Dominique Laporte (1949–1984) writes of a lost object—specifically, of human waste—that has several implications in his book: *Histoire de la merdre*, 1978 (*History of Shit*, 2000). (Search the Internet for the cover design for the 1978 edition, especially its illustration by Roland Topor.) First, Laporte’s history begins with the Hygiene Act of 1539 in Paris. This act spins out other endless acts focuses exclusively on human waste. Additionally, this act determines that human waste, as a grounding, constitutes what a human subject or individual might be. In other words, as Rodolphe el-Khoury, one of the translators, explains, the history of shit constitutes the history of “bourgeois subjectivity” (x). The argument is that waste, especially human waste, could be used to grow food. Since food and human waste, as well as other animals’ waste, however, are a serious problem for health, the hygienists ruled the day, arguing for precise collection and processing of human waste, which was perceived to be superior to other animal wastes. Hygienists saw their roles primarily as seeking the balance of the needs (*besoins*). Here is a sample of what Laporte sees as *the logic of the irreparable* at work:

> How are we to understand the hygienists’ efforts to demonstrate that the loss of the object [human waste] would result in national disaster? How should we
consider their meticulousness in keeping records, in balancing figures, and in summing up accounts? . . . What is evident from this fantastic arithmetic is that the object of loss is incalculable. It is the priceless pretext that contorts arithmetic into marvelous and inconsistent figures and, in the end, demonstrates only that one cannot fix a price on the loss of shit. Dr. E. D. Bertherand, who considered cesspools and latrines from the triple perspective of ‘hygiene, agriculture, and commerce,’ introduced his communication to the agricultural Commission with the following epigraph: ‘That which we lose through neglect, that which we fail to gain through ignorance, is without price.’

This sentence splendidly summarizes the driving impulse of the hygienist’s project: an irreparable loss that must be replenished through an excess of attention and knowledge. It is thus no accident that—when it is a matter of fulfilling need—the manure of choice should be human. It is only fitting that shit should be the select object of bourgeois anthropocentrism.

(126; emphasis added)
In a tunnel where I was raped, a tunnel that was once an underground entry to an amphitheater, a place where actors burst forth from underneath the seats of a crowd, a girl had been murdered and dismembered. I was told this story by the police. In comparison, they said, I was lucky.

Alice Sebold, *Lucky: A Memoir*  
(cover, hardback edition)

I could not have what I wanted most: Mr. Harvey dead and me living. Heaven wasn’t perfect. But I came to believe that if I watched closely, I might change the lives of those I loved on Earth.

Alice Sebold, *The Lovely Bones* (20)

Like the freed convict in Kafka’s *Penal Colony*, who has survived the destruction of the machine that was to have executed him, these beings [unbaptized children in Limbo] have left the world of guilt and justice behind them: The light that rains down on them is that irreparable light of the dawn following the *novissima dies* of judgment. But the life that begins on earth after the last day is simply human life.

Giorgio Agamben, *Coming* (7)

Irreparable: But what if all of the above principles, along with Bartleby and Pip, should fail (might fail, even *ought* to fail)? What if we are stuck within Aristotle’s logic of the irrevocable (*Nichomachean Ethics*, 1139b.1–13)? If so, then there is always the irreparable. Agamben says: “The
Irreparable is that things are just as they are, in this or that mode, consigned without remedy to their way of being. States of things are irreparable, whatever they may be: sad or happy, atrocious or blessed. How you are, how the world is—that is the Irreparable” (Coming 90). But this notion of the Irreparable does not mean there is no hope. There is a topological loop worked into the folding of the problem, or the problematizing of the fold. Agamben says: “We can have hope only in what is without remedy” (Coming 102).

I keep thinking of Foucault’s scraps from the archive in Archaeology, but more so I keep thinking of Agamben’s discussion of Auschwitz, enunciation, and the archive. There is such a hopeful passage toward the end (or rebeginnings) of Remnants: “Between the obsessive memory of tradition, which knows only what has been said, and the exaggerated thoughtlessness of oblivion, which cares only for what was never said, the archive is the unsaid or sayable inscribed in everything said by virtue of being enunciated; it is the fragment of memory that is always forgotten in the act of saying ‘I.’ It is in this ‘historical a priori,’ suspended between langue and parole, that Foucault establishes his construction site and founds archaeology as ‘the general theme of a description that questions the already-said at the level of its existence’ [Archaeology 131]—that is, as the system of relations between the unsaid and the said in every act of speech, between the enunciative function and the discourse in which it exerts itself, between the outside and the inside of language” (144; emphases mine).

This is a description of obsession and its hysterical other, or the hysterical third try (above), in which we placed and still place in, as a taking place of, hope. The What remained unsaid, the What was not, will have been said, will have become a being in the coming community, will have become through a series of lines of flight. There is the condition of the compossibility (of the archive, of
the Palace of Destinies) of a rebirth of sub-jectivity in a superject, in an anarchi-ject or in some walking dead who knows and who speaks, who testifies to not only what has been, but what is to come. This rebirth is compossible, as Agamben says, in terms of human being, in terms of s/he turns it\(^1\) who “is capable of not having language, because it is capable of its own in-fancy” (146). Human being, between two images of language, can appear out of Auschwitz, out of “the most radical negation of contingency,” as the Muselmann (148) can appear—compear—as Primo Livi’s paradox of the Muselmann. Agamben writes: “The Muselmann is the complete witness.’ It implies two contradictory propositions: 1) ‘the Muselmann is the non-human, the one who could never bear witness,’ and 2) ‘the one who cannot bear witness is the true witness, the absolute witness’” (150; cf. 159–71). From everyone raped to the Muselmann, the ashes, the stones, the bones, the specters, the non-human—all speak. In radical emerging media. The raped open up new condition for the possibility of emergent media. Given what wants to be recalled. Spoken. I think of Susie Salmon.

And yet, it is, more so, the “silent murmur” in the archive (Foucault, Archaeology 27–28) or it is “the animal in flight that we seem to hear rustling away in our words” (Agamben, Language 107) that speaks. But as Agamben says, “the voice, the human voice, does not exist” in language (107). Again, the voice is not human. Made not human. Made into some other species. By way of the negative, we can but say “it is” not human, non-human. “It is”

\(^1\) Ereignis. Agamben, from Heidegger’s Being and Time, writes-interpolates: “it is [it = Ereignis] only nameable as a pronoun, as It (Es) and as That (Jenes) ‘which has sent the various forms of epochal Being,’ but that, in itself, is ‘ahistorical, or more precisely, without destiny’” (Language 102; Heidegger qtd. from Being 41).
intractable (108). “It” speaks statements that are not readable. How we respond to “it” in language “is ethics” (107).

We walk through the woods: suddenly we hear the flapping of wings or the wind in the grass. A pheasant lifts off and then disappears instantly among the trees, a porcupine buries in the thick underbrush, the dry leaves crackles as a snake slithers away. Not the encounter, but this flight of invisible animals is thought. Not, it was not our voice. We came as close as possible to language, we almost brushed against it, held it in suspense: but we never reached our encounter and now we turn back, untroubled, toward home.
So, language is our voice, our language. As you now speak, that is ethics. (108)

The nonhuman taking place toward the coming community, murmurs and rustles awaYvES: From the between of potentiality and impotentiality; from beyond good and evil; to and from Limbo. “[B]eyond perdition and salvation” (Coming 6). Hence, a (third figure of) the Irreparable.