Reading and Writing Revenge Fantasies

“Nothing is ever to be posited that is not also reversed and caught up again in the *supplementarity of this reversal* [reversement].”
Luce Irigaray, *This Sex* (79, Irigaray’s emphasis)

Yes, rape (in cinema) has a history (e.g., Haskell). And so does revenge (e.g., Read; Horeck; Heller-Nicholas; Projansky). Perhaps rape and revenge began at the same time and have exhibited parallel complementary traces that contribute to the development of subjectivity. Rape and then revenge; or, Revenge and then rape; or still, Rape as revenge. But Revenge for What? Perhaps rape and revenge inform the very narrative structure of violence called history. As Laura Mulvey says: “sadism demands a story” (“Visual” 14). We could equally say that a story demands sadism. A sadist. Indeed, either may be in the other. Perhaps a sadist, such as de Sade, as many commentators have argued, can teach us in his dialogues something by way of his interlocutors.¹

¹ See these various commentators who generally read de Sade’s various works as performing the dark side of reason (Enlightenment): Le Brun, *Sade: A Sudden Abyss*; Klossowski, *Sade: My Neighbor*; Frappier-Mazur, *Writing the Orgy*; Weiss, *The Aesthetics of Excess*. Also see this
I want to turn now to a woman’s revenge story that has as its script You rape me, I kill you. In my turn, I will deal with imminent reversibility.

Wendy Hesford (Strosser’s Rape Stories): As a case in point, Hesford addresses the reversibility based on revenge in Margie Strosser’s video Rape Stories (1989) and takes a stand against it, just as I do. But Hesford’s take is by far more complicated than this simple reversal (based on the principle of an eye for an eye) suggests.

Hesford starts from Teresa de Lauretis’ discussion (Technologies 31–50) on the reversal of violence of rhetoric in relation to the rhetoric of violence. De Lauretis contends, “the representation of violence is inseparable from the notion of gender, even when the latter is explicitly ‘deconstructed’ or, more exactly, indicated as ‘ideology.’ I contend, in short, that violence is engendered in representation” (33). There is no doubt that “violence is engendered in representation,” along with rhetoric becoming rhetorics! The problem is that a powerful way of attempting to escape the metaphysics of representation is both negative and nonpositive-affirmative deconstructions. The violence of rhetoric drifts, as Paul de Man would say, into “a reading, not a decodage,” with readings unto readings unto a pure rhetoric, which means rhetorics (Allegories 9), displacing in the rhetoric of violence the fact that violence is engendered, that sex is forced on women and some men, making them sexually normed as “women,” as objects used in certain life-denying ways (De Lauretis 37).2 No matter how much

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2 De Man’s infinite rhetoricity (transversibility) is informed by his reading of C. S. Peirce. While de Man engages in a poststructuralist reading, Lauretis’s is a “realist” reading (Technologies 38–42). Predispositions
anyone tries to control logos (language), however, through identification, non-contradiction, and excluded middle, logos does what logos desires—makes impossibility possible. Whether we like it or not. At best, we can take note of it when we notice it. (Here comes a tsunami.) In as much as human beings speak, we are also spoken. There is, consequently, the idea of mis-trusting logos (a language, any language). Hence, the presumption that misology leads to misanthropy (See Plato, Phaedo 89d-90).

To combat this drift of reversibility and beyond, Hesford has one over-riding goal and primary application in respect to the fantasy of revenge in Strosser’s video. The “goal,” as Hesford says,

is not to look at survivors’ representations as mirrors of historical or psychic realities but to consider how realist strategies authenticate survivors’ representa-

3 From Aristotle through Cicero to the present, rhetoric has been developed to teach speakers (writers and readers) to control the flow of logos (language). Historians of rhetoric have continually tried to separate the tropes from the topoi, the latter being supposedly the very essence of rhetoric. But there is no way to rid tropes from topoi, conceptual starting places. Later, with Ricoeur’s hermeneuts of suspicion, especially, Nietzsche and Freud, as well as my addition of Heidegger, logos speaks human beings. Marx is usually included, but I can accept such an inclusion only if Marx is not a “Marxist.” My sense is that Lyotard, in Libidinal Economy, has embarrassed Marxists. And so have Žižek (Sublime Object of Ideology) and Sloterdijk (Critique of Cynical Reason). What I am saying here is heretical on several levels, which I have already explained in detail in Negation and Sexual Violence. But really, a challenge was offered in favor of my position, way before I knew I had a position, by Ijsseling (Philosophy and Rhetoric in Conflict). See my summary in Negation (170–73), in fact, see the whole book.
tions. I use the terms realist in this context to refer to conventions and strategies of representation that signify that which is deemed ‘true’ and presume a measure of objectivity. Thus, the ‘textual anxiety’ that sustains this project is the desire to rescue the concept of agency from the anti-humanist assaults of poststructuralism in ways that do not configure agency outside of culture and its discourses but reconfigure personal and political agency as embodied negotiations and material enactments of cultural scripts and ideologies. For example, in order to account for the pain that women endure to claim agency in the context of sexual violence, we need to understand rape as both a material and a discursive site of struggle of cultural power. (197; Hesford’s emphasis)

Hesford is “consider[ing] how [“realist”] strategies of appropriation can subvert dominant rape scripts even as they establish complicity with them” (197; cf. Leonardo).

Hesford responds to what she sees as the political weaknesses of poststructuralist reading practices for feminism and women. Therefore, Hesford recognizes what I stated above, but would not accept what appears to be the inevitable flow of logos. Hence, our differences. So much depends on what is taken for our relations with logos!

Hesford’s application centers on a series of readings of Rape Stories done with great care, asking, what is gained by Strosser’s calling on a particular strategy of reversal? Hesford says, “The victim rewrites the rape narrative of male power by constructing herself [through a reversal] as [the] one who inflicts pain and violation; the survivor

4 See my thoughts on deconstruction in Negation (207–33).
maims and disarms the phallus and then distributes the
fragments among other female rape survivors” (207).

To add to Hesford’s critique—because I agree with Hes-
ford’s take on the trope of revenge—what I find ethico-po-
litically counter-productive in Strosser’s video is that it is
not only reactionary, vengeful, and suffering from rese-
ssenti-
ment, but it is also a call for a counter-narrative of sacrifice
and resurrection. While there are countless narratives of
rapes of women (it is an ur-script as I have pointed out),
should the man who raped Strosser be murdered, muti-
lated, and cut into slivers and distributed to other women
who have been raped? No doubt, the prevailing answer by
readers would be understandably YES! For those who have
not viewed the video: Toward the end, Strosser fantasizes
killing the rapist and cutting his corpse into wafer-like
slivers and distributing them to women to eat.5 Hence, a
sacrifice for communion. A call put out: Do this in remem-
brance of me! The ramifications of this fantasy-act are
numerous, from a Christian story of incorporation and
resurrection to a parodic reversal of Freud’s story in Totem
and Taboo of the slaying of the father and the consuming
of his flesh by the brothers (SE, XIII: 1–161; cf. Hamacher
1–81). Here instead of a band of brothers, a band of sisters.
Either way, someone is sacrificed. Either way, a commu-
nity is established at the expense of the other. Either way,
Strosser is saying: Do this in remembrance of all our
sisters who have been raped.

But perhaps Hesford and I, though differently, are
making too much of what we see as a script of revenge.
After all, the script is just a thought, a fantasy, in a film/
video, just like all those ancient mythic narratives of rape
founding new communities. We might reason: What is

5 Strosser’s work is not near—actually, it is not even comparable—to
Meir Zarchi’s I Spit on Your Grave (1978). But I have only read about
Zarchi’s film. I refuse to view it.
good for the goose is good for the gander. And for the gosling? Everything is reversible! And improperly proper for a sacrificial economy. And yet, have we uncovered a limit?

I want to examine—diatactically—my own mixed responses to Strosser’s video, for they open up for me some things about the video and Strosser’s purpose for making it that complicate issues greatly. My ethic in thinking, reading, and writing is not dialectical resolutions (from standing above), but diatactical self-criticisms (from mis-understandings within and around the rhetoric of violence and the violence of rhetoric) (cf. White, *Tropics* 4). I must, as I hope others will, be suspicious of every thought spoken and written, for I am not the master of what I say or write. Nor, I would insist, is anyone. I will try to rehearse my responses and then comment on them and how I see the video as an experiment against canonized ways of reading rape and as an experiment, intended or not, for a pedagogy of reading (viewing) rape stories (cf. Projansky; Cuklanz). And yes, equivocations will mis/inform the flow.

Much of what I see and re-see, however, will be, in my contrary attempt to explain my viewing experiences, informed by the thinking of tactical poststructuralist theories. Some rather radical and even disconcerting for me at times. What I find peculiar in my experience with the video was that while I was reading the video, the video was reading me. It is not unusual that in some genres

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6 My allusion here is to Ovid’s story, in *Metamorphoses*, of Philomela. As the story goes: Tereus is married to Procne. They have Itys as their son. The narrative begins with Tereus raping Procne’s sister, Philomela. Let us recall, if only with a casuistic stretching by analogy, that Procne for revenge kills her and Tereus’ son Itys *(It was)* and then serves Itys up for the unwitting incorporation by the father. The generosity of Being *(Itys, it is, it gifts)* in this counter-scenario is subverted with violence begetting violence. With the eternal return of the same. (See, *Sexual Violence* 28–31.)
objects can read their subjects, whether male or female or third possibilities (Deleuze, *Cinema 1* 81; cf. Perniola 39–58; Elkins, *Object*; Baudrillard, *Revenge*). What I am saying about viewer-video (subject-object) relations can be interpreted as a form of reciprocity, or reversibility itself, if not reconciliation, which I see as potentially, though dormant, in all thoughts and things, but it is not any mere reversibility that leads unquestionably to revenge as we see in Strosser’s theme of revenge. I would think, as Christa Wolf does, that there is a “third alternative” (106–07, 118): Namely, “living” the various textual lives within the text, for example, in Wolf’s work, the fall of Troy.

To this end, I am going to follow this *topos* as well as *chora* of reversibility. I am aware that Jean Baudrillard insists that today, given the “systems” we live in, reversibility in mythology is not possible. We are stuck, he insists, in “irreversibility” (*Revenge* 25), just as he refuses to go with “transversality” (33). More important for me, however, is to counter-insist on reversibility in “mythologies” (25), that is, in mythomorphic discourses that are the foundations of thinking, reading, writing. I will make much of this insistence as we proceed. Why? Because reversibility can lead to, and I believe it is leading toward, a *transversibility*, or rather a transvaluation of values that will enhance living (cf. Irigaray, *This Sex* 79–80). But I am getting ahead of myself.

At First Viewing: I received the video as being composed of, edited with, more than Strosser’s telling her story. I received the video as having several different narrators, each telling her separate story (“Rape Stories”). I viewed it as an anthology of stories. Upon additional viewings,
however, I reversed my original position and began to see that it was Strosser’s telling alone, with the implication that her telling was one of many “Rape Stories.” Therefore, I moved from the idea of many narrators to one (with the potentiality of many stories). Either way, what I began additionally to think was that the video was interrogating me, or more broadly that the video interrogates the viewer—that this was a video titled “Rape Stories” that also attempts to create the illusion, for the viewer, of going through the ordeal of having to make a statement concerning what is taking place (in the video) and then having to defend it. Most peculiar, as I began to critique the video, I simultaneously found myself being critiqued. This was no simple matter that critique of others is also self-critique. I discovered that I was becoming others and that the video is pedagogical in a distributed, non-privileged, non-can onized way.

To extrapolate further, what I find remarkable about Strosser’s video is that it places me and perhaps other viewers into many different subject or mute (tongue cut out) interlocutor positions such as a police detective listening to a report made by a woman who has been raped, but which in a later scene has the same woman becoming that very detective watching and interrogating the viewer. Subject/object(abject) reverses to object(abject)/subject. In one story or subject position, it is many stories and subject-object positions. As Virginia Woolf might say, the apparent entities “are edged with mist. [They] make an unsubstantial territory” (Waves 185). Entities (subjects/objects) become singularities who take on, or taken by, some apparatus (dispositif) greater than the radical-collective eye of the fly.8 There are all kinds of such productive-turn-para-

8 For apparatus, see Agamben, What is an Apparatus?, as well as Deleuze “What is a Dispositif?”
doxical reversals, as well as metamorphoses, in the video that test us as viewers, male or female (cf. Pribram; Pro-
jansky). That test the exuberance of our very being. (I am 
aware that I am mixing, conflating, my viewing experi-
ences of Rape Stories with other potential viewers’ experi-
ences. In as much as Hesford’s viewings are an invitation 
to see it her ways, my viewings are an invitation as well to 
see it my wayves [ways, waves, yes as affirmations]. I do not 
see these various wayves as antithetical. Rather, I see these 
wayves, as Gayatri Spivak might say, as establishing the 
conditions for “saying ‘yes’” to the text-video a second and 
third time [see “Feminism” 212].)

This video Rape Stories is many things, but it is, to 
borrow a critical phrase, a “test drive” as well (Ronell). 
When I view the video, I am tested. So while I agree with 
De Lauretis and Hesford that the reversibility displaces 
the literate “fact” that violence is en-gendered and that 
rape scripts go unchallenged, I still see that, because of 
reversibility, in another sense, rape scripts go perpetually 
challenged, and I can be taught, as other female and male 
viewers can be taught, what it may be like to be interro-
gated by the law, or as often claimed, raped again. (To be 
sure, this teaching, or pedagogical move by Strosser, can 
be viewed as a simulation [reality] of what it must be like 
to be raped again. See Smart 34–35; Estrich 60–62; Henge-
hold 98–100.) Strosser’s video can teach the viewer both 
how to listen and more importantly how to hear rape sto-
ries when told—and “we” are told—in quite different and 
subtle ways. (I am referring to Strosser’s telling the viewers 
that, when she tells men that she has been raped, she tries 
to situate the stories to make them tell-able. She tells a 
man, “I hate parking garages because I was raped. And 
invariably, the man would say, I never knew anyone who 
was raped before. And I would say, that’s what you think; 
they just never tell you.”)
Reversibility can be pharmakonic. Part of which can be life-enhancing. And yet, any such part, or counterpart, can put out a call for a script of transgression. Revenge. Which after all is said and undone is what Rape Stories attempts to do, to transgress, and to accomplish transgression by way of mirror images, which are plentiful in the video. And as Hesford argues and reminds us these strategies based on mirroring (a woman is raped; therefore, a woman should fantasize revenge against the rapist) are productive of only the same (206–12). As long as we dwell in the Symbolic (exchange and death), however, we are left with the question of where do women go for a life-enhancing scripted response that does not send them looping back to fantasizing about “empowerment” by way of revenge? Or contra-power? The Symbolic (along with simulation) has its various pedagogical mirroring stages. But it is not near enough to avoid the psychoanalytic Symbolic and Real and take up with the so-called materialist real to find the scripts. After all, the two, as Slavoj Žižek argues, homologically uphold each other: The Freudian-Lacanian and the Marxian views are both concerned with “the secret” of the dream and of the commodity (Sublime 11–16; cf. Horeck 1–13; Rose, States 3–4). Scripts as texts for life or filmic action are potentially Ovidean texts.

I consider myself, at this moment, a Bergsonian materialist that would not attempt to separate his thinking from the Symbolic—Lacan, Kristeva, Žižek’s S/symbolic and Real—except when passing over into the zone of indeter-

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9 For a discussion of pharmakon, see Derrida, Dissemination. It is not a matter of choosing to think pharmakonically. Thinking is pharmakoncic.

10 We can read Žižek as a poststructuralist himself. Žižek reads Lacan, however, as espousing a view that “is perhaps the most radical contemporary version of the Enlightenment” (7). But Žižek argues, “the moment we see it ‘as it really is,’ this being [i.e., this thing that is “the paradox of being”] dissolves itself into nothingness or, more precisely, it changes into another kind of reality” (28).
mination where third (non-transcendental, non-simulated) figures will have flourished (Bergson, Creative 126; cf. Kittler, Discourse; Gramophone).

Subsequent Viewings: I viewed the video all the way through the first time and thereafter numerous times the first day that I received it. The second day, I viewed the video through stops and restarts. Forwards/backwards. Backwards/forwards. Browsings. Repeatedly. Studying the scenes. Taking notes. Making more notes, while recalling how I was hailed to view the video by way of Hesford’s readings.

Let us stop and take notice of the fact that I have been calling Strosser’s work a “video” and not a film. Hesford calls it a “film” (200). The organization—Women Make Movies—that distributed Rape Stories called it a videotape, which distinguishes it from other offerings that the organization calls films. (The works, at the time of my ordering/viewing, came in two basic formats of either 16mm, with a few in 35mm, film or in generic analog video. These expressions of difference by the WMM organization are more in terms of format and do not allude to a theory/genre specifying particular conventions of film vs. video making. The video is now distributed by scribe.org.)

So, Why am I calling the work a video? And is there a difference between a film and a video? The latter question is generally answered with a Yes.12 The former question is


12 Yvonne Spielmann focuses on the technical differences between various media, including film and video. But in the opening chapter, she spends much time reviewing exceptions to technological differences. She points to and thereby reminds me of Bolter and Grusin’s take on remediation. They write: “If the logic of immediacy leads one either to
best answered by my saying that I am insisting on thinking the work a video for the reason that it allows me to use the term, genre or paragenre, heuristically in rethinking Rape Stories. If the work can take me on a test drive, I in turn can take the work on a test drive. In fact, I would say that the work invites me to take this reversal seriously. If for no other than heuristic, heretic, heuretic reasons. And for, as I announce in the Preamble, the task here is meditation through remediation.

My calling Rape Stories a video changes the conditions for the possibilities of reading any rape stories as De Lauretis would and Hesford does. I am less disagreeing with Hesford’s reading, which is informed by the cultural and academic scripts of reading films; I am more so attempting, rather, to account for Hesford’s reading of rape scripts, real/ism, and how “realist strategies can authenticate survivors’ representations” (197) in Rape Stories. This approach that would avoid, or work around, the violence of rhetoric is important to both De Lauretis and Hesford, and yet, it is equally important to all previous, parallel discussions concerning the inoperative, unavowable, coming community (cf. Alexandra Juhasz’s work). But the importance of the approach rests on the notion that a liberating subject of modernity is necessary to do erase or to render automatic the act of representation, the logic of hypermediacy acknowledges multiple acts of representation and makes them visible. Where immediacy suggests a unified visual space, contemporary hypermediacy offers a heterogeneous space, in which representation is conceived of not as a window on the world, but rather as ‘windowed’ itself—with windows that open on to other representations or other media….In every manifestation, hypermediacy makes us aware of the medium or media and (in sometimes subtle and sometimes obvious ways) reminds us of our desire for immediacy” (33–34; qtd, 302–03). Additionally see Bellour, L’entre-images; Jameson, “Reading”; Ulmer, “One”; Ronell, Finitude’s Score.
political work. This subject is, however, as Greg Ulmer argues,

formed in the apparatus of literacy, dependent on a specific historical configuration of technology, institutional practices (a written model of knowledge and law) and the behaviors of selfhood (the humanistic ideology of individualism). Is this apparatus still in place? The debate about the constructed nature of the human subject among humanists, Marxists, and deconstructors is one *symptom* that things are changing. The institutions organized by the apparatus of literacy express a nearly universal condemnation of a new institution whose organization reflects a new apparatus—television, representing the electronic apparatus (different technology, institutional practices, and personal behaviors). (“One” 259; emphasis added. Cf. Heath, “Turn”; Nancy, *Being* 1–99.)

But besides the distinction between film and video, I have in mind also Deleuze’s distinction between *classical* and *modern cinema*, which are comparable in their differences with the previous pair. Specifically, I am thinking of Deleuze’s *Cinema 1* and *Cinema 2*, in which he develops the differences between classical and modern, with the later radically decoding (deterritorializing) subjectivity, or any center of feigned authority and control. As is well known—and therefore I will give only a brief description here—Deleuze is working out of a Bergsonian ontology of monism with memory (mind) and matter as indistinguishable, or “*movement-image* and *flowing-matter* [as] strictly the same thing” (*Cinema 1* 59; Deleuze’s emphasis). Subjective and objective perceptions, going through a *distributed perception*, slide into a third of “liquid perception”; or additionally put, solids become liquids that, in turn,
become “gaseous perceptions” (dispersive and nonhuman) (71–86). What Deleuze has in mind as an exemplar for the latter-third is “Vertov’s non-human eye, the cine-eye [which] is not the eye of a fly or an eagle... Neither is it... the eye of the spirit endowed with a temporal perspective... [I]t is the eye of matter, the eye in matter, not subject to time” (81; emphasis added. Cf. Deleuze, Negotiations 54). This eye is radically molecular and distributed. Which is brought about in cinema through “flickering montage... photogramme-shot [frame still shot]... hyper-rapid montage... re-recording” (85). According to Deleuze, what Vertov aims for and achieves is “the genetic element of all possible perception, that is, the point which changes, and which makes perception change, the differential of perception itself” (83; emphasis added). Besides movement-image, there is time-image, which introduces the “irrational cut,” no longer based on metonymic (cause/effect) or synedochic (part/whole) relations but paralogical-conductive relations, with the interstices bringing forth “the new image of thought” (Cinema 2 214–15; cf. 179–82; cf. Doane). The irrational cut is outside of the realm of the so-called rational cut (castration itself). For Bergson and Deleuze, “the universe... is metacinema” (Cinema 1 59), is brain (Cinema 2 189–224), in its relation with human beings after human beings’ brain, that is, after the posthumanist turn. As Deleuze says, “cinema produces reality” (Negotiations 58; cf. Cinema 2 262) by circulating and decirculating its characters and hence its viewers through “cerebral circuits, brain waves” (60; cf. Kittler, Gramophone xl-xli). Metacinema forms a potential pedagogy and a canon that is perpetually de-canonized.

As we move from film (modernism) to video (postmodernism or late capitalism), or from classical through modern cinema, the more we lose the conditions of subjectivity (agency), narrative representation and memory, as
well as rational cuts, and the more we rediscover the conditions for cracking-up subjectivity (Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand* 198–200; Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, 167) into haecceans and singularities (Agamben, *Coming* 17–20; cf. Perniola 22–38). Which are by far more resistant to domination than subject-object relations. We have not yet arrived at this crack-up of subjectivity into singularities, to the degree it will occur, but all signs (symptoms) indicate we are drifting—for good, bad, or in-difference—to a greater degree in this direction. Just as we drifted from orality to literacy, we are now drifting from literacy (print culture) to electracy (electronic culture). And finally to the conditions of imminence (coming politics and community). But this is not to say that any one of these modes of being is left behind or disappears, for they all remain and begin to crowd and mob memory itself (see Burgos). We move hence from *imminent reversibility* to *imminence* (always already on the verge of happening). But this sketch needs to be a full argument, or a more forceful post-announcement, than I can possibly give here. But we will have to re-live through it, perhaps for a while in the desert—a fate

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13 We should keep in mind Freud’s “Screen Memories” (*SE*, III: 301–22); Deleuze’s notion that the “brain is a screen” (see, e.g., the interview “Brain” in Flaxman 366; also, *Cinema 1* 56–63; *Cinema 2* 189–224) which echoes back to Bergson’s thinking (*Matter and Memory* and *Creative Evolution*) and recalls recent “intellectual” cinema. Moreover, we should keep in mind Havelock (*Muse*), Ulmer (*Teletheory; Heuretics; Internet*), and Ronell (*Telephone*) on distinctions among oral, literate, and electronic-digital cultures. Also, see Burgos, “Memento”; Murray, “Digital Incompossibility”; Hansen, “Seeing With the Body”; Johnston, “Machinic Vision.” And especially see Kittler, *Gramophone* 129–33, who argues, “Total use of media instead of total literacy: sound film and video cameras as mass entertainment liquidate the real even” (133). Most devastating is Kittler’s *Discourse Networks*.

14 Baudrillard best describes the implosion of time and space, the loss of ethos (or subjectivity, agency), logos (reason), pathos (community). See *Transparency*; cf. Virilio *Open Sky*. 
accomplished—first to think it as a back-formation, or metaleptic production (Levinas, *Totality* 22–30; cf. Blanchot, “Prophetic,” *Book* 79–85). The writing-reading-thinking as backwards! Or as a *chiasm* (Irigaray, “Invisible” 151–84). At least, this sketch can suggest, however, where I am coming from in dis/respect to this test drive. If there is an exemplar for this *condition of imminence* it is to be found performed (virtually, deformed) in Jonathan Nolan’s story “Memento Mori”15 (which his brother, Christopher, made into the film *Memento*). But it is the story—not only the film—though the story and the film, the two different apparatuses, keep collapsing in on each other—that I refer to as exemplars of what is coming to our post-medium communities. It is the story, curiously enough, that carries the germs of an electronic apparatus. The story is, in my thinking, a story of transitions-interruptions and not one of restricted, but general arrival.

Interruptions as Other Viewings (*Memento*): In the story, Earl (in the film, Leonard Shelby), the man who suffers from a blow to the head as he attempted to save his wife from getting raped and murdered, tries to remember but cannot. (Or so we are led for the most part to believe in the film.) His “condition” for being has changed. Though he would think sustained difference, he thinks repetition. In the film, Leonard asks, *Have I told you about my condition? Of possibilities?* He perpetually attempts, nonetheless, to remember, to return himself back to that event of real violence (the originary moment), but he perpetually and circularly fails, even with the prosthesis of writing notes.

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15 Nolan’s story was published in *Esquire* (March 2001), and can be found on the Web at [http://www.esquire.com/entertainment/books/a1564/memento-mori-0301/]. For the film *Memento*, see the script (Nolan, *Memento*), a selection of articles (Kania), and the making of the film (Mottram).
all around him (on the walls, mirrors, on front and back of photographs, on the ceiling and even more so on his body). As he reads these notes, he can remember them for about ten minutes and then he slips into a total state of confusion, which is not a beginning but an interruption, an experience of finitude, starting over again reading. Leonard’s signature is the ten-minute script replayed in loops throughout the story as well as the film on its way to becoming a video near us. Leonard and the viewers along with him loop the loop in reversible order to some apparent origin of crime. An image of rape. Every ten minutes, Leonard experiences the depletion of self. Of subjectivity itself. Of individuation. The cognitive conventions of the subject-Leonard as a prosecutor declaring a particular subject a criminal—means, method, motive, and opportunity—disappear.

Leonard uses his “writings” as a means of establishing a point of stasis. He reads what he has written on the back of a Polaroid photo of Teddy: “Don’t believe his lie He is the one Kill him [sic].” He does this knowing that he does not know. And yet, he thinks knowing, thinks he has a grounding freed from subjective distortion by the facts written down on paper or tattooed across his body. As Deleuze might say about Earl/Leonard, “defenseless against a rising of the ground which holds up to [them] a distorted or distorting mirror... all determinations become bad and cruel” (see Difference 152–53). Earl/Leonard’s thinking is finally accomplished in a total state of cynicism. Someone’s gotta pay. Or be sacrificed. To close this debt. This rape. As he says in the last scene of the film, which is the first of the chronological scenario, “I have to believe in a world outside my own mind [or brain]. I have to believe that my actions still have meaning, even if I cannot remember them. I have to believe when my eyes are closed, the world is still here. Do I believe the world is
still here? Is it still out there? Yeah! We all need mirrors to remind ourselves where we are. I’m no different” (emphasis added). Then after a pause, he says: “Now, where was I?” Thus ends, yet ever re-begins for us, the film. The image, in the mirror, of thought.

In any court of law, this story → turn Polaroid-photos → turn-film → turn video would most likely be thrown out. This metamorphosis of story-turn-video could not even be shown as evidence to convict Earl or Leonard, for video, as l’entre-image, is subject to what the court would see as cynical cuts. In this story that is morphed into a film, there is the incipient, yet residual beginnings of video itself. Not only does this story without a story, attack the conventions of literacy itself, and not only does it pass through the conventions of film, as a transitional form, but it also replaces us nearby, if not well inside, the material conditions of video. It is a huge leap to say so, but as Ulmer might say, this film without a film is approaching “video thinking as a kind of hymn [elegy] to writing (“One” 262; Deleuze, Cinema 2 166–67).

Earl/Leonard writes to the point of having messages to himself tattooed-written in reverse on his body so that he can read them in a mirror: On his arm, he reads, “I RAPED AND KILLED YOUR WIFE.” And on his chest he sees a tattooed sketch of a man, like a “police sketch.” Earl/Leonard perpetually yet only momentarily asks, Who is the “I” of “I RAPED AND KILLED YOUR WIFE.” Earl/Leonard wants to track down this sketch of a man and get revenge for his wife’s death and pain. But the voice in Earl/Leonard, the remaining thread of what was, forever re-looped, says, “So the question is not ‘to be or not to be,’ because you aren’t. The question is whether . . . revenge matters to you. It does to most people. . . . But the passage of time is all it takes to erode that initial impulse. Time is theft. . . . And as for the passage of time, well, that doesn’t
really apply to you anymore, does it? Just the same ten minutes, over and over again. So how can you forgive if you can’t remember to forget?” (story, online). This voice (over) in the story as well as the film that speaks and taunts Earl/Lenard (about revenge) will also disappear. As the film nullifies itself, so do the taunts. At best, for us it is an oral or literate residue of a convention of narration and point of view, a nostalgia that will eventually withdraw from us altogether. As guilt or conscience will have withdrawn. With the conditions of the possibilities of revenge gone, which means the subject (agent) gone, so then goes ethos. Which is haunt, place, topos. Home. Without any takers or buyers. The crying of our lot. Disappearance.

The problem is not just the violence of rhetoric as portrayed and explained by De Lauretis and supported and reinforced in terms of rape scripts by Hesford. The problem is not just owing to the use of poststructuralist reading (bad) habits. The problem, rather, is the on-going result of cultural drift, the growing loss of habitus, of symbolic exchange, which poststructuralism and literacy-turn-electracy studies are disclosing to us. We are moving toward the posthuman period becoming an ellipsis (e.g., see Steigler, Technics, I and II; cf. Pearson, Viroid Life). In as much as Strosser’s video resituates us as subjects, or objects, or even abjects in the rape stories, the apparatus of video itself resituated us. The change in the media—intermedia—changes us. As I have tried to suggest electrate conventions even in literacy, a short story, or in a film, can function as videography, drifting (reversing, transversing) where they so desire, changing both the story/ies and us.

There is every good reason to believe that Strosser was, in fact, raped. Because she said she was. But when Strosser’s rape “story”-turn-”stories” are re-rendered in video, or film/video, uncontrollable proliferation begins to occur. There should be every good reason to believe that Leon-
ard’s wife was, in fact, raped and killed by an unknown man, but the telling in film-video, given the rapid cuts and layering of scenes, toward the end, which is the rebeginning, casts doubt, suggesting that Leonard himself might be the perpetrator. Which leaves us with the additional impossible problem of his inability to form new memories. Even the brain-mind, as cinema, and memory, as screen memories, are given to irrational (or non-rational) cuts, or as some might claim, cynical cuts. The medium does become both the mass/age and the mess/age.

The media of “Memento Mori” (print) and Memento (film-video) are devastating. Catastrophic. Quite allegorically (literally), Earl/Leonard is dead (“the question is not ‘to be or not to be,’ because you aren’t”). The question is whether or not Earl/Leonard wants to kill or not kill the (a) man who raped and killed his wife and killed him. Or put similarly, wants revenge. And yet, existentially, there is the question of living on in his death. Posthumanly. Let the dead bury the living (cf. Kittler, Gramophone 124–33).
The abyssal inclusion of video as call of conscience offers no easy transparency but requires a reading; it calls for a discourse. As we have been shown with singular clarity in the Rodney King case and, in particular, with the trial, what is called for when video acts as the call of conscience is not so much a viewing of a spectacle, but a reading, and, instead of voyeurism, an exegesis.

Avital Ronell, “Trauma TV,” *Finitude’s Score* (312)

A Peculiar (Now Impertinent) Reading: Before this interruption explaining why I called *Rape Stories* a video, why I wanted to disclose the conditions for different-differential readings, and then why the eventual loss of reading as an ethico-political problem, I began with what I referred to as a “peculiar” reading, which I will continue. I initially viewed the video as being composed of a number of women sequentially telling their rape stories, though of course I made the assumption that the primary story—the first one told—was Strosser’s. Hence, while the story was one in its repetitiveness, it was also many stories of women raped and forced (obsessively, like the ancient mariner) to tell their stories. (I have analyzed the video and accounted for nine sections. I can only invite my readers to view this video to follow my discussion.)

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16 There are, as I count them, nine sections to *Rape Stories*. Each section is titled by Strosser herself in a designation of time, which I place in italics. I open each with only the starting monologue.

- The video opens in black with audio in the background: “In 1979 I was raped. These are my stories.”
- Section 1, in color, is of a lone woman viewed at a distance walking in an Urban, quasi-industrial setting. There are two separate shots. The voice over begins, “The earliest memory I have of rape fear was when I was about six or seven years old and we lived in the country.”
- Title shot: *Rape Stories*
- Section 2, in color, is of a woman (in a talking-head view) beginning, “Now ten years later [1989], I still think of the rapist. Actually,
In part, what led me to many instead of one storyteller

I don’t think about the rapist but think about rapists in general or about being rape…. But I do think about the rapist, too. What happened to him?”

- Section 3, in b/w and the longest section, begins, “Two Saturdays ago” [1979] with another talking-head camera view supposedly of Strosser (or a different woman altogether playing Strosser [?]), speaking into a microphone, saying, “Okay, well, two Saturdays ago, I was up late with Susan…” The speaker gives a full account of her going outside to buy cigarettes and returning and letting a man who was a stranger into the building and then the elevator with her and of being raped by him while he held a knife to her throat.

- Section 4, in color, is of two women in jogging shorts, with the shot limited to a frontal view of their tee-shirts and shorts with arms moving as they are apparently jogging. This section begins, “The day after the rape I wore sunglasses all the time. I was afraid to meet other peoples’ eyes, because my look was frightened, accusing. I felt transparent through the eyes.”

- Section 5, in b/w, takes place in a room, perhaps a laundry basement, with a woman walking around holding a clamped light, while she momentarily picks up a cat, and then returns to walking around. The voice over says, “For a long time I never entered a room without looking for another way out. If I couldn’t see it, I wouldn’t go in.”

- Section 6, in color with a steady camera shot at night, takes place inside a car in the flow of traffic with street lights passing. The voice over says, “Right after the rape I was working as an assistant editor on a documentary film about high-fashion models called Beautiful Baby, Beautiful. All the editors were women. And we worked in a nice apartment on Central Park West. So it was an extremely secure kind of environment.”

- Section 7, in color, same woman with camera shot as in section 2, saying, “I still have this nightmare about the rape. Sometimes. The nightmare is that I’m in my lobby.”

- Section 8, in color, women in a pool floating with face up. The voice over says, “On the night of the rape, after I was released from the emergency room, I went home and sat in a hot bath tub. And tired to soak off the rapist.”

- Section 9, in color, same woman with camera shots as in sections 2 and 7, saying, “One day it occurred to me that I would feel a lot better if I got rid of the rapist. So I started fantasizing about killing the rapist.”

The credits are shown with the background audio of an elevator opening and people walking in and out.
was the sequential shift from the woman telling her story in what I have labeled section 2 ("Now ten years later") to section 3 ("Two Saturdays ago"). I took the person in section 2, which is right after the title shot, to be Strosser herself. The contrast between the women in sections 2 and 3 is so distinctive in the way the two women look that I simply did not see them as the same woman. (After rape, is there metamorphosis as Ovid suggests? Or perhaps, in a rather negative term, a "hysterization," as Freud suggested? [see Hengehold 98–100].) It was more than the fact that one section is in black and white and the other is in color; it is a whole host of differences in terms of movement-images (loops) and time-images (cuts).

Later, however, when rereading Hesford, I discovered that she says, "Two Saturdays ago" (or my section 3) is "spliced into" the whole 1989 narrative of the video (200). This was puzzling for me. In looking for some support for Hesford’s interpretation, I returned to the Women Make Movies Online Catalog and read the following statement: “In October 1979, Margie Strosser was raped in the elevator of her apartment building. Two weeks later, she asked a friend to interview her about the incident [emphasis added]. Ten years later, she remembers and recounts the rape, revealing the emotional texture of the experience and the reshaping of the event through memory. Between these two distant and disparate versions of the same story, slips a third, that of the video narration, which integrates the experience over time, revealing the process of recovery. Candid and intimate, Rape Stories speaks to women's common fears and the importance of telling our stories, however painful” (emphasis added)\(^\text{17}\)

With this explanation for the relation of time between

section 2 and 3, I still found it difficult to see Section 3 as real, for the movement-image, the sensory-motor scheme appears to break down in its over-playing of scripts (e.g., the microphone and the self-conscious comment about it [Oh, “I’m on microphone,” so I should speak directly into it]; the reaching for the cigarette and the holding it in hand [the planned filming of the cigarette episode, zooming away in such a way and with perfect timing and then, when the cigarette script is accomplished, zooming back to the original subject-camera distance]; the fixing of hair; the phrasing of some comments and asides such as telling why she is amending her earlier versions of the story for the sake of truthfulness—in other words, all appear to be as scripted and rehearsed and, therefore, as cues to be sent to the viewer-readers to see-read the “actor’s” and filmographer’s tone [i.e., their practiced attitude toward what they are saying and doing]). And yet, I ask myself What is a “real” (representation of a realist) response to a camera and a report to spectators after having been raped? I felt a deep stupidity (Ronell, Stupidity; Shaviro, Cinematic 201–39), when confronted with the question of actuality or reality. I heard an ethical scream coming from within me. I wanted to believe that this scene is real, but I felt stupidly pressured into having to accept this scene as real, when the scene itself was telling me, perhaps by way of film-literary conventions, that it is apparently not real. Not a documentary. But staged. And yet, are not documentaries staged! (Did we not discuss this matter earlier when thinking about Elke Sander’s Liberators Take Liberties!) My confusion was placing me into the position of interrogating and assessing my “reading” of Rape Stories. I was undergoing a metamorphosis and hysterization. Approaching, perhaps, the conditions of a Lacanian real.

As I recall viewing the Strosser’s film or video, I am
now additionally aware that, as a video, it is comparable to George Holliday’s video tape of Rodney King’s being beaten and shown on TV and then in court. I can see now that the Holliday’s video is undercut by the TV presentation (the cutting short and the framing of the video on TV next to the talking heads) and can also see now that the full video is similarly undercut, so to speak, by the defense attorney’s reading of it in court frame by frame by frame (cf. Ronell, *Finitude* 312–24; Gooding-Williams 42–43, 51–53, 58–62, 65–69).

Everyone, including Strosser, is employing the logic of the cut, yet reframing the cuts, or in terms of collage re-motivating by detaching and reattaching the cuts elsewhere. And whether for experimental, juridical, political purposes (see Ulmer, “Object” 92–93). In other words, the Holliday-King video has two showings (on TV and in court) and two primary outcomes among others (one at first apparently determined, the other undetermined, or overdetermined, and dismissed as evidence). Which is more truthful? The edited version on TV with the talking heads or the so-called raw (uncooked footage of the entire video)? Or yet again the so-called raw (uncooked) footage that the attorney stirred and cooked—let simmer—through his reading of it in court frame by frame? (cf. Burke, *Counter-Statement* 66).

We have come to learn—or have been reminded—that video, like photographs, is portable and more malleable than film once it is released and placed in public places. Video is just cut and recut and shown on TV, now on YouTube or wherever, while studios have their film cut in copyrighted trailers or full versions. (The exception to video trailers’ being fixed, however, is the growing interest that video-enthusiasts and hobbyists have for downloading from the WWW re-editing trailers. Through brico-
lage, montage, collage.) TV entertainment news would not likely show a scene from a new film just anyway it wished, while it does show a scene from a video as it so wishes. When film is recut, it is later a Director’s cut. Or a censor’s cut. In general, a residue of authority follows film. Eventually, a residue of authority disperses—i.e., disappears—in video. Again, the Holliday video, in its final cut, was thrown out of court. Just as eye-witness accounts are thrown out.

I am presuming not just a difference between film and video or TV and video, with video watching TV and vice versa—Ronell has discussed this relationship—or a difference between classical and modern cinema—Deleuze has already accomplished this end. I am pointing, rather, to a difference between two videos hesitantly becoming one. I am pointing to a difference introduced by the logic—any-logic-whatever—of the cut. Specifically, in respect to Rape Stories, I am pointing to differences and repetitions owing to a spliced video (section 3, “Two Saturdays Ago” [1979]) being introduced within a full, narrated 1989 video called Rape Stories, with the former, in a sense, re-cutting the latter perpetually not just in reversals but potentially in imminent transversals. The introduction of this foreign body into the larger body revs up the immune system to reject it. But it is not that simple. For this organ without a body, as Slovaj Žižek might say, remains an “incoherent, excessive supplement” (Organs 87). In retrospect now, I can only ask, How is the splicing of a 1979 video into the 1989 video changing the corpus? How is it functioning as an intruder. While the WMM online statement points to the voice over (“the video narration, which integrates the experience over time”) as narrative suturing the two scenes together (“two weeks later” and “ten years later”), I did not take note of this “video narration” when viewing the film. Why? Because it was, rather, the cut and then
the movements that in another sense for me narrated the experience. Deleuze explains:

Cinema always narrates what the image’s movement and time make it narrate. If the motion’s governed by a sensory-motor scheme, if it shows a character reaching to a situation, then you get a story. If, on the other hand, the sensory-motor scheme breaks down to leave disoriented and discordant movements [which it does for me in the section 3, in B/W, as I described the movements being disorienting, with the woman at the microphone], then you get other patterns, becomings [a plane of immanence, assemblages, blocs] rather than stories. (Negotiations 59; emphasis added)

I should have realized that I should not have been confused about the number of stories (as well as tellers), but redirected by the blocs. Of various—not experiences—but movements, affects, sensations.

Strosser, or so I believe, directs the splicing and inserting. (Christopher Nolan, similarly, inserts a chronological, quasi-documentary, in black and white, in Memento, so that the rest of the film, told in reverse, might be more easily followed. And yet, the counter-documentary also makes for immense thematic complications and productive confusions.) It is that way in the age of mechanical reproduction. But someone might object that all “movies” (cinema, film, video analog and digital) are subject to being cut and spliced and, in fact, that is how they are made. Or might object that while the Holliday video was cut by others, the Strosser video-film has not subsequently been cut by others. Of course. But it is not just any cut I am referring to in respect to Rape Stories. I am attempting to talk about a quite different logic of the cut from one
that Occam’s razor might intend, to supposedly simplify
the story or to add to a tighter economy of commu-
ication.\textsuperscript{18} It is not just a matter of who makes the cut or
when or how many times the cut has been made. I am
talking about a logic of the cut—virtually, any paralogic of
the fold—that turns any celluloid or analog/digital film/
video into a direct statement or a telling of theory itself
(see Small, \textit{Direct Theory}; Ulmer, \textit{Teletheory}). By design
or by chance. To make my point even more heretical: I
am not so certain now that Strosser’s video is, as Hesford
claims, a pro-fantasy-revenge story or stories. There is
too much in the video that complicates that ever-so-easy
reading and invitation to critique it as such. The video is
highly reflexive and deflactive. The video is more exu-
erant in terms of creating a view of video making itself
as such. Video is, as intermedia can be, an aesthetic of
confusion, any-space-whatever and wherever. The logic
of the cuts in \textit{Rape Stories} adds to a certain uncertain

\textsuperscript{18} In discussing editing, I use Ackham’s razor to exemplify the distinc-
tion between rational cuts (castration, the principle of negative dialectic
being applied) and irrational, or nonrational cuts (vagination, or folding).
Though I call on this difference, I generally agree with Shaviro’s Deleuz-
ean take that the sign of lack (negation) is not helpful or accurate in dis-
cussing editing or suturing, that instead editing augments (i.e., shows the
“ontological instability of the image,” but thereby adds exuberance, opens
up excess) (see \textit{Cinematic} 34–43; cf. Heath, “On Suture” in \textit{Questions
76–112}; Silverman, \textit{Subjects} 194–236, and \textit{Acoustic} 10–13; Copjec, “Cutting
Up” in \textit{Read} 39–64; Žižek, \textit{Organs} 87–90). Similar to Shaviro (Deleuze), I
am interested in movement, affect, sensation. I continue this discussion
through chapter 2 and thereafter. Interestingly, Valerie Solanas in \textit{Scum
Manifesto} and Avital Ronell in her introduction to the second edition
point to an \textit{editing} (SCUM suggesting “society for cutting up men”) that
looks forward to Strosser’s fantasy of cutting up her rapist into slivers
and distributing (ironically, through contra-power, disseminating) them.
But most interesting is Ronell’s discussion of Solanas’s ideas-concepts
in terms of editing men: “‘Cutting up’ no doubt conjures castrative glee,
sinsinuating carving up, morcellating men. Yet [it] also pens other seman-
tic possibilities of which Valerie was fond: laughter, montage, editing” (11).
extra confusion or amplification between literacy and electracy, but a productive confusion. While the video is about rape stories (supposedly through a proposed constative-performative act of mimetic revenge), the video is also about unmaking a video about rape stories and revenge (through a proposed deformative act of grafting, montage and collage). The video post-critically mimes itself as an object of study. While, therefore, there is the suggestion of revenge through castration, there is the counter-suggestion of forbearance through invagination. Or through a series of folds. Not only does Strosser propose to cut up her perpetrator into slivers and to distribute them as communion, but also she is cutting up her film-video into slivers and distributing it anyplace wheresoever. It is, as if Strosser is filming-writing—videographing—and becoming Mrs. Dalloway, “slicer] like a knife through everything” (Woolf 11). Over all, this film-video is about moving from consubstantiality to unsubstantiality. While it has an epistemic-ethico-political purpose (knowing and doing), it also has an aesthetic dimension (making). And yet, it has a post-Aristotelian-Kantian-aesthetic dimension of the “informe,” or “formless” as well as of the “deform”ative (unmaking) (see Bois and Krauss, Formless; Sallis, Double).

In an electronic age, film-video is sent pirated in cuts across the world. We expect this outcome from photography and film-video to file.mov. It is impossible to control these passages. They chronically misfire. Going beyond any single aim. Film-video becomes, in as much as Strosser’s “Rape Stories” does, “thin slices of space as well as time” distributed, becomes assemblages of accidental details (see Sontag 4–5, 22–23, 105–10; Ray 13, 24–39). Many videos—as direct theory or tell a theory—are made as such, needing no, but remain open to, additional cuts and invaginations. Many of us, aware of the cutting and distributions of these virtual-incompossible worlds, bring those
presuppositions and conditions to bear on viewing film-video. *Rape Stories* invites me—invites us—to expect such self-reflexive, self-reversal-transversal remarkings of it.

All of which is to say, then, that, the body-corpus of Strosser’s film-video, with an ironic twist—call it the *revenge* of object over subject—is becoming sliced into thin singularities and distributed to a (coming) community of sorts. (One way or another we are asked to consume a corpse, corpus.) It is as if the film by way of video is becoming “filmic.” The entire film. Which, according to Barthes, would mean the film is becoming beyond description, obtuse, slipping into the third senses (*Image* 64–65). Or as Deleuze might say, it is as if the film is becoming “nothing other than slivers of crystal-images” (*Cinema* 2 69). It is not that I feel less stupid when viewing *Rape Stories* as a video. I am aware that I am responding to the video by way of a misnaming (a mistaken/ness) and a parabasis (an interruption), both of which are stupidities of other kinds. It is that I, too, become forgetful.

But something else wants to be said. In terms of *materiality*, we are moving from *techne* (potentiality) to *atechne* (impotentiality). In terms of *reading* film, we are moving from film through video (as intermedia) to TV. But video again calls us. As Ronell says: “[W]hat is called for when video acts as the call of conscience is not so much a viewing of a spectacle, but a reading, and, instead of voyeurism, an exegesis” (*Finitude* 312; emphasis added. Cf. Heidegger, *Being* 317–35). Ronell speaks of “traumatv” (*Trauma*In-Visability). Obviously, Strosser’s *Rape Stories* is an account of the traumatic event. Ronell says, as Cathy Caruth does, however, that reading trauma is *reading the impossible*. (While this notion of reading trauma comes out of psychoanalysis, which De Lauretis and Hesford want to avoid, this notion is equally about psychoanalysis and technology.) For Ronell, the trauma is “a phantom text,” “hidden
from televised view” and “the Rodney King beating is a metonymy of a hidden atrocity.” She continues, “Under nocturnal cover, nomadic, guerrilla video captures no more than the debilitating discrepancy, always screened by television, between experience and meaning. . . . This is why it could prove nothing but this discrepancy in a court of law [in Napa Valley]. . . . The repeat performance of a frame-by-frame blow shows how this text became nothing more than the compulsive unfolding of a *blank citation* [emphasis added].” And finally, Ronell says: “*this is the truth of video*, the site of the neural gleam that knows something which cannot be shown” (324–25; emphasis added). As we know—but I insist on repeating—the court eventually threw out the video as evidence and fell back on eyewitness accounts. As Ronell argues through Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, “‘the trial both derives from and proceeds by a crisis of evidence, which the verdict must resolve.’ As a sentence, the verdict is a force of law performatively enacted as a defensive gesture for not knowing” (325; qtd. from Felman and Laub, *Testimony* 18). To date, no judge, as far as I know, has thrown out secreted-hidden videos made by the rapist, showing himself raping the victim. But that day may come sooner than we think.\textsuperscript{19}

\* Coincidentally, as I originally wrote this section, a judge had to call a mistrial of the Gregory Haidl and Jane Doe case (Santa Ana, trial in Orange County) that involved a video of a group rape. Several teenage males drugged a teenage female and raped her. It was not necessary for the judge to throw out the video, for the defense-jury did. The defense was able to redescribe the video as the making of an amateur porn film and called on an expert witness to say that Jane Doe, who was “allegedly” in a stupor, unconscious, during the making of the video, was not in a *full* stupor but conscious enough to resist! Recent report: <http://www.ocregister.com/articles/doe-241830-videotape-jane.html>. Perhaps one of the most infamous cases that involved a video is that in Canada of Paul Bernardo and his wife, Karla Homolka, who raped and killed on video Karla’s sister, Kristen French. There was a conviction. “Key events in the Bernardo/Homolka case”: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/
I have tried to illustrate that both film and video give new, yet diminish older, conditions of possibilities: Both, but more so potentially video, break up literary (print culture) conventions, becoming “filmic,” and both break up the subject as well as memory, becoming the “third meaning [sense].” Additionally, as Deleuze says: “Any creative activity has a political aspect and significance [just as Strosser has]. The problem is that such activity isn’t very compatible with circuits of information and communication, ready-made circuits that are compromised from the outset. All forms of creativity including any creativity that might be possible in television, here face a common enemy. Once again it’s a cerebral matter: the brain’s the hidden side of all circuits, and these can allow the most creative tracings, less ‘probable’ links” (Negotiations 61; emphasis added). In other words, cinema-film-video (the metacinema, the brain’s hidden side) is our best alocus for creative discoveries that will work around the, heretofore, intractable circuits of the informatics of domination.

Both film/video and TV, as we have seen, have the capacity to make Rape (sexual violence) Chaste. And yet, there is a double capacity at work. There is a pharmakonic effect: While one side incapacitates potentiality, the other opens up something new (impotentialities), something

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20 Barthes writes, “The filmic is not the same as the film, is as far removed from the film as the novelistic is from the novel (I can write in the novelistic without ever writing novels)” (65). The filmic and the novelistic are the remainders. In terms of economy, then, Strosser’s film signals for us a becoming by way of “useless expenditure” (Barthes Image 55; Bataille, Accursed), becoming “lovable” (see Barthes 59; Agamben Coming 2), becoming radical singularities and “whatever beings” (Agamben 1–2). In this third sense, the film is not just for the present community of wanting revenge, but for the coming political community of the obtuse or whatever beings.
vital in terms of capacities. Out of the impossible can come possibilities. As a case in point, I have in mind what Barthes calls the “filmic” and characterizes as a certain uncertain obtuse element in film (as in Eisensteinian, Vertovian, but in any, experimental film). He says that the filmic “outplays meaning—subverts not the content but the whole practice of meaning [into the third meaning, sense]” (62). That is, it subverts the whole practice of informatics. In this subversion, there is—I would venture to say again and again—an uncanny movement from constative through performative to deformative (cf. Sallis Double 85–106). To post-cinematics. What this drifting out of a binary, which is imminently-reversible-turn-transversal anyway, leads to is a third figure of sense, a third figure that challenges, if not erases, what has gone for content, meaning, altogether (cf. Deleuze, Logic 28–35). Sens is our alocus of impotenti-ality for resistance.21

Barthes explains further: “A new—rare—practice affirmed against a majority [i.e., dominant] practice (that of signification), obtuse meaning appears necessarily as a luxury, an expenditure with no exchange [as in Bataille’s accursed share]. This luxury does not yet belong to today’s politics but nevertheless already to tomorrow’s” (62–63; Barthes’s emphasis). Barthes’s allusion to tomorrow’s politics, I take, to be in an obtuse, future anterior, yet meta-leptic allusion to a politics put forth in Nancy, Blanchot, Agamben, Ronell, and Waters’ discussions of a community without a community. From disappearance does come compearance (see Nancy, Inoperative 28, 30). Not a politics of revolution-evolution, but involution.

But I am getting way ahead of myself. Again. And yet, it is ever important that this forthcoming community, which

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21 If there is a challenge on the horizon, a challenge that would take us back to an informatic domination, it may very well be neurocinematics (see Hasson et al.). But not to worry!
Strosser’s video awaits a viewing in, is one without revenge, one that, as Agamben writes, “can have hope only in what is without remedy” (Coming 102; cf. Nietzsche, Zarathustra 249–54). But without remedy is to be taken as the “irreparable,” which has another, third sense. We will approach it later. I leave much unsaid and unacknowledged that wants to be ethically screamed. Therefore, let me rebegin and try again by thinking, reading, writing my continuing notes.

(To be continued.)