as a vehicle for a knowledge practice and is not explored for its own sake.

Roland Barthes provides an interesting perspective on the relevance of shamanism to the poststructuralist effort to displace the old categories of self in a way that is particularly relevant to grammatology. Questioning the historical passage of "to write" from a transitive to an intransitive verb, Barthes argues that the best definition of the modern "to write" can be found in *diathesis*, the linguistic notion of voice (active, passive, middle), "designating the way in which the subject of the verb is affected by the action."

According to the classic example, given by Meillet and Benveniste, the verb *to sacrifice* (ritually) is active if the priest sacrifices the victim in my place for me, and it is middle voice if, taking the knife from the priest's hands, I make the sacrifice for myself. In the case of the active, the action is accomplished outside the subject, because, although the priest makes the sacrifice, he is not affected by it. In the case of the middle voice, on the contrary, the subject affects himself in acting; he always remains inside the action, even if an object is involved. The middle voice does not, therefore, exclude transitivity. Thus defined, the middle voice corresponds exactly to the state of the verb *to write*: today to write is to make oneself the center of the action of speech [parole]; it is to effect writing in being affected oneself; it is to leave the writer [scribeur] inside the writing, not as a psychological subject (the Indo-European priest could very well overflow with subjectivity in actively sacrificing for his client), but as the agent of the action. 13

In contemporary experimental writing, "to write," Barthes argues, has become a middle verb, establishing a new status for the agent of writing: "The meaning or goal of this effort is to substitute the instance of discourse for the instance of reality (or of the referent), which has been, and still is, a mythical 'alibi' dominating the idea of literature. The field of the writer is nothing but writing itself, not as the pure 'form' conceived by an aesthetic of art for art's sake, but, much more radically, as the only area [espace] for the one who writes" (166). In the middle voice, then, nothing takes place but the place (space).

It is worth noting that Derrida explicitly relates the betweenness of differance with the middle voice:
And we shall see why what is designated by "differance" is neither simply active nor simply passive, that it announces or rather recalls something like the middle voice, that it speaks of an operation which is not an operation, which cannot be thought of either as a passion or as an action of a subject upon an object, as starting from an agent or from a patient, or on the basis of, or in view of, any of these terms. But philosophy has perhaps commenced by distributing the middle voice, expressing a certain intransitiveness, into the active and the passive voice, and has itself been constituted in this repression. (Speech, 137)

Beuys’s exercise of the shaman’s position, operating in the middle voice, provides a frame within which philosophy may be rethought.

The distinction between the active and the middle voice (illustrated in the classic example by a ritual situation) reflects the distinction between priestcraft and shamanism as rival modes of spiritual activity: the institutional representative versus the nomadic medicine man. Barthes himself makes explicit the connection of his theory of the subject in writing with shamanism in his essay “The Death of the Author,” in which the “shaman” is opposed to, or designated as the alternative to, the “author”: “In primitive societies, narrative is never undertaken by a person, but by a mediator, shaman or speaker, whose ‘performance’ may be admired (that is, his mastery of the narrative code) but not his ‘genius.’”

Certain modern writers, Barthes says, have attempted to recover something like the shaman’s position, against that of the “author,” who joins his person to his work: “For Mallarmé, as for us, it is language which speaks, not the author: to write is to reach, through a preexisting impersonality—never to be confused with the castrating objectivity of the realistic novelist—that point where language alone acts, ‘performs,’ and not ‘oneself’” (“Death,” 8). Derrida uses Mallarmé to make a similar point, of course, and now we can see that the shaman, working in the middle voice, is another example of what is involved in Writing.

Shamanism, to give a general definition, is the self-cure of a deep depression by the use of psychic techniques (trance states induced by monotonous rhythms, for example) that enable the individual to gain control over his unconscious imagery. This self-healing in turn gives the shaman the power to heal others, his principal function in a primitive community being that of doctor. Freud’s self-analysis, constituting the origin of psychoanalysis, resembles in certain respects the experience of the shaman’s calling. Derrida’s focus on the emergence of psychoanalysis as a domain of knowledge, the model problem for grammatology as a science of science (especially in La carte postale, for which Freud’s letters to Fliess, by means of which Freud enacted the therapeutic transference, provide the organizing reference), indicates the usefulness of shamanistic performances as a dramati-
zation of grammatology's concern. The question posed in "Spéculer—sur 'Freud'"—"how an autobiographical writing, in the abyss of an untermi­nated auto-analysis, could give its birth to a worldwide institution" (Carte, 325)—reflects the fundamental problem of poststructuralism: the status of the subject of knowledge, of the specific relation of idiom to system in the process of knowledge.

Claude Lévi-Strauss, comparing shamanism and psychoanalysis, identifies the aspect of his articulation which is most relevant to applied grammatology. Grammatology's interest in both psychoanalysis and shamanism as models for a new pedagogy (specifically, in the practices of Lacan and Beuys as exemplary figures) has to do with the peculiar mode of communication they developed in order to address a register of comprehension other than the rational intellect (without, at the same time, neglecting the latter). Both practices, that is, share a similar manner of manipulating symbols. The similarity becomes especially apparent, Lévi-Strauss notes, in the therapeutic techniques developed to treat schizophrenics who are not reachable with the talking cure originally advanced for the treatment of neurotics.

Actually the therapist holds a dialogue with the patient, not through the spoken word, but by concrete actions, that is, genuine rites which penetrate the screen of consciousness to carry their message directly to the unconscious ["carried out not by a literal reproduction of the appropriate behavior but by means of actions which are, as it were, discontinuous, each symbolizing a fundamental element of the situation"]. Here we again encounter the concept of manipulation, which appeared so essential to an understanding of the shamanistic cure but whose traditional definition we must broaden considerably. For it may at one time involve a manipulation of ideas and, at another time, a manipulation of organs. But the basic condition remains that the manipulation must be carried out through symbols, that is, through meaningful equivalents of things meant which belong to another order of reality.16

Lévi-Strauss is convinced that shamanism may be as useful for "eluci­dating obscure points of Freudian theory" as psychoanalysis is for helping to understand the shamanistic cure. In our present state of comprehension, one seems to be the inverse of the other—"'In the schizophrenic cure the healer performs the actions and the patient produces his myth; in the shamanistic cure the healer supplies the myth and the patient performs the actions.'" But if Freud's intuitions about the ultimate biochemical nature of psychopathology (supported by recent discoveries of chemical im­balances in the physiology of schizophrenics) are accurate, even these differences in practice will be insignificant, since both cures will function according to a set of homologous structures which "in aggregate form we
call the unconscious.” Lévi-Strauss’s description of this set corresponds to Lacan’s distinction between the Imaginary and the Symbolic:

For the preconscious, as a reservoir of recollections and images amassed in the course of a lifetime, is merely an aspect of memory. ... The unconscious, on the other hand, is always empty—or, more accurately, it is as alien to mental images as is the stomach to the foods which pass through it. As the organ of a specific function, the unconscious merely imposes structural laws upon inarticulated elements which originate elsewhere—impulses, emotions, representations, and memories. We might say, therefore, that the preconscious is the individual lexicon where each of us accumulates the vocabulary of his personal history, but that this vocabulary becomes significant, for us and for others, only to the extent that the unconscious structures it according to its laws and thus transforms it into language. (Lévi-Strauss, 198–99)

Grammatology, then, can learn from Lacan and Beuys about how to mount a practice that moves between preconscious (Imaginary) and unconscious (Symbolic) registers, keeping in mind that the conditions that shape psychoanalysis also shape contemporary adaptations of shamanism, such as that undertaken by Beuys, so that Beuys and Lacan are in roughly the same position relative to Lévi-Strauss’s advice: “The modern version of shamanistic technique called psychoanalysis, thus, derives its specific characteristics from the fact that in industrial civilization there is no longer any room for mythical time, except within man himself. From this observation, psychoanalysis can draw confirmation of its validity, as well as hope of strengthening its theoretical foundations and understanding better the reasons for its effectiveness, by comparing its methods and goals with those of its precursors, the shamans and sorcerers” (Lévi-Strauss, 200).

THE CALLING

As for Beuys himself, aside from his childhood fantasies about Genghis Khan (he carried a cane with him everywhere and imagined himself to be a nomad herdsman), his first encounter with shamanistic practice was as patient rather than as “doctor.” A pilot on the eastern front in the Second World War, Beuys’s dive bomber crashed in a wilderness area of the Crimea (one of the five times he was injured or wounded during the war). Tartar herdsmen discovered him in the wreckage, buried in the snow, and cared for him for over a week before he was transported to a German hospital. "I remember voices saying Voda (Water), then the felt of their tents, and the dense pungent smell of cheese, fat and milk. They covered my body in fat to help it regenerate warmth, and wrapped it in felt as an insulator to
keep the warmth in'" (Beuys, 16-17). Tisdall adds that "it is true that without this encounter with the Tartars, and with their ritualistic respect for the healing potential of materials, Beuys would never have turned to fat and felt as the material for sculpture," as he did in the 1950s and 1960s, although, as she stresses, by that time the materials are not merely autobiographical allusions but are "elements of a theory to do with the potential and meaning of sculpture" (to be discussed later).

The war years as a whole, and this incident in particular, resulted ultimately in a personal crisis, culminating in a nervous collapse (deep depression) lasting from 1955 through 1957. The illness in retrospect may be recognized as one of the elements traditionally associated with the shaman's calling. "This crisis was very important for me," Beuys later noted, "because everything, truly everything, was put in question. It was in the course of that crisis that I decided, with energy, to research all that in life, art, science was the most profound. I was already prepared for it by my earlier work but this was to be an entirely different theory of art, science, life, democracy, capital, economy, liberty, culture" (Vadel, 15). This global re-orientation, Beuys added, is "closely linked to what people call an individual mythology," involving not only the discovery of a new theory but also "what would be defined later as features of a shamanistic initiation" (15).

Up to and through the period of crisis, Beuys made many drawings related to his experience (including the extensive notes made during the war on the landscape, people, and customs of the region in which shamanism originated). These drawings are the equivalent in his self-healing process of Freud's letters to Fliess (and of Freud's "Egyptian dream-book," about which Freud said in one of his letters, "It was all written by the unconscious, on the well-known principle of Itzig, the Sunday horseman. 'Itzig, where are you going?' 'Don't ask me, ask the horse!' At the beginning of a paragraph I never knew where I should end up. It was not written to be read, of course—any attempt at style was abandoned after the first two pages"—Origins, 258). Beuys's drawings, too, are a mode of research in which, like Freud, Beuys laid the foundations for an institution while exploring his own psyche. Describing his impulse to draw, Beuys states:

With me, it's that certain questions—about life, about art, about science—interest me, and I feel I can go farthest toward answering them by trying to develop a language on paper, a language to stimulate more searching discussion—more than just what our present civilization represents in terms of scientific method, artistic method, or thought in general. I try to go beyond these things—I ask questions, I put forms of language on paper, I also put forms of sensibility, intention and idea on paper, all in order to stimulate thought. 17

It is worth noting in this context that Beuys, as a young man, wanted to
study the natural sciences, especially the life sciences, but that he was discouraged by the specialized, narrow manner in which these sciences were taught.

The drawings deserve attention because their themes and structures provided the resources for his later performances, many of which amount to an enactment of his drawings. They exemplify the purely graphic element of Writing (a drawn writing), the exercise of which brings into appearance a dimension of knowing that is the equivalent in the visual arts of lalangue. In the preface to the catalogue of an exhibition of Beuys's drawings, with a title that echoes Derrida's interest in the apotropaic—The Secret Block for a Secret Person in Ireland—the curator remarks that "for Beuys drawing has been a way of thinking, or a thinking form" (in an interview in the same catalogue Beuys states, "When I speak about thinking I mean it as form. People have to consider ideas as the artist considers sculpture: to seek for the forms created by thinking"). The curator's assessment of the forms developed in the collection indicates the extent to which Beuys's program parallels Derrida's hieroglyphic project to extend language into a general writing. "The widening of language is the key to the process of change in thinking, and for Beuys the widening of language came through drawing. Drawing becomes a way to reach areas unattainable through speech or abstract thinking alone: to suspend all notions of the limits or limitations of a field so that it encompasses everything. The germination point of all the later thinking appears in the drawings."18

Like Derrida's texts, Beuys's drawings break the "laws of genre" ("Beuys's contribution to the history of drawing is as individual as it is unique—he has gone beyond the bounds of drawing as we know it").19 Part of the powerful effect of the drawings is that they achieve a mixture of rigor and play like that which Derrida promotes in scholarship. He uses a great variety of techniques, but most of all it is the unusual nature of his materials that fascinates: "pencil and paint, rabbit's blood and pieces of fish, phosphorus and iron chloride, milk and furniture stain, gold enamel, silver leaf and fruit remains have been used in a seemingly infinite number of permutations. And the surfaces he draws on are just as diverse—envelopes, book covers, pages from newspapers or notebooks or ledgers, wallpaper, corrugated cardboard, silver foil, wax-paper, normal paper" (Simmen, 86)—lists that read almost like a combination of Derrida's categories of the abject and the vomi (all the glutinous liquids associated in Glas with the "+ L" effect). Collage and the exploitation of chance effects, needless to say, are part of the strategy: "His procedure is a delicate probing of these materials, and they respond by revealing their poetic possibilities. This is particularly true of the used and worn things he chooses." Beuys's technique, then, can be thought of as an analogue of the metamorphosis of terms in Derrida's "decomposition"—"Pencil and paint for Beuys are
aids to meditation about destruction and things destroyed. . . . Things often seen, often overlooked undergo a metamorphosis" (Simmen, 87).

In 1961 Beuys was appointed Professor of Sculpture at the Düsseldorf Academy of Art, beginning the phase leading to the full realization of his calling, for at this time his personal trajectory intersected with certain international tendencies in the arts. Düsseldorf, in any case, was becoming a major center of avant-garde activity, being the home of Group Zero (led by Otto Piene and Heinz Mack), the German rival of the French *Groupe de Recherche d’art Visuel* (GRAV). Beuys met and began to work with members of an international group active in Düsseldorf—Fluxus—which counted among its most active participants George Maciunas, Nam June Paik, Charlotte Moorman, Wolf Vostell, George Brecht, Dick Higgins, Emmet Williams, Daniel Spoerri, and John Cage (Beuys, 84). Fluxus sponsored "events" in a number of European cities, events that took the form of "Happenings," or experimental, Neo-Dada concerts.

As Tisdall notes, this concert element—the unconventional musicianship involved—is what most interested Beuys in Fluxus, sound being for him an essential sculptural material (noise, music, language). Beuys’s very first Action (the term he prefers to "performance"), performed 3 February 1963, lasted only twenty seconds: "I dashed forward in the gap between two performances, wound up a clockwork toy, two drummers, on the piano, and let them play until the clockwork ran down" (Tisdall, 87), although it should be added that the next night he performed the much more complex "Siberian Symphony, section 1."

In this avant-garde company Beuys developed his ritual format, which has made him famous, tending first to favor provocation, and later meditation, as his dominant mood. He had by this time adopted a permanent costume, marking his denial of the distinction between art and life, including his felt hat (the magic hat, which is part of the traditional shamanistic garb) and a flight vest (alluding both to his biography—his service as a pilot in the war—and the shaman’s power of flight, the "technique of ecstasy" in Eliade’s definition).20 The flight vest itself indicates the special point of interest for grammatology in this aspect of Beuys’s work—the convergence in his objects of autobiographical and mythical dimensions. Reserving for later a detailed discussion of his actions and theories, I would like for now to take note of Beuys’s own statements of intention regarding these two components of his work—the autobiographical, related to psychoanalysis; the mythological, related to shamanism. Their conjunction in Beuys’s Actions provides one version of the position of the subject in knowledge.

The point I wish to stress is the similarity of Beuys’s intention, with respect to shamanism, to the program of grammatology, designed to exceed science (not to oppose it as such). "So when I appear as a kind of shamanistic figure, or allude to it, I do it to stress my belief in other priorities and
the need to come up with a completely different plan for working with substances. For instance, in places like universities, where everyone speaks so rationally, it is necessary for a kind of enchanter to appear” (Beuys, 23).

In his interviews Beuys often mentions shamanism and psychoanalysis together as strategies for addressing the general public in a way that is at once educative and therapeutic—his intention is to use these two forms of discourse and styles of knowledge as pedagogies. “It was thus a strategic stage to use the shaman’s character but, subsequently, I gave scientific lectures. Also, at times, on one hand, I was a kind of modern scientific analyst, on the other hand, in the actions, I had a synthetic existence as shaman. This strategy aimed at creating in people an agitation for instigating questions rather than for conveying a complete and perfect structure. It was a kind of psychoanalysis with all the problems of energy and culture” (Vadel, 18). Beuys stresses that he is interested not in providing solutions in the form of scientific or pseudo-scientific theories, nor in transmitting information, but in stimulating thought—“I am much more interested in a type of theory which provokes energy among people and leads them to a general discussion of their present problems. It is thus more a therapeutic methodology” (17). This intention parallels the pedagogical aim of grammatology to stimulate creativity.

Psychoanalysis and shamanism, each in its own way, is a knowledge of death. Beyond the Pleasure Principle, for example, in which Freud speculates on the life and death drives, is the tutor text of “Spéculer—sur ‘Freud,’” for some of Lacan’s most important theories (he devotes his second seminar to it), and for poststructuralist psy-phi (psychoanalytic-philosophical) writing, indicating the general concern with the problematic of the death drive in culture. And, as Eliade explains, shamanism is precisely a knowledge of death:

It is as a further result of his ability to travel in the supernatural worlds and to see superhuman beings (gods, demons, spirits of the dead, etc.) that the shaman has been able to contribute decisively to the knowledge of death. . . . The lands that the shaman sees and the personages that he meets during his ecstatic journeys in the beyond are minutely described by the shaman himself, during or after his trance. The unknown and terrifying world of death assumes form, is organized in accordance with particular patterns; finally it displays a structure and, in course of time, becomes familiar and acceptable. In turn, the supernatural inhabitants of the world of death become visible. (Shamanism, 509–10)

Beuys draws on both theories of death to call attention to what he feels is the “fatal character” of our era (“The process of death, in methodical terms, involves all the elements of death in our environment. . . . Yes, we are living in a death zone”), which he challenges by a special use of shaman-
ism: “I don’t use shamanism to refer to death, but vice versa—through shamanism I refer to the fatal character of the times we live in. But at the same time I also point out that the fatal character of the present can be overcome in the future” (Drawings, 94). Grammatology, too, is a way of bringing the subject into relation with death. “Spacing as writing is the becoming-absent and the becoming-unconscious of the subject. By the movement of its drift/derivation the emancipation of the sign constitutes in return the desire of presence.... As the subject’s relationship with its own death, this becoming is the constitution of subjectivity. On all levels of life’s organization, that is to say, of the economy of death. All graphemes are of a testamentary essence” (Grammatology, 69).

Beuys, then, uses shamanistic and psychoanalytic techniques to “manipulate symbols,” as Lévi-Strauss described it, in order to affect others. But we should not forget, following Barthes, that the shaman and the analyst (countertransference) work in the middle voice. Beuys’s use of the double inscription is as motivated by his private and unconscious interests as by this intention to address the primal levels of the public’s awareness. Just as in the shaman’s seance, in which healing another takes place by means of dramatizing the shaman’s own illness and cure, so too in Beuys’s Actions is the exploration of his own signature the means for addressing the concerns of the group. “My personal history is of interest only in so far as I have attempted to use my life and person as a tool, and I think this was so from a very early age” (Beuys, 10). “The life course and the work course run together, but not as autobiography. The prolonged experience of the proximity of death—initiation through resurrection” (Secret, 6). The “contamination” that interests Derrida in the problematic of the signature is systematically exploited by Beuys (“Fluxus, ‘the flowing,’ combats traditional art images and their material expectations, recalling the words of Heraclitus: ‘All existence flows in the stream of creation and passing away’ [the apeiron]. Existence in a total logical consistency is contrasted to a barely realized demand for totality, making penetrable the borders between art and life, as well as between the separate arts”—Adriani, Konnertz, and Thomas, 78).

Thus, Beuys includes in his vita his own birth date and place, as if listing an exhibition. The bathtub in which he was bathed as an infant is offered as a sculpture, but in a spirit quite different from that of the ready-made, since, as Beuys explains, his stress is on the meaning of the object—not in the sense of self-reflection, but, by certain additions or modifications (adding pieces of gauze soaked in plaster and fat), in a more general sense: “the wound or trauma experienced by every person as they come into contact with the hard material conditions of the world through birth” (Beuys, 10). Not that the spirit of parody which informed Duchamp’s mode (as well as that of Fluxus) is absent, for the tub is also meant to call
to mind an old adage: "Some people say 'Beuys is crazy, his bath water must have been too hot.' Such old sayings have deep roots and some unconscious truth" (10).

Like Derrida, Beuys mixes collage principles with fetishism, integrating the anthropological and the psychoanalytic applications of the term ("decisive is an assumed content of meaning which is based in part on the fetishes of certain primitive races, which would impose its own individuality on the psychic area of the transmitted material"—Adriani, Konnertz, and Thomas, 98). Like the collageists, he uses in his works whatever he finds around him in his environment, the difference being that even the detritus, items accumulated on his studio shelves over the course of years, then introduced into works like Stag Hunt, not to mention more substantial items (the VW bus—the family car—which ended up as the rescue vehicle in "The pack," loaded with children's sleds each carrying a roll of felt, a flashlight, and a glob of fat), becomes charged or invested with the status of relics. The inside-outside opposition is meaningless for an organization of the human life-world, in Beuys's view, in which "the outward appearance of every object I make is the equivalent of some aspect of inner human life" (Beuys, 70). An important feature of these "representations" is the simplicity of the items involved: "Another decisive Fluxus element was 'the lightness and mobility of the material.' The Fluxus artists were fascinated by the opening up of the simplest materials to the total contents of the world. Beuys: 'Everything from the simplest tearing of a piece of paper to the total changeover of human society could be illustrated'" (Adriani, Konnertz, and Thomas, 79).

There is a continual interaction and overlapping in his works between the two domains of images (biographical and archetypal), each one used in turn to guide the research of the other. Beuys has remarked how vividly he remembers certain parts of his childhood. But he explores these memories not to recover the past but (as in the case of shamanism) in order to think with them into the future. Tram Stop, for example, a work reconstructing parts of the place at which the five-year-old Beuys would get on and off the tram, is described as "not so much a recollection of childhood as the carrying out of a childhood intuition" (Beuys, 242). Here is a description of the work (originally installed at the Venice Biennale, 1976—hence the references to the lagoon):

The monument itself rises vertically from the ground. Round the upright barrel of a field cannon are clustered four primitive seventeenth-century mortar bombs, their tops, like the cannon barrel, cast and transformed in proportion and surface from the original monument in Cleves [Beuys's hometown]. Above the cannon, emerging from it, is the head of a man, modelled by Beuys in 1961 with Tram stop in mind.... Past the monument runs a tramline, a hori-
zontal element along the earth's surface that bends slightly and curves gently, coming up from below the surface and running down into it again. If it were extended, this curve would reach far into the Venetian lagoon. . . . On another radial axis is a bored hole, sunk down to the water of the lagoon below, and then on, 25 metres deep in all, so that it becomes an iron tube full of cold water. (Beuys, 242)

"Why should a head emerge from a cannon?" Tisdall asks. Beuys's intention, she says, has to do with "the war of ideas" going on in his head. But we can also see it as a version of a shamanistic motif—the suffering associated with the initiation: "First they put the shaman's head on a pole," according to one version of the myth, "Then they scatter the hacked-up flesh in all directions like an offering" (Lommel, 55). To anticipate the later reading, we can note as well the grammatical echoes in such a work. The Venetian lagoon parallels Derrida's example of the homophonic shuttle (in Glas) passing between lagune and langue (tongue, language), and the tram line connotes the transportation devices signified by "metaphor" as a term meaning "bus" or "vehicle." That this rhetorical dimension is systematically available in Beuys's objects and actions will be demonstrated in a later section.

SCULPTURE

The term Plastik (sculpture, plastic arts) functions in Beuys's program in the same way as écriture (writing) in grammatology. Just as Derrida went to the most fundamental level of writing—the grammme, the articulation of différance—in order to formulate a principle of general writing (an expansion of the term "writing" to include every manner of inscription, of coming into appearance as such), so too does Beuys turn to the most fundamental level of sculpture in order to produce a theory of creativity which cuts across all divisions of knowledge and addresses the question of human productivity as such. The pressure Beuys places on such terms as "sculpture," "science," and "art" parallels Derrida's deconstructive paleonymics—the science of old names in which the old term is retained while being extended almost catachrestically to cover a new semantic field: "All these actions were important to enlarge the old concept of Art making it as broad and large as possible. According to possibility, making it as large as to include every human activity. . . . On the other hand, this again demands that the concept of Science has achieved this expansion itself." 21

Working in terms of their respective points of departure—theory of language and the art of sculpture—Derrida and Beuys each formulated the highest generalization yet produced to account for human creativity, which
may be seen as the equivalents in cultural studies of Einstein’s formula in the physical sciences (they function at the same level of generalization). Whereas Derrida’s generalization is expressed in a set of terms, a semantic field including the series associated with differance (*trace, écart, grammaire*, and so forth), Beuys’s “formula” is presented as a sculpture—actually a word-thing, since the work consists of both an object and a discourse. This work, or genre of works (Beuys started producing it in a variety of forms around 1964), entitled *Fat Corner*, exemplifies the importance of Beuys for an applied grammatology. The lesson in Beuys’s practice concerns the relation between ideas and objects, demonstrating the word-thing structure fundamental to a picto-ideo-phonographic Writing. Derrida’s theories and texts (as I argued in part I) call for a new writing beyond the book in which models, in the form of objects and actions, supplement verbal discourse. The task of applied grammatology is to introduce this Writing into the classroom (and eventually into research communication in the form of video tapes). The relation of ideas to objects in Beuys’s practice contributes at least one version of how the pedagogical process might be reorganized. In this section, then, I will discuss *Fat Corner* and Beuys’s general sculpture (*Plastik*), focusing on his own account of how this work functions as well as noting its interlacing with Derrida’s texts.

*Fat Corner* is not a unique work (indeed, anyone can make one) but describes an element (unit, situation, process) that Beuys has presented by itself or as part of other Actions or Environments and that he considers to be the fundamental embodiment of his principle of creativity. The title (*Fettecke*) is descriptive: the work consists of a quantity of fat (usually margarine, but a variety of other kinds of fat have been used) packed into the corner of a room to form a mass in the shape of an equilateral pyramid (the point is in the corner; only the base is visible)—the sculptural equivalent (for my purposes) of the A of differance. The material is left to putrefy, to spread and absorb whatever is in the air, and to be absorbed in turn by the walls and floor—the figure of decompositional disgust, the *vomi*. The elements of the piece are the fat; the action of putting the fat into the corner; the corner itself, a geometric form; time and the process of putrefaction; and the viewer’s response.

*Fat Corner* is not an “aesthetic” object nor an “art” object, in the traditional sense. Beuys did not come to art by the usual route of craft or skill at producing “beautiful” objects, but because of “epistemological considerations”: “It seemed to me very important to work within art with concepts [*Begriffen*]. . . . I saw here an opportunity to achieve something conceptual working with other people which would have as much importance for the understanding of art as of science.”22 What he has in mind, he says, is the convergence of “art and life, science and art,” at the fundamental level of human creativity. As a kind of “conceptual art,” then, his
objects are offered as signifiers in a writing which joins together material and thought.

Derrida’s homophonic principle permits me to approach Beuys’s “rituals” or “rites” (as his Actions are sometimes described) as writing (the colossal homonym is the shift from noun to verb). Beuys (w)rites. Operating as a double inscription, an object-action such as Fat Corner Writes at two levels—one motivated, the other arbitrary (extending to the register of the unconscious the old distinction between Sinn and Bedeutung, sense and meaning). At the motivated level, the point of departure for Beuys’s Actions is always selected from something available in the material itself, or in the location where the Action takes place (the coyote is used in America, instead of the hare; in Chicago an event is based on an identification with Dillinger).

Thus, Beuys interrogates materials the way Derrida interrogates terminology (as in the exploration, in Glas, of the “flowers of rhetoric”). His intention in this interrogation (“What is Plastik? I have attempted to crack open this concept in its first principles”) parallels Derrida’s solicitation of the philosophemes of metaphysics. The examination of fat and felt—his two primary materials—exemplifies the motivated relationship between his theoretical discourse and his objects:

This Theory of Sculpture describes the passage of everything in the world, physical or psychological, from a chaotic, undetermined state to a determined or ordered state. Chaotic is the state of raw material and unchannelled will power, characterized as WARM. Ordered is the state of material that has been processed or formed, symbolized by the heart sign of movement at the center. Here it acquires form and definition and appears in a crystalline state, represented in the diagram by a tetrahedron and characterized as COLD and INTELLECTUAL. If the process goes too far the crystal becomes a burnt-up, over-intellectualized “clinker,” and falls out of the system. . . . Ideally a balance should be achieved, though the overriding tendency today is towards the intellectual pole. Balance, reintegration and flexible flow between the areas of thinking, feeling and will, all of which are essential, are the objective of the Theory. (Beuys, 72)

As Tisdall explains, Fat Corner is an excellent demonstration of the theory, since its elements manifest the qualities of the ideas. “Fat can exist as a physical example of both extremes, as a chaotic, formless and flowing liquid when warm, and as a defined and ordered solid when cold; a paradox that is compounded when it is placed in that most ordered of forms, a right-angled corner or wedge. . . . The corner symbolizes the most mechanistic tendency of the human mind, the cornerstone of our present society, as manifested in our square rooms, square buildings and square cities, all built on combinations of the right angle” (72). In one of his many exposi-
tions of this theory and its relation to his materials, Beuys states: “This is my sculptural theory, theory in quotation marks, since I believe that it is hardly a theory, but a reality [Wirklichkeit]. I am not a theorist, but I research a reality. Essentially I mean that what I do exceeds theory and is a search simply for the actual Gestalt of things.”

The reality or Gestalt of fat (and felt) which Beuys uses to make a theoretical statement has to do with its morphological properties: “Actually two elements, fat and felt, are closely related. Both have a homogeneous character in that they have no inner structure. Felt is a material pressed together, an amorphous material, with an uneven structure. The same is true of the nature of fat, and that interested me.” He does not simply remain at the level of biographical motivation—the association of fat and felt with his war trauma—but interrogates the materials in turn to discover their “own” properties, the natural motivation that would accompany their presence in a work:

There is on the one hand a “chaotic, flowing” process of retaining heat which, as the source of “spiritual warmth,” is provided with an inexhaustible source of energy. It is found in heat sensitive materials such as wax and fat, whose unformed state can be described as absolutely amorphous. On the other hand are the crystallized final forms existing in a geometrical context which are taken from the many materials during the conversion of the fluid or warm steam state into the cold, hardened state. . . . With the aid of such materials [wax and fat] it is possible to analyze this process of movement under the simplest conditions, from the organic-embryonic prototype to the orderly, crystallized systems and from the shapeless mass of fat to corners of fat, which provide a base model. (Adriani, Konnertz, and Thomas, 39-41)

The process of hardening or shaping these amorphous materials into forms (fat into corners, a suit made of felt) manifests the forming, creative activity as such. Describing this process in Fat Corner, Beuys declares: “The fat goes through exactly this process in my Actions. Here is warmth (left), and here is cold (right). I could say, that is a general score [Partitur] for almost all the Actions I have done” (Rappmann, Schata, and Harlan, 22). It is the score not only for his own works but for human creativity in general.

The first element of sculpture as writing, then, is the motivated quality of the materials as signifiers, similar to Derrida’s deconstruction of the figurative-proper opposition by elaborating the literal sense of metaphor: “The art objects do not demonstrate ideas, they are embodied ideas—(there lies the metaphor).” And Beuys is not at all reluctant to state specifically what he intends the objects to mean, what concepts he wants attached to the Actions. At the same time, and this point brings us to the
second element of sculpture as Writing, the objects function mnemonically, with a certain arbitrariness and a certain independence from the concepts. The word-thing, that is, writes a double inscription. "Had I expressed all this in recognizably logical statements, in a book, for example, it would not have been successful, because modern man is inclined only to satisfy his intellect and to understand everything according to the laws of logic" (Adriani, Konnertz, and Thomas, 72). The first step, then, is to get the interest or attention of the audience with a memorable image—something that provokes and that persists in the memory. "If you want to explain yourself you must present something tangible," Beuys says, discussing the didactic character of his work. One of the difficulties of his work is that it "is permeated with thoughts that do not originate in the official development of art but in scientific concepts" (Sharp, 47). And his Actions and objects are models of his working through these concepts: "One is forced to translate thought into action and action into object. The physicist can think about the theory of atoms or about physical theory in general. But to advance his theories he has to build models, tangible systems. He too has to transfer his thought into action, and the action into an object. I am not a teacher who tells his students only to think. I say act; do something; I ask for a result" (47).

For Beuys, then, "the formation of the thought is already sculpture" (Sharp, 47). And the models he builds and performs exemplify the pictoideo-phonographic Writing sought by an applied grammatology. His comparison of his models (a term he frequently uses to describe his Action-objects) with those used in scientific instruction suggests that there is as useful a role for "apparatus" and "laboratory demonstrations" in the humanities as in the sciences. The difference is that Beuys is deconstructing the scientific (positivist) attitude toward knowing and learning. That Beuys is engaged in a mode of Writing may be seen in his description of himself and his works as "transmitters": "I want the work to become an energy center, like an atomic station. It's the same principle again: transmitter and receiver. The receiver is the same as the transmitter. . . . The spectator becomes the program" (44). Indeed, the best way to appreciate the specific nature of this Writing (rite-ing) is not as art, science, or philosophy, but as pedagogy: "To be a teacher is my greatest work of art. The rest is the waste product, a demonstration. If you want to explain yourself you must present something tangible. But after a while this has only the function of a historic document. Objects aren't very important for me anymore. I want to get to the origin of matter, to the thought behind it. Thought, speech, communication—and not only in the socialist sense of the word—are all expressions of the free human being" (44).

The statement "To be a teacher is my greatest work of art" is the "holo-phrase" of this chapter. The task, however, is to determine how Beuys
teaches. The first thing to be stressed is that all the elements of the new pedagogy are present in his work, including speech, or discourse, which is put in its place in relation to models and mimes, objects and actions. One of Beuys's principal concerns is the coordination of these elements (exemplifying the readjustment needed in our thinking in general, similar to Derrida's reversal of the logocentric trajectory of phoneticization). “It is a question of selection. In which sphere and in which sector can I reach something with these media, in which domain can I bring about something with each medium. Sometimes, I can do something with a complete, determinate combination, for example object and action or action and discourse, or only with speech or only thought or only writing or only drawing and so forth” (Herzogenrath, 33).

It may be worth emphasizing that discourse is an important part of Beuys's performances, just as it was necessary to stress the importance of images and models in Derrida's Writing—their productions are converging on the same hybrid mode. The art historians will never record the many questions posed after his Actions, Beuys complains, even though these are an important part of the total work (Vadel, 16). “Beuys's 'actions' have always been followed by exhaustive discussions to help his audience conceptualize what they had just seen... The difference between open signs and normative language reflects the difference between art and science. Beuys attempts to move forward on both levels at once” (Simmen, 89). The discussion following the performances, whether led by Beuys himself or whether taking place among the spectators, is a direct part of the production (at times it even becomes nearly the whole production, as in “Honey pump,” Documenta 6 in Kassel, in which Beuys managed an information booth and organized discussion workshops throughout the one hundred days of the exhibit), manifesting the status of his Actions as “learning pieces.”

In addition, as noted earlier, Beuys considers speech to be a kind of material in which to sculpt: “The speech especially is totally plastic because it already has movement. What the mouth does with speech, the blubber it releases, these are also real sculptures, although they can't physically be seen, the air is worked on, the larynx is worked on, the inside of the mouth articulates, the bite, the teeth, etc.” Beuys shares Derrida's interest (elaborated in Glas) in the “articulators,” the physiology of speech, the mouth-ear circuit as the vehicle of a certain metaphorics. The interaction of discourse and objects (the speech-writing relation, unified within a larger frame in both écriture and Plastik) in Beuys's Actions makes his rite-ings an exploration of the origins of writing.

My point for now is that there is no need to translate what Beuys is doing from art into pedagogy, since he is already engaging in pedagogy. He is already performing the pedagogical implications of his art, just as Lacan, in
his seminars, displayed the conversion of psychoanalysis into pedagogy. The lesson for an applied grammatology in these two presentations lies not in the art or the psychoanalysis but precisely in the pedagogy made available in each case—by the encounter of art and psychoanalysis with an educative purpose. In mentioning these two pedagogies together, we have touched on the nexus of grammatological teaching, having to do with the “psychoanalytic graphology” Derrida described as being part of a future grammatology: “Here, Melanie Klein perhaps opens the way. As concerns the forms of signs, even within phonetic writing, the catexeses of gestures, and of movements, of letters, lines, points, the elements of the writing apparatus (instrument, surface, substance, etc.), a text like The Role of the School in the Libidinal Development of the Child (1923) indicates the direction to be taken” (Writing, 231).

Beuys’s inclusion and cathecting of the fundamental apparatuses of the school in his Actions—blackboards, chalk, erasers, desks, pointers, lectures—provide the best example available of how such a “graphology” (concerned directly with the unconscious investment in, the symbolic significance of, common schoolroom objects and actions) might become part of a pedagogy. Erasers, for example, being made of felt, carry all the associations related to this primary material in Beuys’s system: “Felt as an insulator, as a protective covering against other influences, or conversely as a material that permits infiltration from outside influences. Then there is the warmth character, the greyness which serves to emphasize the colours that exist in the world by a psychological after-image effect, and the silence as every sound is absorbed and muffled” (Beuys, 120). In relation to fat, felt (as insulator) has the “analytical” function of separating each stage of the creative process (as embodied in Fat Corner) from the others—the principles of chaos, movement, and form. 28

Blackboards, as Tisdall notes, have been part of Beuys’s Actions from the beginning and have played an ever-increasing role (the Environment Directional Forces consisted of one hundred blackboards covered with drawings and notes produced during a month of lectures). In “Celtic” (an interpretation of the Celtic oral tradition), “Beuys made and erased a series of drawings on a single board, manoeuvring it with a shepherd’s crook and holding it aloft as if it were a highly charged piece of equipment” (Beuys, 204). It is not just that the familiar or banal objects (whether from the classroom or other areas of life) are charged with significance by becoming part of an art Action but that they already carry charges of energy—a feature he expresses sometimes by including actual batteries and other electrical apparatuses in his works. The energy that interests him, of course, is psychological, spiritual, libidinal. Thus, when we are told that Beuys seeks to change the very concept of “object” (Romain and Wedewer, 76), we may assume that what is involved is this notion of the
object as "energy field" or "transmitter": "The object is intended as a transmitter radiating ideas from a deep background in time through an accretion of layers of meaning and biography, functioning like a Faraday cage in which the power is retained through a kind of grid. The object transmits while the text demonstrates" (Beuys, 26). A part of this economy of the object as a "battery of ideas" essential to an understanding of Beuys's pedagogy has to do with the effect of such objects. How do they transmit? Although commentators have noticed a progression in Beuys's oeuvre from drawings to objects through Actions to speech, Beuys himself denies that his work has become too verbal: "Verbalisation has certainly acquired another character in it, and so too have other more physically realised environments, objects, sculptures, drawings, etc. But the object Directional Forces for example, grew in fact out of thinking and speaking. But then it led in my opinion to a more vital image." 29 The generation of the image as model is the same effect sought by Derrida.

**MNEMONICS**

Grammatology accounts for the functioning of Beuys's objects in terms of the scene of Writing. Beuys and Derrida, that is, are in agreement about the communication process, working with the principle that a letter does not always reach its destination, or that the letter's destination is not determined by the old notions of identity. Their methods of W-rite-ing are based on assumptions not only about how "ideas" are generated but (and here is a crucial lesson for the new pedagogy) on how ideas are communicated, or rather, disseminated. Fat Corner—the gradual staining and spreading of the fat as it is absorbed by the walls and floor (the fat in the corner being the equivalent of the gl in Glas, the hard and the soft, the fat as the flux of agglutinative processes)—is an image for Beuys of the spread of ideas, a version of dissemination. "The process of infiltration takes place as the filtered stain spreads slowly outwards with time... the spreading of ideas to the different forcefields of human ability, a kind of inspiration that takes effect through a physical process of capillary absorption: psychological infiltration, or even the infiltration of institutions. ... The smell of course permeates everything" (Beuys, 148). Fat Corner, in short, is the perfect embodiment of Derrida's new philosopheme based on the contact or subjective sense of smell and taste which is the justification for writing as decomposition. In this context it also becomes clear that felt—amorphous, made of compressed hair, shaped by stretching and pulling—is a better model for the contact philosopheme than is the textile (weaving) of textuality used throughout Glas; suggesting the hand-eye relation of touch and Begriff. Infiltration de-monstrates the principle of communica-
tion by contamination, the permeability of boundaries as membranes, which is one of Derrida’s principal concerns.

The question for pedagogy is not Who speaks? but Who receives?—the reading or listening or spectating effect, in response to the double inscrip­tion of Writing. “I am aware,” Beuys says, “that my art cannot be understood primarily by thinking. My art touches people who are in tune with my mode of thinking. But it is clear that people cannot understand my art by intellectual processes alone, because no art can be experienced in this way. I say to experience, because this is not equivalent to thinking: it’s a great deal more complex; it involves being moved subconsciously. Either they say, ‘yes, I’m interested,’ or they react angrily and destroy my work and curse it. In any event I feel I am successful, because people have been affected by my art” (Sharp, 45).

Derrida speaks of the receivability of his work—specifically as thema­tized in Glas—in similar terms. Like Beuys, Derrida believes that the unreceivability of a provoking work is itself an effective mode of reception. The provoking, unreceivable work forces the various “Anonymous Societies of Limited Responsibility” (SARL) to reveal themselves, to expose their systems of exclusion: “For the unanimity [of a faction] already feels what it vomits, that from which it guards itself, it likes it in its own way, and the unreceivable is received.” What he was seeking in Glas, Derrida explains, is the totally unanticipated reading—to write precisely at the point where all calculation of effects is lost: “What happens ‘all unknowingly’ is always the most, let us say, marking, the most effective. And then that does not return to the presumed ‘father’ of the text, which is the real effect, the only effective one, of a dissemination.”30 Perceptible and acknowledged debts and connections, those that are recognized as such, Derrida argues, are the most superficial, the least transformative. “If the history of the analysis of ‘reading effects’ remains always so difficult, it is because the most effective pass through assimilations or rejections which I call by analogy ‘primary,’ the most ‘unconscious.’ And by rejection (for example the internal vomiting, incorporative) still more than by assimila­tion” (“Faux-bond,” 95). The project of the double inscription, acting on this reception theory common to Derrida, Lacan, and Beuys, is to work directly at the primary, affective level of effect.

How the scene of Writing is received is, of course, a major topic in The Post Card, with perhaps its best definition being given in the “appended” article “Telepathy,” in which Derrida compares the way the unconscious filters and selects what it receives with the way some member of the public will decide to respond personally (by return mail) to an open letter written by a newspaper columnist (this quotidian journalistic event serves as a model for the functioning of “unconscious” communication). Such a communication does not take place between two identifiable subjects:
No, of a letter which after the fact seems to have been sent towards some unknown recipient at the moment of its writing, recipient unknown to him or herself if one might say so, and who determines himself upon the reception of the letter; this is then completely different from the transfer of a message. Here, you identify yourself and engage your life on the letter as program, or rather to a post card, an open letter, divisible, at once transparent and ciphered. The program says nothing, it announces or utters nothing, not the least content... In short, you say "that's me" by a sweet and terrible decision, quite different: nothing to do with the identification with the hero of a novel. ("Télépathie," 8)

The nature of the relation between Derrida and Beuys—between theoretical and applied grammatology—is clearly evident in their respective uses of the post card, which Derrida evokes as a theoretical model in a text, but which Beuys literally produces as object. Indeed, one of Beuys's more common "multiples" (simple, inexpensive, usually quotidian objects—often ready-mades or modified ready-mades—produced in bulk for large distribution) is the post card, signifying, in addition to its scene or message (printed recto and verso), the phenomenon of "transmitting" as such. Some of the cards include, for example, simple phrases such as "give me honey," "honey is flowing," "let the flowers speak," or "name equals address"; some simply bear his signature or one of his signet stamps. There are cards with scenes from various Actions, pictures of Beuys himself, scenes from cities he has visited. He has made cards from wood and from magnetized metal; all the cards are reproduced in large editions.

The effect of the multiples, as Beuys understands it, characterizes the reception of the scene of W-rite-ing as mnemonics. The object or image has at one level a vehicular function—attached, even if arbitrarily, to an idea (like the "active agents" in the old mnemonic systems), it is meant to serve as a reminder: "The whole thing is a game, one which, with the help of this kind of information, counts on casting the anchor of a vehicle somewhere close by, so that people can later think back on it. It's a sort of prop for the memory, yes, a sort of prop in case something different happens in the future. For me, each edition has the character of a kernel of condensation upon which many things may accumulate... It's like an antenna which is standing somewhere and with which one stays in touch" (Schellmann and Klüser, 1).

Beuys considers his editions to be a more effective means of spreading ideas than writing (in the traditional sense) would be, because, in addition to the superficial or even arbitrary connection between the vehicle and the idea, the object works at the primary register as well, in a way that is discontinuous with any intention, beyond the reach of any possible calculation of effect. At this level the effect that Derrida tries to achieve by means
of "anasemia" comes into play, described by the third meaning of "sense"—neither "the sense" nor "meaning," but "direction" (sens): "if one has a relationship to this, one can really only have it, not based on a rational, analytical understanding, but because one has experienced something of the right direction, the direction in which the vehicles are standing, simply standing somewhere" (Schellmann and Klüser, 5).

At this primary level, the object functions according to the principle Derrida described as being at work in Mallarmé's Mime, which retained the structure of mimesis but without representing anything. In Beuys's case, the objects produce the effect of reference, but without referring to anything. Or rather, the reference is now supplied by the recipient, who in response to the stimulus produces it out of himself, like the recipient of the open letter in the newspaper who decides "that's me" and writes a reply to the journalist. "Where objects are concerned it's more the sense of an indication or suggestion... But the multiples are often quite minimal allusions, just suggestions. I actually find interpretations of them harmful. You can describe a thing, say something about the intentions, and that's how to get close to the power that leaves something in the things so that they can have some effect. There is a 'more' in them that means they appeal to more than understanding" (Schellmann and Klüser, 14-15). The more is the plus of surplus value which Derrida explores in metaphor. The description of his works as referring without reference has been applied not only to Beuys's multiples but to his Action-Environments as well, such as Tram Stop, about which one commentator said: "That all leaves very distinct traces [Spüren] which are only the perceptible edges of something other: the whole work and the whole action have only the character of a hint" (Krupka, 49).

In terms of the double inscription, then, Beuys's objects are both what they are (their qualities motivate the concept attached to them) and stimulation for the general processes of memory and imagination. At the primary level, the object does not "transfer a message" but moves the spectator—remaining open in its reference, the object evokes associated memories that are motivated less by the qualities of the object than by the subject of reception: the theme of a work like Fat Corner, Romain and Wedewer argue, is not immanent in the material and is not accessible by means of interpretation but only through its appeal to the observer's associative memory. "If one wants to characterize the Beuysian object, the fat works being representative of the whole, with a term, one can best designate them by the attribute appellativ. That means, these works do not stand for something, they rather produce representations of things, feelings, relationships—or release, arouse, trigger them—and their admissibility depends not on a precise designation, but if they actually make possible the arousal in one of the general adequate idea of representation" (27-28).
It is worth reviewing several other accounts of the evocative function of the Beuysian object, since it is precisely this primary effect that applied grammatology intends to add to pedagogical communication. This primary effect, moreover, is what Derrida models in all his undecidable object-images of things which are at once open and closed—umbrellas, matchboxes, shoelaces (tied and untied), post cards. The apotropaic dimension of the object-image is a principal aspect of Beuys's works. Peter Handke's assessment of the effect on himself of seeing one of Beuys's performances reveals an important feature of their mnemonic character: "It must be made clear: the more distant and hermetic the results performed on the stage, the clearer and more reasonable [sic] can the spectator concretize this abstract in his own outside situation. . . . In memory it appears as one burned in their own life, an image, which in its nostalgic effects and the will to work on such images in oneself [sic]: then only as after image does it begin to work on oneself. And an excited peace overcomes one, when one thinks: it activates one, it is so painfully pretty, that it is utopic and that means: becomes political" (Adriani, Konnertz, and Thomas, 194-95).

Beuys's object-actions, that is, are expressly intended to function by means of an aftereffect, working thus directly with the "time of understanding," the way the Impressionists, for example, worked with the effects of space and light—one has to experience Beuys's works from the proper distance in time, as integrated by the operation of memory, just as one has to be at the right spatial distance from an Impressionist painting to allow the eye to integrate the colors properly. Indeed, Romain and Wedewer declare that Beuys does for the intuitive memory what the Op Artists did for optical perception—each working with the object in relation to its reception (69-70)—a comparison similar to my own discussion of Derrida's Op Writing.

Handke, it is important to add, was not particularly impressed at the time of the performance (he is discussing the Action Iphegenie/Titus Andronicus) which did not seem to him to be at all adequate to what its title promised (an abject performance, without pretending anything more than the simulacrum of reference). The powerful impact of the aftereffect, then, was all the more evocative, a response that others have recorded with respect to other works:

As always in Beuys's work, the logic of a distillation process interacts with the associations of the few objects and materials that are used: the particular situation is directed at a generalized effect. The tangibly itemized cycle as a symbolic parallel with life does not strike the viewer through his recognition of each single item and the subsequent perception of the whole as a shocking process . . . What hits home is the after-effect of the transformed objects which completes the field of association. This potential psychic intensity
is thus achieved through the multiplication of several connections which create tensions between the individual effects of each object and their various different extended meanings. This intensity, which can register as a long-lasting shock in the mind of the confronted viewer, is certainly the most essential characteristic of Beuys's sculpture. (Beuys, 215-16)

Fat Corner, the score for all Beuys's Action-objects, is not only memorable but also a model of memory—of the psyche itself—and as such it is the equivalent of Freud's "Mystic Writing-Pad." It manifests the point that Beuys's works, in addition to being stimuli for thoughts, are the very image of thinking. Thinking for Beuys, in any case, is a kind of sculpture, to the extent that the ultimate signified, the connotation, of all his work is thinking, or human creativity, as such. "Thus the fat displaces itself from a very chaotic condition in a movement terminating in a geometric context. . . . It was power in a chaotic condition, in a condition of movement and in a condition of form. And these three elements—form, movement, and chaos—were the undetermined energy from which I drew my complete theory of sculpture, of human psychology as power of will, power of thought and power of feeling; and I found that it was a schema for understanding all the problems of society" (Vandel, 17).

As we saw in Freud's discussion of the ancient analogy comparing memory to wax, Beuys's use of fat, tallow, and wax (including beeswax) enables him to treat at the concrete level, symbolically, the same matters Freud and Derrida address textually. And before too hastily concluding that the formal structure of Fat Corner is not sufficiently complex to deal with the conceptual range Beuys claims for it, we should note that Michel Serres, discussing the philosophy of science, adopts exactly the same image—wax and its modification by heat into three possible conditions (liquid, solid, and the movement between)—as model for organizing the three dominant phases of modern Western epistemology: Cartesian, Bachelardian, and the present (Serresian?). "Communications carry information and engrave it in solids which conserve it. Three states: movement, propagation, communication; three states: figures, fluids, solids. The third state, solid, communication or information, could be called equally structure-application" (L'interférence, 91).

The sciences providing the analogies guiding each of these paradigms are, respectively, geometry (Cartesian), physics (Bachelardian), and biology. The current episteme, according to Serres, is characterized by the wax in its hardened (crystalline) state (Beuys's image of the potentially overintellectualized condition of modern thought) because of the capacity of hardened wax to record and preserve traces of information (like the Mystic Pad). Discussing the need to write a new, contemporary epistemology that brings together history and science, Serres states:
In effect, history, as such, implies an epistemological recurrence perfectly analogous to scientific recurrences: it furnishes the energy necessary to reanimate the dead information residing among the solid mnemonic stocks. At the same time, it [the non-Bachelardian epistemology] discovers, first, the fundamental mode of existence of objects: the demy of paper, the metamorphic rock, the piece of wax, some embryonic tissues, some cut stone, all supports of forms to read, all historical objects. . . . The god of the new Pantheon is universal scribe and reader: there is a code of all communication, it ciphers and deciphers all cryptograms. (*L'interférence*, 125)

My point, however, is not to give an exposition of Serres’s model, whose correspondence with grammatology I noted previously in any case, but only to note that Serres’s use of the image of wax in this comprehensive context supports the generalizing power of Beuys’s Plastik. As for the direct relation with grammatology, it may be apparent that *Fat Corner* embodies the dynamics of force and form that Derrida discusses in “Force and Signification.” The fat in the corner presents the opposition Derrida lists as “duration to space, quality to quantity, force to form, the depth of meaning or value to the surface of figures” (*Writing*, 19). Derrida’s purpose is to deconstruct this opposition, his problem being that, working within language even while trying to expose what lies outside language, giving it its shape, he is restricted to the metaphors of structure. What criticism should be able to treat—“that which engenders in general is precisely that which resists geometrical metaphorization”—is reduced to the “inessential,” only a “sketch or debris.” “*Form* fascinates when one no longer has the force to understand force from within itself. That is, to create” (4). In this early essay Derrida can but state the *other* of structure, which we have noted elsewhere with the terms *apeiron* and Moira: “To grasp the operation of creative imagination at the greatest possible proximity to it, one must turn oneself toward the invisible interior of poetic freedom. . . . They can only indicate it through a metaphor [of “separation” and “exile”] whose genealogy itself would deserve all of our efforts. . . . This universe articulates only that which is in excess of everything, the essential nothing on whose basis everything can appear and be produced within language” (8). Deconstruction is an attempt to harness this creative force: “a certain *strategic* arrangement which, within the field of metaphysical opposition, uses the strengths of the field to turn its own stratagems against it, producing a force of dislocation”—a force “which is pure qualitative heterogeneity within movement” (20, 21).

Beuys, however, not restricted to texts and language, *is* able to provide an image of force, which, along with “energetics,” is one of the chief descriptors of the fat in his Actions. Speaking of the revolution he wishes to carry out in the arts, Beuys says, of his Actions, “that all becomes included
in a fully new statement of movement. The Action is in and for itself another word for the nature of movement. . . . So I ground the Action character in my work: to find the beginning of movement in the world” (Krupka, 41). In order to transform thought, and society with it, everything must be expressed, “even those things which still lie beyond language as we know it—a new substance that is both evolutionary and revolutionary” (Beuys, 179). *Fat Corner* makes directly accessible in applied grammatology the processes of movement and energy—force—which could only be articulated negatively in theoretical grammatology.

**GRAMMATOLOGY**

Having remarked in the previous sections Beuys’s own account of his work, as well as some of the ways he performs the scene of Writing, I would like now to examine more systematically the grammatological character of the Actions—to review the Actions within the context provided in part I of this book. I will take as my point of departure one Action—“How to explain pictures to a dead hare”—which is often designated as typifying Beuys’s work. I will first describe the work, including Beuys’s statements about it, and then discuss it as a version of grammatology.

In the performance, on 26 November 1965—Beuys’s first exhibition in the art world context, Tisdall notes—“Beuys spent three hours explaining his art to a dead hare. The gallery was closed to the public, and the performance (though recorded on television) was visible only from the doorway and the street window” (Beuys, 101). “Beuys, whose head was covered with honey and gold leaf, held a dead hare in his arms and carried it, walking through the exhibition and talking to it, from picture to picture, letting it touch the pictures with its paw. After the tour was finished he sat down on a chair and began to thoroughly explain the pictures to the hare ‘because I do not like to explain them to people’” (Adriani, Konnertz, and Thomas, 130).

In putting honey on my head I am clearly doing something that has to do with thinking. Human ability is not to produce honey, but to think, to produce ideas. In this way the deathlike character of thinking becomes lifelike again. For honey is undoubtedly a living substance. Human thinking can be lively too. But it can also be intellectualized to a deadly degree, and remain dead, and express its deadliness in, say, the political or pedagogic fields. Gold and honey indicate a transformation of the head, and therefore, naturally and logically, the brain and our understanding of thought, consciousness and all the other levels necessary to explain pictures to a hare: the warm stool insulated with felt, the “radio” made of bone and electrical components.
under the stool and the iron sole with the magnet. I had to walk on this sole when I carried the hare round from picture to picture, so along with a strange limp came the clank of iron on the hard stone floor. (Beuys, 105)

The honey on the head is another manifestation of the idea of thinking as a sculptural activity. The process of bees making honey (honey in the geometric beehive) is a version of the same principle demonstrated in Fat Corner (Rappmann, Schata, and Harlan, 61). Not only the honey on the head but the hare itself is a model of thinking: "The hare has a direct relation to birth... For me the hare is a symbol of incarnation. The hare does in reality what man can only do mentally: he digs himself in, he digs a construction. He incarnates himself in the earth and that itself is important" (Adriani, Konertz, and Thomas, 132). The hare burrowing into the earth is an image of thinking—of man embodying his ideas in forms. The Action as a whole is especially useful in our pedagogical context because, as Beuys explains, it deals with "the difficulty of explaining things"

particularly where art and creative work are concerned, or anything that involves a certain mystery or questioning. The idea of explaining to an animal conveys a sense of the secrecy of the world and of existence that appeals to the imagination... The problem lies in the word "understanding" and its many levels which cannot be restricted to rational analysis. Imagination, inspiration, intuition and longing all lead people to sense that these other levels also play a part in understanding. This must be the root of reactions to this action, and is why my technique has been to try to seek out the energy points in the human power field, rather than demanding specific knowledge or reactions on the part of the public. I try to bring to light the complexity of creative areas. (Beuys, 105)

Beuys’s own accounts of his intentions do in fact articulate the program desired for applied grammatology. My purpose, then, is to show that one reason why Beuys’s practice is so relevant to this program is that the specific elements of grammatology as Derrida defines them are also available in Beuys’s work, although Beuys himself never makes them explicit. There is no need, in other words, to impose the categories of grammatology on Beuys but only to call attention to the manner in which Beuys employs them.

My procedure here will be to treat Beuys’s objects or “ciphers” the same way Derrida treats vocabulary, that is, in terms of the entire semantic field or symbolic topos that is evoked. The hare, for example, as Romain and Wedewer remind us, means many different things in various world mythologies and legends besides “incarnation” or “birth,” any of which may be brought into play in the reception effect when this animal is used in an Action (31). The hare is perhaps Beuys’s chief totem animal, em-
ployed in a variety of ways, including its literal presence, as in “How to explain pictures to a dead hare,” or “Siberian Symphony” (which included a dead hare hanging on a blackboard), “The chief” (with two dead hares, one at either end of a large roll of felt in which Beuys was wrapped), “Eurasia” (in which Beuys maneuvered along a line a dead hare with its legs and ears extended by long, thin, black wooden sticks), and so forth; the hare is also included as an image sculpted in chocolate, gelatin, and other materials, or as a toy; it may be evoked as an image in titles, such as “Hare’s grave” (actually a “genre” of works—boxes or reliquaries of detritus).

Of the several meanings of the hare available in mythology, the most significant one in our context, the one that reveals the convergence in grammatology of Derrida and Beuys, is the hare as an embodiment of Thoth, the god of Writing: “The divine hare was closely connected with the Egyptian god Thoth, the Greek god Hermes, and the Roman Mercury, all of whom were supposed to have similarly invented writing.”

It is of no less interest, perhaps, considering Derrida’s concern with the function of the copula “to be” and its confusion with the ontological “being” (in “The Supplement of Copula,” or “Ousia and Grammê,” for example), that the hare was in ancient Egypt the hieroglyph for the auxiliary verb “to be.” The scholars noted, of course, that the hare was used to represent the copula verb for phonetic reasons—the hare hieroglyph was used whenever the phonetic value “un” was needed, with “to be” being the only word in which this sound occurred alone. Since we are now taking up the Moira, or destiny, of this term in the context of Derrida’s homophonic and macaronic methods, I might add that Derrida’s deconstruction of the problem of the “first” (origins) or the “one”—Un in French—may be transduced into Beuys’s manipulation of the hare, whose name as a deity is Un (Layard, 156). The legendary fertility of the rabbit also motivates the hieroglyph, as shown by research into the symbolic connection of the hare to the copula, which demonstrated that the hare signified “leaping” and “rising” and hence, according to the argument, “being.” The Greek word for “I leap,” moreover, means also “emit semen” and hence “beget” (Layard, 142–43, 151). Derrida, of course, does not take such etymologies at face value, but he does play with them in order to generate texts.

The hare as Thoth indicates that the special importance of Beuys for applied grammatology is not only that his Actions demonstrate a pictoideo-phonographic Writing but that they teach the theory of grammatology in a dramatic form (“theorert” or philosophical theater). More than just a translation of the theory of writing into a performance mode, the Actions show a way to work with the question of Writing nonconceptually (non-theoretically), in a “creative” rather than in an “analytic” mode. From this
perspective, agreeing with Beuys's denial that his use of animals is "atavistic," we can see that his principal animal imagery connotes the metaphors of *inventio*. His performances, following the score of *Fat Corner* (itself an embodiment of the principle of creativity), are a manner of *doing* what he is saying—they literalize and enact the philosophemes of "invention" used in the rhetorical tradition (he generates "original" works of art by performing the rhetorical description of creativity, in works whose lesson is meant to be "everyone an artist").

The structuring principle of Beuys's Actions (the metaphors of *inventio*) relates to the chapter on Mnemonics (chapter 3), in that Beuys’s imagery resonates with the images used in Medieval and Renaissance commonplace books to describe the operations of "invention." As the Book achieved dominance in education, replacing the oral tradition, the location of hypomnemetics shifted from the mind (memory) to the pages of commonplace books, those encyclopedic compendia, organized by topic, collecting and classifying a great range of materials from every imaginable source and subject area (including, of course, the "flowers of rhetoric"—the jewels, stars, or ornaments constituting the best of "everything" that had been spoken or written). As Lechner explains, the commonplace books "were often called the artificial memory. The desire for possessing a kind of universal knowledge led to the distrust of the ‘natural’ memory and the supplying of an auxiliary one" (147).

Derrida’s interest in hypomnemetics can be seen to include this rhetorical phase in the history of knowledge (leading up to Hegel’s “Absolute Knowledge”), as discussed in terms of the “scene of teaching” in which, in grammatology, “nothing takes place but the place itself” (understood now as the topics or places of invention). The crucial point of Lechner’s study of the commonplaces for my purpose is her account of the metaphors traditionally employed to describe the use of the commonplace book as artificial memory (for the generation of a composition), that is, the metaphors of the invention process, involving the gathering together of the material to be used in a presentation. Invention in the commonplace tradition was associated with movement about a field, locating ideas stored in “seats.” Two metaphors were used pedagogically to teach this process (and were repeatedly alluded to wherever the tradition was influential): "The two images which recur most frequently in the rhetorical works for describing the invention and storing of material are the bee gathering nectar and the hunter pursuing game. Both images relate to wild life in nature, which suggests some kind of ‘searching for’ or hunt, and to human life, which implies industry of some sort. Here ‘invention’ is seen as a search which somehow ‘covers ground’ " (Lechner, 137).

It is no accident, considering Beuys as an applied grammatologist, that the two most predominant, consistent images in his Actions involve some
aspect of bees making honey and the hunting of the hare (the example Lechner cites does, in fact, refer to the hare: "Those that bee good hare-finders will soone finde the hare by her fourme, for when thei see the ground beaten flatte around about, and faire to the sighte: thei have a nar­rowe gesse by al liklihoode that the hare was there a little before" [144]—the example serving to show the "relation between the mark or 'identity' of the locality and the game sought in the place"). Similarly, Seneca’s image of the bee, Lechner says, was echoed by many Renaissance rhetoricians: “We should follow, men say, the example of the bees, who flit about and cull the flowers that are suitable for producing honey, and then arrange and assort in their cells all that they have brought in” (138).

In this context we are reminded that Derrida’s entire discussion of the flowers of rhetoric in the Genet (genêt) column of Glas, including his exposition of creating by means of dissemination (dehiscence), is a rhetoric of invention. One of Lechner’s examples, taken from Novum Organum to show Bacon’s application of the inventio metaphor, is especially relevant to Derrida (and Beuys): “Those who have handled science have been either men of experiment or men of dogmas. The men of experiment are like the ant; they only collect and use: the reasoners resemble spiders who make cobwebs out of their own substance. But the bee takes a middle course; it gathers its materials from the flowers of the garden and of the field, but transforms and digests it by a power of its own” (Lechner, 140).

Derrida, similarly, discussing the inside-outside problem in “Outwork,” uses the spider metaphor, evoking specifically the one described in the Songs of Maldoror: “‘Every night, at the hour when sleep has reached its highest degree of intensity, an old spider of the large species slowly protrudes its head from a hole in the ground at one of the intersections of the angles of the room’” (Dissemination, 42)—the spider is the corner (rationality and form in Beuys). Derrida elaborates: “A spider emerging ‘from the depths of its nest,’ a headstrong dot that transcribes no dictated exclamation but rather intransitively performs its own writing.” Lautréamont’s textuality as spider is beneficial transitionally in its break with the dogmas of naive realism. But Hegel’s equally intransitive textuality reveals the negative limitations of this model, with the description of his method (in speculation “the conception of the concept is an autoinsemination”) calling to mind the spider invoked a few pages earlier, spinning its web out of itself: “It [philosophy] must therefore produce, out of its own interiority, both its object and its method” (47). That Derrida is concerned with the problematic defined in Bacon’s metaphor may be inferred from the etymological associations he provides for “hymen.” Within the various hymenologies, or treatises on membranes, one finds all three of Bacon’s inventio models—hymenoptera include winged insects, ants as well as bees
and wasps; *huphos* includes spider webs, and so forth (213). Where Derrida’s sympathies lie, however, must be surmised by the process of elimination.

From his earliest drawings and sculptures, such as *Queen Bee* (1947—but there are many works with this title), through “How to explain pictures to a dead hare,” to “Honey pump” (the huge pump, made with ships’ engines to circulate two tons of honey, which accompanied the information room at *Documenta 6*), Beuys has drawn upon the bee and its activities as one of his central images:

The heat organism of the bee colony is without a doubt the essential element of connection between the wax and fat and the bees. What had interested me about bees, or rather about their life systems, is the total heat organization of such an organism and the sculpturally finished forms within this organization. On one hand bees have this element of heat, which is a very strong fluid element, and on the other hand they produce crystalline sculptures; they make regular geometric forms. Here we already find something of sculptural theory, as we do in the corners of fat. (Adriani, Konnertz, and Thomas, 41)

His explicit interest extends to the symbolic significance of bees and honey, beyond his own theory of creativity: “This warmth character is to be found in honey, in wax, and even in the pollen and nectar gathered from plants. In mythology honey was regarded as a spiritual substance, and bees were godly. The bee cult is basically a Venus cult” (Beuys, 44).

The point, however, is that, whatever Beuys says about his frequent use of the bee or hare images, they may also be understood as references to the rhetorical theories of creativity and composition. Thus, his Actions fulfill the grammatical goal of a *Writing which does what it says*, showing how the root metaphors or philosophemes of Western thought might be interrogated and deconstructed at the applied level.

A further insight into Beuys’s principal images of creative thought (keeping in mind that the beehive filled with honey is a version of fat in the corner) is made available in Derrida’s notion of the signature (the contamination between life and art, the motivated relationship between the proper name and the work). The name “Beuys” (“speculation—on ‘Beuys’”), that is, *signs* the metaphoric of *inventio* mounted in the Actions (both the hunting of the hare and the bee in its hive). Although antonomasia in Beuys’s case only produces a near rhyme, the relevant term does designate the elements of *inventio*, revealing that Beuys’s Actions are an enactment of his name. There are in fact two feminine nouns involved—homonyms (so that Beuys’s signature itself includes Derrida’s homophonic principle)—with the root being *Beut* (*die Beute*). One is a hunting term, meaning “quarry” or “game,” illustrated by the phrase “the hunter pursues his quarry” or “to return with a good bag.” The other *Beut* means “a
wooden beehive,” with the verb *beuten* meaning “to stock a hive with wild bees.” In short, hunting (the hare, or the stag—another one of Beuys’s totems) and bees, as terms and images, line up at three levels—in the *Beut* homonyms; in the *inventio* metaphors of the hypomnemic commonplace books; and as the organizing images in many of Beuys’s Actions. The *Beut* is also in “Beuys.” *Beute* is to “Beuys” what *genêt* is to Genet, *die Kante* to Kant, or *éponge* to Ponge—all are rebus signatures.

To appreciate the destiny of this signature effect, it is important to note that the *t* of *Beut* is present in the signature, in that Beuys sometimes signs his name with the tail of the *u* extended (to look like an upside-down *h*—the *h* being the letter signifying *Mensch* or *Human* in the formulas presented in the Action “24 hours . . . and in us . . . under us . . . landunder”), the tail of the *u* not only extended but crossed, thus adding a buried *t* to his name (recalling the transduction techniques of writing-drawing Derrida recommended in his discussion of Adami).

The cross, which appears in a variety of forms in his work, is itself one of Beuys’s trademarks (he uses it in his rubber signature stamp “Fluxus Zone West”), suggesting an important convergence of his program with Derrida’s use of the chiasmus (which Derrida himself associated with the red cross mark in Adami). Beuys’s cross is meant to suggest many other crosses, the history of this sign in religion and politics, art and science (related as much to Mondrian’s abstractions as to the cross hairs on a machine-gun). “Sometimes it [the cross] is a global symbol of the earth. Often it is the schematic representation of natural structure, as in the *Queen Bee*. When used as a Christian symbol it represents those aspects of noninstitutionalized Christianity which Beuys believes to have had a powerful effect on Western thinking” (Beuys, 108). But whatever its embodied form, the cross, as with Derrida’s chiasmus, is finally the mark of a structuring or stricturing dynamics of creativity (“X: not an unknown but a chiasmus. A text that is unreadable because it is only readable”—Dissemination, 362).

In a session recorded at Documenta 5, Beuys, drawing the cross, stated that it symbolized “a square into which one can introduce value” (33) (recalling the “square mouth” of enframing in Dissemination). Again, the cross marks human creative potential—“That means, as a plus. + that is a plus,” signifying individual human freedom (Ritter, 72)—the cross as “plus” being associated with Derrida’s compositional “+ L.” By the sixties, then, the cross in Beuys’s work had become “the general medium of marking: cross as crossing two lines, defining a point. It serves as the distinguishing mark of a place . . . for example the ‘shooting post in the woods’ (perhaps a stag memorial) . . . as shorthand for a compilation, cross-like, covering storehouses (‘information theory’)” (Krupka, 55).

Whether chiasmus or cross, *x* or +, the dynamics of creativity in theoretical and applied grammatology alike involves the taking place of the place
itself, teaching invention by displaying and deconstructing the metaphors of creativity.

The grammatological import of the methodology explored in "How to explain pictures to a dead hare" is also apparent in the emphasis it gives to the step (the "strange limp and clank of iron on the stone floor"). Derrida has applied his special techniques to an interrogation of the steps or step (pas) as a methodological term ("step by step"), which is the "theoretical" version of Beuys's performance movements. "It is the unimaginable logic, unthinkable even, of the pas au-delà ['step beyond' or 'no beyond'] which interests me" ("Faux-bond," 101). Derrida experiments with the step at two levels—as homonym and as "story." (1) The term pas exemplifies a colossal homonym, moving undecidably between noun and adverb, between pas as step and pas as negation (ne pas), summarized in the phrase pas au-delà. The phrase refers to his revised notion of speculation—his homophonic operation—which displaces all logic of denial and disavowal, all dialectical opposition, thus enabling him (in the service of copia) to proceed without taking a step: "The entire system of limits (faux pas) which prohibits putting one pas in the other finds itself surmounted in one single step (pas), without the step, the activity of walking, what one does with the legs, taking place. . . . The pas de plus ['no more' or "one more step"] works its homonym silently, surmounting the two senses, at one stroke, the two limits. Its transgression is not therefore a work or an activity, it is passive and transgresses nothing." Such is the step with which Blanchot proceeds ("Pas," 147, 152).

(2) The other level at which Derrida experiments with the step of method, in a way that more directly resembles Beuys's performance, involves a narrative dramatization of walking with a limp (the metaphors of method). In "Envois," that is, "Derrida" falls and fractures his ankle, forcing him to walk with a limp and lean on a crutch or cane, so that the "story" repeats the methodological metaphors. The pun is still at work here as well, since "Envois" is preface to a study of the "legs"—legacy—of Freud. The scene of "Derrida" hobbling around with a cast and cane prepares the way for—or performs, mimes—the method to be followed in "Speculer—sur 'Freud,'" a piece that itself mimes Freud's own speculative method. Freud, both in his letters to Fliess and in Beyond the Pleasure Principle, refers to his speculative procedure as an impeded walk, using a phrase cited from another author: "What we cannot reach flying we must reach limping" (Origins, 130). We are reminded, of course, that Oedipus limped, as did all the males of his line (as Lévi-Strauss pointed out).

Derrida mimes this limp in his own essay, trying to capture just the right gait, since its effect, as exercised in Beyond the Pleasure Principle, is similar to that of the pas sans pas (step without a step) achieved by Blanchot—an interminable detour that transgresses passively (Carte, 287).
Reading *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* as a "discourse on method," Derrida finds that the pleasure of method is the repetitive return of the question—rhythm. "Fort: da. It is necessary that the most normal step allow disequilibrium, in itself, in order to carry on ahead, to be followed by another, the same again, but as another. It is necessary that the limp be above all the rhythm of walking, unterwegs. ... If speculation remains necessarily unresolved because it plays on two *tableaux*, band against band, losing to win, winning to lose, how be surprised that it [*ça*] proceeds badly? But it has to advance badly in order for it to work. It rightly limps, isn't that so?" (433).

Noting that *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* ends with the citation about limping mentioned earlier, Derrida remarks that its last chapter, in view of its uselessness to the argument, is a kind of "club foot." Yet it is effective in its own way, because it manifests the methodological value of the prosthesis. Beuys also dramatizes this methodological step, with his canes and shepherd crooks (present in many drawings and Actions) standing for the prosthesis—for the simulacrum replacing the thesis in the deconstruction of dialectics (*Carte*, 414). Beuys refers explicitly to his legs in several Actions, partly with respect to the shuttle sewing them into his signature: in terms of the anagram with "bee" (*die Beine* = legs; *die Biene* = bee) and in terms of *die Beuge* (bend—*Kniebeuge* = kneebend). The following event from the Action "Eurasian staff" is relevant: "Beuys again went to the felt sole [on the floor] and this time placed his iron-soled foot over it at right angles. Then he put a lump of fat in the right angle behind his bent knee and crouched down sharpening this angle until the fat was squeezed out on to the felt sole" (*Beuys*, 130). And in a version of the Action "Celtic" performed in Basel, home of Paracelsus, Beuys highlighted "with flashlights the back of the leg above the knee, located in alchemy as a potentially powerful zone" (*Beuys*, 199). Such works embody his slogan, "I think with my knees." Discussing "The pack" (the VW bus loaded with sleds)—which reminds us that the methodological analogy actually includes the metaphors of transport as such (method's root metaphors being derived from the history of travel, messengers, the to and fro, or *fort: da*, rhythm)—Beuys states: "I compared it [the Volkswagen motor with the sled's runners] to a person who, finding himself in an emergency, says, if I cannot run any longer, I can at least still crawl" (*Herzogenrath*, 31). The methodological message of "The pack," in other words, is conveyed by the same slogan of speculation Freud cites at the end of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*.

Keeping in mind the importance for Derrida of the shoes and their laces as methodological models in "Restitutions" ("the shoes or stocking with which thought advances, walks, thinks, speaks, writes, with its language provided with shoes (or as road)"—trans. *Leavey*, 21), we may include as
an experiment with the step of deconstruction Beuys’s concert in Wuppertal (1963): “Dressed like a regular pianist in dark grey flannel, black tie and no hat, I played the piano all over—not just the keys—with many pairs of old shoes until it disintegrated” (Beuys, 87). His intention was “homeopathic,” indicating a “new beginning, an enlarged understanding of every traditional form of art.”

The steps of grammatology itself are the issue here, finally. The difference between Beuys and Derrida is the difference between applied and theoretical grammatology. The interrogation of metaphors and models which Derrida addresses in his texts (using the performance capacities of literature), Beuys carries beyond the Book into literal action. Although the difference in their content or subject matter seems at times to be extreme, much of the difference may be attributed not only to the differences between their respective points of departure (philosophy and sculpture) but to the division between text and Action. Putrefaction is just as important to Derrida’s Writing (the epithymics of decomposition) as it is to Beuys’s Plastik (Fat Corner), but the word and the thing affect people differently. Beuys’s performance mode similarly leads him to adopt certain formats that may seem alien to Derrida’s position—alchemy, Kabala, or the prophet motive in general (about which more later). But scrutiny of the Actions reveals within them, operating as their organizing principles, the pedagogy of invention and the metaphors of Writing—grammatology, in short.

The method of grammatology, then, shared by Derrida and Beuys, is the display and displacement of the literal sense of the root metaphors of Western thought—dialectic and rhetoric, science and art. At the same time that this analytical function is at work, a further pedagogy of creativity is also set in motion, intended not only to show people the principles of creativity and how to put them into practice but also—and here is the particular power of the new pedagogy, beyond deconstruction—to stimulate the desire to create (not necessarily in “art,” but in the lived, sociopolitical world).

The image of the nomad summarizes the steps of grammatology (the nomad wanderer who crosses all boundaries), with Derrida using the image analogically, while Beuys literally enacts the shamanistic practices of the nomadic civilizations (associated with the Russian Steppes). “Ever since the very first texts I published,” Derrida remarks, “the motifs of the ‘margin’ and of ‘nomadism’ are very insistent,” although, he adds, their operation in his thought should be distinguished from the ideology of nomadic margins which was fashionable in Paris intellectual circles (“Crochets,” 108). Perhaps, too, it is justifiable to include “margarine” in that series of terms Derrida generates around marges, including marche and marque.