W/holes: Rethinking Writing Spaces, Moving Toward a Post-Critical Composition

And yet, we . . . no matter how far we get, as workers, into electracy . . . will remain exclusively in literacy. At least, for a long while! . . . We keep resurrecting our home no matter how we try to get it to the other side of the tracks. We save our HOME of literacy, though it is forever being blasted away by the forces of technology around us. . . . —Victor Vitanza

Using both hands, he dug a hole in the soggy soil. It was too dark to see, but he thought he could feel a tiny pool of water at the bottom of his hole. He stuck his head in the hole and licked the dirt. —Louis Sachar

We learned to crawl alongside the PC. We came of age with the Internet. Early-adopting, hyperconnected, always on: Call us Children of the Revolution, the first teens and tweens to grow up with the network. It takes a generation to unlock the potential of a transformative technology—we are that generation. * From IM to MP3 to P2P, we lab-test tomorrow's culture. While others marvel at the digital future, we take it for granted. Think of it as the difference between a second language and a first. And imagine the impact when full fluency hits the workplace, the shopping mall, the living room. * In the past, you put away childish things when you grew up. But our tools are taking over the adult world. Check it out: The technology is trickling up.

—Wired

Sarah J. Arroyo

I believe something is missing from Wired's recent description of the newest "children of the revolution," and it is this (not necessarily
negative) omission to which this essay will offer an extended response. Along with the workplace, the shopping mall, and the living room, what happens when full fluency hits the university? More specifically, is writing part of what is “taken for granted” in the digital future? If so, how has writing changed, and what implications will full fluency hold for our field? If technology is “trickling up,” how does this phenomenon change the way we teach? These questions comprise the central focus of my essay, since both in and out of rhetoric and composition, the roles that digital spaces play in our postmodern and more recently post-human lives have been under contestation. Not only what constitutes a “space” (both “real” and “virtual”) but also what takes place within these spaces have generated intense points of contention. Even before September 11, 2001 (and amplified thereafter), theorists and practitioners from several areas of study have been rigorously investigating the cultural implications of space changing and how these changes will fundamentally alter thought and practice in the humanities (see Harries, Moulthrop, Soja, and Ulmer, for example). Digital (electronic) space significantly alters the way writing, speaking, and thinking happen, and these alterations require much more than surface-level revisions to affirm them and make them work within the confines of the university.

Because our learning spaces have changed, traditional ways of imparting knowledge within them are losing their effectiveness. According to critics of the modern university structure such as Bill Readings, exactly what higher education is suppose to do with these changes has reached a crisis-like impasse. J. Hillis Miller and Manuel Asensi contend that using the traditional word “crisis” to describe what is happening is not appropriate because it suggests that a remedy is possible; rather, the change going on now in universities is irreversible (19). Addressing this “crisis,” Victor Vitanza focuses specifically on how electronic writing spaces are changing the values implicit in writing. He argues that these spaces require major adjustments: “Not just bodily readjustments . . . but agential readjustments as well, . . . subjects in relation to objects in post-critical conditions, yet remaining subjects thinking in critical conditions” (“The Shaping Force”). Thus, not only particular practices but also conceptualizations of the writing subject designed and carried out for a literate apparatus will not alone be effective in electronic spaces. Echoing this assertion, D. Diane Davis tells us that “the alliance between computers and composition [forces the posthumanist paradox into the writing classroom” (Breaking 249); in other words, the experience of not being able to control writing through critique and critical reflection is unavoid-
able and introduces a space where one doesn’t “choose to write” but where, so to speak, “everything is writing” (250; qtd. in Haynes 9—10).

I will suggest that a post-critical composition presents a theory and a methodology that works in these spaces where everything is writing and offers a viable alternative to prevailing theories and practices in the field: particularly expressionist and social-epistemic rhetorics and recent combinations of both. These combinations—which are part of what Bruce McComiskey names “the new integrationist movement”—attempt to fuse the best elements of both epistemologies (751). While I would also move toward valuing both the social and the personal, I believe these combinations are not sufficient, because they are still predicated on the categories that created the split in the first place. When everything is writing, traditional values and purposes for writing change; these changes will take place at fundamental levels by altering perceptions of both the writing subject and the “object” of writing.

In a very different approach, advocates of critical, empowerment-oriented pedagogies have also responded to the aforementioned “crisis” of spatial representation brought on by technological advances by transferring the print-based methodology of critique to the digital medium. Demonstrating this type of response, Michelle Sidler suggests that when teaching in a digital classroom, teachers should not ask students to delve into the multimedia/digital space in order to produce a new writing in the medium. Instead, she contends that we should shy away from diving into new technological developments. Sidler writes, “Teachers need to supply students with tools of critique and analysis” (3). Hence, problems emerging from new technologies can be dealt with through engaged critique: just like print-based media have been for the decades. However, Gregory Ulmer, one of the leading theorists of the movement that challenges the very notions that have organized the Western tradition and held the apparatus of literacy in place for nearly the past three millennia, works to move beyond adding technology on to what we already do. He conceptualizes “electracy” to serve as the new literacy wherein information is organized fundamentally by the image. Electracy helps distinguish the “epochal possibility that what is at stake is not only different equipment but also different institutional practices and different subject formations from those we now inhabit” (“Foreword” xii). Ulmer’s assertion is central to the main line of argument in this essay. The infiltration of new technologies does not just indicate that we now have more computers in writing classrooms with which to carry out greater levels of critique; rather, it creates the need for new theories about
writing, reading, and thinking—subjectivity, community, and representation—which will allow us to see how “electracy” is indeed emerging. Thus, electracy will be cultivated for producing “writing” in electronic media that is not dependent solely on print-based values and methods. While Sidler would introduce media into her classes for the purposes of critique, Ulmer would use media to perform critique. Electracy changes thinking— that part of praxis that precedes action—to pure praxis. The process of this praxis intervenes in the world, not to reflect, but to change reality. Electracy can start us on our way toward making necessary major adjustments— adjustments that should begin with a reconception of the writing subject.

**Subjectivity in a “Post-Oedipal” World**

The idea of a de-oedipalized subjectivity is not especially new, but its characteristics, aesthetics, practices, and ethics are not fully explored.

—Thomas Rickert

Desire does not lack anything; it does not lack its object. It is, rather, the subject that is missing in desire, or desire that lacks a fixed subject; there is no fixed subject unless there is repression.

—Deleuze and Guattari

Despite the extensive influence of critical pedagogical practices over the past several years, many scholars in and out of the field have in the past and are now again voicing concerns about the effectiveness of empowerment-oriented pedagogies as they are currently practiced in composition. One of the largest concerns has been student resistance toward these practices. Students resist teachers’ consciousness raising efforts and retain cynical attitudes and behaviors: the very opposite of how critical pedagogies aim to work. Thus, many advocates have expressed frustration over students’ resistance not to the dominant culture in which they live, but to critical pedagogy and its teachers (see, for example, Anderson, Bauer, Crowley, and Ervin). Students are not able to step out of their own situatedness: they can neither see nor examine their ideological biases, which are often in conflict with consciousness raising efforts by composition teachers. This “problem” deals with how the writing subject is conceptualized in critical pedagogies. In “‘Hands Up, You’re Free’: Composition in a Post-Oedipal World,” and by way of Gilles Deleuze and
Slavoj Žižek, Thomas Rickert suggests that the problem lies within the conflict arising between current “post” or “de” oedipalized subjects and the necessarily “oedipalized” subject (who must learn to resist dominating forces in control) of critical pedagogy. De-oedipalized subjects—or, I might add—the new “children of the revolution,” appear to be carrying apathetic attitudes because they do not change behavior after critical reflection. Because there is not an attachment to authority in the traditional sense, it is impossible to resist it. Rickert explains that critical pedagogical practices have neither “produced engaged, liberated students [nor] resulted in a slew of good, politically engaged social critics” (298). Thus, relieving students of their unfounded assumptions does not guarantee that they will change these assumptions and subsequently act for the good of the collective. I suggest that these practices themselves are the very thing that elicit negative resistance from students, for they rely on a notion of the subject, properly oedipalized, who can and will change beliefs and actions based on rational analysis and a negative mode of critique. This change will occur, it is assumed, after the voids, the “holes” in the subject’s beliefs and learning, are filled with critical reflection on and resistant action toward dominant ideologies. The subject would then—it is assumed—act in his/her own best interests. Marshall Alcorn and Peter Sloterdijk have explained at length that people stick to their positions for anything but rational reasons. By employing the method of critique through critical reflection, it is assumed that reason alone will guide emancipation from dominant, oppressive forces in control. A major conflict occurs, however, when students see and understand their “mystified” attachment to ideology in perfectly rational terms; they neither see the purpose of nor engage with critique, which in turn (re)emphasizes and reinforces their cynical, “mystified,” and so-called indifferent subject status.

Lynn Worsham and Rickert have pointed out that—despite the influence of various versions of postmodern thought—by continually relying on an oedipalized, modernist conception of subjectivity, we continue to alienate students because they do not change their actions after they have engaged in critical reflection. By reconceptualizing the writing subject, we will be able to see our students not as apathetic and disengaged, but as exemplars of our digital, postmodern, and posthuman world. These students are not examples of what is to come, but instead are examples of what is already happening: both in and out of our classrooms. I will first extend the idea of a post-oedipal subject as worked out by Worsham and Rickert and then link this extension to the methodology
that shows how a post-critical composition works. We can now take advantage of how apt Deleuze and Guattari’s terms are for the spaces we inhabit, which will begin to articulate what a post-critical composition might entail.

Geoffery Sirc discusses how desire and joy function in writing situations in *English Composition as a Happening*. His practice suggests that the writing subject (and the writing teacher) are *intensities* engaging not in *lessons* per se, but *happenings*: these happenings cannot be directly named and codified, but they can be intuited and acted upon by students. I have linked this with one of the most crucial yet misunderstood aspects of Deleuze and Guattari’s thought: their ubiquitous notion of desire, which is inextricably intertwined with the question of the writing subject. According to Deleuze and Guattari, desire has absolutely nothing to do with “lack” or yearning for something that is missing (a “hole”). This is different from other theorists such as Roland Barthes, whose work also is informed by desire, but who remains in the modernist notion of returning “what’s missing” to it. Deleuze and Guattari wanted to develop a purely positive conception of how desire might work. Thus, desire works as production: continuous making and remaking. Deleuze and Guattari tell us that there is desire and the social and nothing else. The coding, uncoding, and recoding of desire—territorialization, deterritorialization, reterritorialization—is a function embedded in the structure of the university. Deleuze reminds us that the molar society’s goal (such as the university) is “to code the flows and to treat as an enemy anyone who presents himself, in relation to society, as an uncodable flow” (Web Deleuze: 11/16/71). Desire works not to create subjects but to create *singularities*. Thus, Deleuze and Guattari take the focus off *subjectivity* per se, and move it toward asking how things work by creating *assemblages*: aleatory connections that happen among singularities brought together in all directions. Deleuze remarks that even if a person says “I desire this or that,” that person is in the process of “constructing an assemblage.”

Taking Deleuze’s description further, Davis suggests that these connections and constructions happen in “the space of the hole” (46), between de- and re-territorialization. This “between” space, this fissure, crack, and void happens in the “flux of exploded identities” where deterritorialization has occurred and reterritorialization has not yet taken place. This flux is precisely what makes post-critical writing possible. The goal is not to fill the apparent “gaps” (in someone’s learning or ideology, for example), but to remain in a constant state of production,
which moves desire out of the realm of the negative and allows knowledge formerly excluded to emerge. Slavoj Žižek, in *Tarrying with the Negative*, provides an image for the “between” space about which Davis speaks: rebels waving a flag with the Communist symbol of the red star cut out, leaving a hole in the center. Žižek calls this a state of passage, a “hole in the big Other,” that has yet to be reterritorialized (2). I suggest that it is precisely “in the holes” where movement, becoming, learning, and writing take place; Rebecca Rauve explains how this movement occurs as lines of flight. She writes, “lines of flight occur when desire exceeds its coded channeling and extends out through cracks and fissures in a structure.” Deterritorialized desire (yet to be reterritorialized) dismantles oppressive structures and makes new assemblages: only to dismantle them and recombine them perpetually by way of decoupage (severing, cutting), collage, and montage (assemblage). The practice of montage does not reflect but directly alters reality; it resists codification and resides as continuous production: pure praxis. 4

To arrive at this point, however, we should first turn to Davis and Ulmer, for they both provide vivid images of the notion of the “self-present” composing subject, that gives the subject in control the ground on which to stand and critique. These images will help us get a grasp on the writing subject that this essay is not talking about/doing. Davis and Ulmer both cast their images to represent students in a typical composition class. Like Deleuze and Guattari, Davis and Ulmer are after assemblages: aleatory connections made by post-oedipal, whatever beings.

The “Self-Present” Composing Subject: “I’m Number 1!”

In “Finitude’s Clamor; Or, Notes Toward a Comunitarian Literacy,” Davis makes an important distinction regarding immanence: she first describes the transcendental “myth of immanence,” which constitutes “a singular being driven by the notion that he’s equal to his signature, that he’s a self-conscious self-presence who is therefore presentable—and who presents himself via his own magnificent inscription” (120). Calling upon Avital Ronell’s discussion in *Stupidity*, Davis refers to the collected letters of Gustave Flaubert, wherein he “details his fascination with a certain inscription he encountered during his trip to the Orient. Someone had carved the name THOMPSON in enormous lettering on Pompey’s column” (120). Davis emphasizes that in the discipline of rhetoric and composition, despite recent reworkings, “a good bit of rhetoric and
composition pedagogy... hails students as Thompsons, reproducing the myth (in every student) by pushing the figure of the self-present composing subject” (121). Here, Davis is attempting to move beyond the present impasse stalling theoretical movements toward something outside of traditional binary constructions; as I have suggested, prevailing pedagogies will not flee from or let go of the self-present composing subject: particularly when dealing with emerging digital literacies. She uses the image of the “THOMPSON” to be “read allegorically as a causality of the myth of human immanence” (120). Hence, THOMPSON stands for immanent subjectivity: immanence that, as Agamben has described, simply “remains” (Potentialities 226).

Davis suggests turning away from the myth of the transcendent immanent subject; holding onto this myth makes it impossible to hear the communications of “post-oedipal,” “whatever beings” occurring between de- and re-territorialization. If they are heard, she says, they are hearable only as “noise” that must only be reinscribed into rational communications systems. She explains, “Sender-receiver theories of communication... tune out these ek-static communications” (“Finitude’s” 133). “Sender-receiver” theories, such as those put forth by Thomas Kent by way of Donald Davidson (see especially Post-Process Theory) argue that writers always write from some place, which can be related to topos: the grounded (location) on which to stand in order to speak/write. E.V. Walter calls this “Aristotle’s doctrine of place [that] declares the separability of beings from places” (205). This assumes that the writing subject and the place from which he or she stands can be separated, critiqued, and properly adjusted. Following Davis, however, we can see that this separation is not possible: the space itself is part of the communication, and these ek-static communications (or what Deleuze and Guattari might call “forces within space”: forces refusing points of stasis) can be heard throughout them, precisely if we listen to “holey space and the way it communicates with the smooth and the striated” (Thousand 500). The holes, gaps, fissures, and disturbances are usually tuned out in the name of clarity, rational communication, or ideological mystification and then reterritorialized and subsequently “filled in.” However, Davis affirms what she calls the “exscribed [that] crashes inscription’s party” (134). The exscribed remains “cracked” and is in tum perpetually reassembled through action and production.

Similarly and in a chance occurrence, Ulmer relates his experience of stumbling into the University of Florida bookstore where he discovers:
A row of Spirit Hands, giant, oversize, pulsating... index finger extended, inscribed GO GATORS on one side, with the logo of the university on the other... to permit the student fans to emphasize the gesture meaning “We’re number one!” (“Spirit” 142)

The foam spirit hand serves as a reminder for how the overtly emphasized “Number 1” (inscribed in the index finger) is inevitably confused with the self-present “I” of the student/subject. He writes: “The ‘I’ is ambiguous, as always, confused easily with me, Institution, or Number One” (149).

Waving the spirit hand validates subject status. To locate this discussion, Ulmer brings in several puns on the spirit hand (in writings and paintings) from Plato to the present, wherein the “hand” pointing represents the index, the signature of the subject, just like the Gator spirit hand with the school name inscribed in the index finger. One of his key examples refers to Martin Heidegger. Ulmer notes, “Heidegger says he prefers thinking a singular hand, as in handwriting, manuscripture, that is debased, depersonalized, and in which the distinctively human is lost when the writing is done with two hands, on a typewriter” (148). With this link of the “one hand” to the “distinctively human” lies Ulmer’s leaning toward electracy and the post-human: breaking out of the realm of the one giant hand ("I’m number one!") toward the electronic: one, two, and some more “hands” “writing” together. As Ulmer continuously points out, and what is crucial to what writing might be like in emerging digital spaces, we are not limited to writing as scripting when working in the realm of the electronic. Digital media allows for something that is not predicated on critical reflection but instead blurs the distinction between the subject and the missing “object”; this is the central tenet of the post-critical. 5 In sum, Davis gives us the image of the THOMPSON, which represents the myth of immanence, and Ulmer gives us the image of the waving spirit hand, the denotation for the “I” that is embedded within not only the university structure, but also in literate-only writing practices. In order to move along with the idea of a different kind of writing, we must “crack up” both the THOMPSON and the spirit hand, for “cracking up” releases forces and intensities previously stifled in the name of maintaining the oedipalized, self-present subject.

**Singularity in a “Whatever” World**

The figure of the “Whatever being,” to which I have been referring, breaks up, cracks up both the image of the THOMPSON and the spirit hand. Like Deleuze and Guattari, who see positive aspects in de-
oedipalization, Agamben affirms the “de-oedipalized” subject: the whatever being. This radical singularity—the whatever being—remains in a state of constant becoming. Agamben explains that the whatever “is neither generic nor individual” (Coming 27). Rather, whatever “adds to singularity . . . a threshold . . . a singularity plus an empty space can only be pure exteriority” (67; emphasis added). As a radical singularity, the whatever being exists only in relation to another whatever being. Agamben claims that the “whatever singularity has no identity, it is not determinate with respect to a concept, but neither is it simply indeterminate; rather, it is determined only through its relation to an idea, that is, to the totality of its possibilities” (67). This is similar to previous descriptions of post-oedipal subjects, which are not reliant on stable identifications that produce critical reflection and resistance. Hence the “whateverness” of the whatever being does not signify apathy; instead, it offers a framework to think about how a conceptualization of subjectivity not occupying traditional subject positions might work. I quote at length to show how the whatever singularity extends Rickert’s (by way of Worsham) “postoedipal” world where subjects appear as “disinvested,” apathetic, and indifferent. Agamben allows us to see this in a positive manner, which sheds some light on how writing can work outside the realm of critique. To present the whatever being, Agamben uses not definition, but several metaphors, such as “pure exposure,” remaining “at the door,” “at the threshold,” and “the exteriority that gives it access.” He continues, however, by explaining the importance of “the passage” through which the whatever traverses; I thus add another metaphor: all of these descriptions might become “holes” in smooth/striated space within which becoming and writing take place. Holey space becomes persistently invented and reinvented (constantly “flowing out”): never to be filled up. The “passage” through which the whatever traverses (holey space) is precisely the space where communications previously tuned out in the name of rationality can be heard.

As I have already mentioned, this idea differs from viewing cracks, fissures, and holes as simply gaps that need to be filled or demystified in order to resist dominant ideologies—a view remaining in the negative and seen as something lacking, or, as a perpetual yearning for what’s missing. Holes instead will have been seen as affirmative responses. Davis’ explanation is paramount to this concept; she argues,

But lack theories are negations that assume holes in the whole; affirmative responses, on the other hand, assume a wild and over-
whelming excess of “parts” that will never make a “whole”: there can be no final One, no final Totalization, and therefore no lack. (Breaking 57)

Hence, dominant ideologies will continually be resisted by affirming the intensities that reappear through the cracks, and then reassembling them into new combinations by way of decoupage (cutting) collage, and montage (assemblage). Whatever resistance, however, is resistance without being reactionary. It is not reflection from a distance in order to act and subsequently change; the discourse of resistance (within which the whatever dwells) is not composed as a metalanguage but as a “text” itself. Thus, “telling about” something is impossible; this “third” kind of meaning must be felt, shown, and reassembled again and again. This forces viewers not to read and reflect critically, but to in turn create their own examples, thereby animating and bringing to life the whatever being. Therefore, the whatever being remains in a state of constant generation and regeneration.

Another of Agamben’s discussions—that of The Face—is pertinent here, for it is intricately intertwined with the previous concepts I have been working with. When talking about the whatever being remaining “outside” (or, “at the door”) he tells us, “The outside is not another space that resides beyond a determinate space, but rather, it is the exteriority that gives it access—in a word, it is its face” (Coming 68; emphasis added). The face as a passage instead of an expression, remaining at the threshold, becomes crucial. Agamben explains “nature acquires a face precisely in the moment if feels that it is being revealed by language” (Means 92). A face is revealed not for the purposes of appearance or outward expression of inner thoughts, but whenever something has been ex-posed: when it has reached the level of exposition that it becomes that very appearance. The practice of giving something a name, of validating subject status, separates the image from the thing. There is a human tendency to practice this separation (as with the spirit hand or other “expressions”), rather than viewing the face as an opening. Viewing the face as an opening provides no room for stasis or judgment, only continuous movement/becoming. Thus, a face gives access but does not determine; the face is the opening (hole) that traverses the smooth and the striated and shows that there is neither an inside nor an outside space. This opening, this ek-stasis, is precisely where the whatever resides.
With Agamben, Davis, and Ulmer resonating, I will now turn to Deleuze and Guattari’s treatment of dualisms, which will show how these ideas work in relation to the methodology of a post-critical composition. More precisely, we will hear how two of their dualisms (concerning space and time) work with and fold into one another to create the possibility of a becoming/writing, or a post-critical composition taking place through holey space. First, smooth space, which Stuart Moulthrop describes as “a structure for what does not yet exist,” is not simply a better alternative to striated space, “the domain of routine, specification, sequence, and causality.” (303). Instead, as Deleuze and Guattari explain in several locations, there must be binaries, but these binaries do not exist in opposition, wherein one is privileged over another. Instead of creating only two possibilities, their dualisms fold into each other and restore the flow of desiring production to create uncountable becomings, lines of flight, and assemblages—desiring production that is possible in the “hole” before deterritorialization occurs. It is these becomings that allow for the possibility of a cultural praxis to emerge. Folding avoids stasis and (Aristotle’s notion of) grounding; therefore, everything becomes re/included. This has been explained endlessly (see Barthes, Deleuze and Guattari, and Agamben); however, it might be tempting to read the smooth and the striated as traditional binary oppositions, a reading that would exclude holey space.

Thus, what is so crucial here are what Deleuze and Guattari call the processes of smoothing and striation—their passages and combinations—happening persistently. There is no finality for smoothing and striating space, no “whole” or One to ever get to. This is also very different from simply affirming kairotic eruptions from smooth space, which may appear at first to reverse dominant, oppressive striations. In other words, it is not smooth spaces in themselves that hold empowering potential; instead, it is the movement and energy that changes within them, which then must become striated again, only to become smooth and then striated again and again. This process shows that liberation will not happen by simply engaging in a negative deconstruction. Hence, the third term, holey space, provides the passage, a place where both the smooth and the
striated “open up” and potentialities are created. Describing the potential of third terms, and emphasizing the desiring production that emanates from them, Barthes writes, “The obtuse [third] meaning carries a certain emotion. . . [It] is not in the language system (even that of symbols). Take away the obtuse meaning and communication and signification still remains” (“Third” 58, 59). As intensities residing in the “cracks,” the third meaning can only be felt. Once felt, a mood is produced that remains in a constant state of generation; the mood, when felt, links elsewhere, but never stops. Thus, unlike the aforementioned “Aristotle’s doctrine of place,” we must affirm the dwelling space within which the mood is felt; it can not be separated from the third meaning. It is in its composition.6

Secondly, another key dualism and third term concerns time: “organizational,” “measurable” chronos and “unsystematizable,” “unmasterable” kairos, which does not submit itself to control. To do away with the tendency to privilege one over the other, Collin Brooke has suggested a post-human rhetoric, which “finds room for both” chronos and kairos, instead of privileging kairos over chronos like a various versions of postmodern rhetorics might do (790–91). To find room for both, I would argue, it is again necessary to move to the third term: Deleuze and Guattari’s haecceity. Recall that for Deleuze and Guattari it isn’t necessarily a matter of “finding room” for different aspects of space or time; rather, like smooth and striated spaces, chronos and kairos are already happening, instantaneously, and in a perpetual refolding fold. Deleuze and Guattari attribute the origin of haecceity to Duns Scotus, who, as they write, “created the word and the concept from haec, ‘this thing.’” However, they also point out that haecceity is sometimes written “ecceity,” which adds to instead of detracts from its understanding, as it “suggests a mode of individuation that is distinct from that of a thing or a subject” (Thousand 540–41 n33).7 Like the other third terms, haecceity resides outside subject-object relations, a singularity that exists only in relation to another. Haecceities mark the potentiality of becoming within each assemblage; they do not create subjects, but create the conditions for the possibility of a becoming to occur. Deleuze and Guattari warn, “It should not be thought that a haecceity consists simply of a décor or backdrop that situates subjects, or of appendages that hold people and things to the ground.” Rather, a haecceity creates moments of possibility, folding time and space, and providing access to a becoming. They continue to describe haecceity as follows:
Haecceity, fog, glare. A haecceity has neither beginning nor end, origin nor destination: it is always in the middle. It is a rhizome . . . [ceasing] to be subjects to become events, in assemblages that are inseparable from an hour, a season, an atmosphere, an air, a life. (Thousand 262, 263, 262)

Through assemblages and haecceity (folding past and future) that “whatevers” cease to be subjects to become events. Events occur as a transformation of the present and their “meaning” cannot be represented in language. Like Davis’ ek-static communications, haecceities are only heard, and only hearable with no predetermined, totalizing structure in place (such as Freud’s “Oedipus,” or even critical pedagogy). This changes the goal of listening: it would not be to cure or answer precisely, but as Davis has suggested elsewhere “glimpsing what lies between . . . toward interstanding, toward the in-between of the ‘seeing’ and the ‘not seeing’” (“Negotiating” 587). The in-between remains at the threshold and often occurs in a fog. Deleuze and Guattari affirm the necessity of the fog, the timelessness of haecceity. Losing oneself in the “fog,” however, is not aimless drifting. Davis, by way of Heidegger, calls the fog the “abyss,” the placeless place where the ground falls off and becomes lacking, therefore producing a longing to hit the ground. She contends, “what makes the abyss agonizing is one’s unanswered desire to hit bottom so that one might start building one’s way back up and out” (Breaking 76). However, there is no way out, yet there is no trap. This is where we reside; as I will discuss next, it is not a place on which to stand or out of which to emerge, but the chora, the “hole” which cannot be separated from life.

Hol(e)y Chora: Catching Becoming/Writing

Becomings belong to geography, they are orientations, directions, entries, and exits. . . . To become is never to imitate, nor to do “like,” nor to conform to a model. . . . There is no terminus from which you set out, none which you arrive at or which you ought to arrive at.

—Gilles Deleuze

For Deleuze, to think is . . . to seize that which is nomadic, which escapes conventional categories.

—John Marks
In "Toward a Post-Process Composition: Abandoning the Rhetoric of Assertion" and by way of Jean-François Lyotard, Gary Olson suggests that the sequence of the communication structure—master, define, systematize—is fundamentally dangerous. Hence, he calls for doing away with the rhetoric of assertion and the discourse of the master altogether, which may very well require doing away with what might be called solutions and "final answers." In "Resisting a Discourse of Mastery," Lyotard claims that an answer is only interesting insofar as it is a new question, instead of allowing the assertion of a solution, which closes off inquiry. Moving away from the metaphor of mastery would require both the speaker and the listener positions to remain open; in other words, instead of mastering, perpetual listening would occur between parties. In order for this to occur, the discourse of mastery (taken on by the immanent subject) would be resisted. For Lyotard, "to write is to allude to something else which is not easily communicated" ("Resisting" 2). Thus, writing functions as constant listening (not necessarily "mastering" an object of study), and the striated system of the university can be flexible enough to imply these empty places in which connections are not already made. Here again is another way to describe "holes" that resist being filled up and contained. In accordance with this description, Davis advocates a "Communitarian Literacy," wherein, among other things, writing:

irrepressibly entails a becoming. You (writing being) are a limit-cruiser, so even when you’re alone, you are not alone. You are already heavily populated with encounters, with others whom you have welcomed and who continue to work you over—to live on in you, haunting and making demands of you—even in your solitude. (136)

Hence, writing that becomes is not in the control of the so-called "composing subject." Davis tells us that "there is no way to write without being written. . . . [Writing] is not an I-dentity booster but an I-dentity buster, an exposure" (138). Seeing writing as an "identity buster" (written by whatever singularities) is very different from using writing to critique, reflect, act, and change beliefs and actions. Becoming/writing entails an exposure out of the control of the "subject being written." Deleuze writes that "becoming is never about assimilation or imitation," which is important for understanding the concept of writing as exposure (Dialogues 2). These ideas echo what has already been put forth here, but are worth repeating for they are crucial for understanding what Davis advocates (contra to the rhetoric of assertion): a "rhetoric of exposition"
... making writing a way of testing out possibilities" (141; emphasis added). To add to this, I will suggest that that we turn to Ulmer to see how these complex ideas might work; how we might not "feign" mastery, but open up perpetual inquiry and keep the conversation going.

According to Ulmer, the apparatus of literacy from Plato through Descartes to the present relies on the method of analysis and synthesis; the literate apparatus figures everything in terms of analysis by breaking wholes into components, and these components operate as if they are autonomous. Recall that many pedagogies claiming to fall under the realm of the postmodern assume that once we see and analyze the contradictions in our world, we will want to change that world; our analysis will make visible previously hidden conditions of oppression. A difficulty with this method arises, however, since many problems are holistic or emergent, existing in the tangle of reality but then disappearing when reduced to parts. Hence, like Derrida and Kristeva before him, Ulmer turns to Plato's *Timeaus* and the excluded third kind of being, the chora, to invent a methodology applicable to the theories I have been discussing and especially the emerging electronic apparatus. Chora lies between being and becoming and therefore cannot be conceptualized in order to become an object. Using the chora, Ulmer attempts to capture intuition, chance, and pictographic representations: what are usually excluded in what we know as "academic writing," because they are linked to emotion and expression. Unlike a literate, heuristic method, wherein there is a set of procedures to follow to produce varying outcomes, Ulmer's aleatory method attempts to grasp that which cannot be articulated in language. This is realized through the "methodology" (the impossible possibility) of chorography: "a way of gathering dispersed information into an unstable set ... held together by a pattern that is the trace of understanding or learning" (*Heuretics* 213). Chorography does not offer a set of pre-established procedures; it creates a network in which to "catch" or "hear" an invention remembered by the body. The chora, Ulmer explains, is "most resistant to interpretation (hermeneutics)," since it relies on analogy and chance (63). However, it is important to keep in mind that this is not mere chance; or, something is not lost and irreplaceable (that is, a hierarchical methodology) when relying on chance. Those who dismiss Ulmer's appropriation of the chora as a methodology for writing as simply expressionist, ludic, sheer nonsense, or "pure chance" miss this point.9

The mode of thought discovered through chorography can be better explained by comparing it to topoi. Walter, upon whom Ulmer relies,
explains that Greek writers used two separate words, *topos* and *chora*, to differentiate certain typical features in the *experience* of places, and he first locates this distinction in the opening lines of *Oedipus at Colonus*. Here, he points out, we hear Antigone referring to the place she and Oedipus presently rest as “choros”: a holy place. Later, when Oedipus speaks about where he must die, he uses both terms, and “*topos* stands for the mere location or the container of the sacred choros, the grave” (120). The “holey” space of the chora, according to Walter, is also very sacred: “holy,” the place where the literal remains of the dead “remain.” Extending this point, Robert Pogue Harrison concurs: “The surest way to take possession of a place and secure it as one’s own is to bury one’s dead in it” (399). The “remains” of the dead consecrate the place by solidifying the ground, stopping movement, creating ownership, and therefore securing a legacy. Harrison names these places “human—call them humic—foundations”; he calls for a return to the earth, but a return that reconsacrates the holy earth, a return to the earth as a *holy object* (401). The remains of the dead, the grave, remain buried and covered up: a solid place/ foundation upon which to reside for a long time. I would modify Harrison’s modernist notions of mourning and “returning to” by not wanting to recover what is lost at all, but instead desiring to celebrate and dwell within it. This notion reworks Harrison’s mourning for the grounded, sacred chora that is no longer present in the continuous movement within our postmodern, posthuman, and postcritical spaces; the chora becomes a purely positive space of uncoded desire and becomings: deterritorializations that have yet to be reterritorialized. Ulmer recognizes this difference in Walter; he hears Walter saying that we might “think before place was split into topos and chora.” Accordingly, Walter “distinguishes [chora] from topos by noting that the former term names a ‘grounded’ mode of thought that was available in Plato but that has been buried” (Ulmer, *Heuretics* 70). This ungrounded mode of thought is rediscovered through choragraphy.

Ulmer links choragraphy to electronic discourse by realizing “the possibility of a hyper-rhetoric in which places of invention are figured not as topoi but as chora” (63). The chora provides the spacing, the condition within which everything takes place; recall Deleuze and Guattari’s emphasis not on the (missing) objects, but on the processes, the *interactions* taking place within the medium of space. Byron Hawk characterizes how Ulmer “conflates the binary of chora as space and topos as place. Rather than chora as metaphysical space and topos as literal place, Ulmer sees the chora as cultural space that emerges between metaphysical space
and physical space.” Hawk also explains that, through choragraphy, “invention becomes something neither unconscious nor conscious. It becomes attentive—a way of being-in-the world, a way of becoming.” The chorographer captures and arranges “memories that float between the cultural and the personal”—that which resides in the hole, the space between de- and re-territorialization. Practice within the chora, then, will be understood, as Ulmer puts it, “in the order of making, of generating. And it must be transferable, exchangeable, without generalization, conducted from one particular to another” (*Heuretics* 67).

The chora—the space of receiving learning and knowing—the in-between space, restores movement to the self-present subject; it contains the possibilities of continuous generation and becomings, and uses the “remains” of the dead in a fundamentally different fashion: not as a solid foundation upon which to reside, but as means for movement and generation. Vitanza refers to the chora as the “chora (us)” to show that electrate writing will require “Total Collaboration”; hence, in the chora, there is no such concept as the individual writing subject who invents texts. Grasping in the chora (continuous processes; becoming/writing) cannot be apprehended by reason: this is, as Walter puts it, “a knowledge that must be ‘grasped’ because it cannot be conceived and it cannot be perceived” (122). It is neither in the rules of rational thought nor a product of sensory experience but a “curious, spurious” mode of grasping reality. Choragraphy, then, serves as the “method” for this idea of “grasping.” Information is stored everywhere, so it must be *evoked* rather than found or uncovered; evocation suggests neither uncovering nor recovering that which is lost. Linking to Davis’ previous suggestion, inventing using choragraphy requires turning ghosts into agents: not mourning these specters’ loss but using their energy to re-create something new.

Thus, the chora, the *space* in which “grasping” takes place, cannot be separated from that which is grasped; as the “method” for catching inventions, choragraphy best suits the un/grounded ground of the whatever singularity. The whatever does not mourn nostalgically for the past but resides as a haecceity: continuously becoming. Becomings happen because of how we vibrate with things/spaces; hence, becomings are key to choragraphy. How might choragraphy work? Walter explains that “chora . . . is a location of shapes, powers, and feelings” (123). Thus, in practice, and in the space of the chora, the “whatever” would experience what Ulmer calls “eureka insights,” which “arise out of the particular way memory stores information in ‘emotional sets,’ gathering ideas into categories classified not in terms of logical properties but common
feelings” (Heuretics 142). The focus here is on the emotional level; however the moods and memories recovered are not used for sentimental or expressive reasons; they then link elsewhere through an unfolding and rhizomatic network of associations. As a crucial caveat Ulmer writes, “Moments thus rescued are not a spectacle for nostalgic contemplation, but tools for opening the present” (Teletheory 112). They become moments of celebration within which inventions come into appearance. Chorography is practiced by critiquing the object in its own medium, which eliminates the critical distance between subject and object. In other words, writing is not only writing about something else; writing is practiced for the sake of writing itself. The post-critic performs his or her theory in an electronic environment, which allows theory and practice to fold together.

The Hole I (Dug, Cracked Up, and) Fell Into

As an exemplar for what I have been advocating throughout this essay, I turn to a Newbery Award winning, pre-adolescent novel: Holes by Louis Sachar. By simply looking at the title, one can see that something will be missing, lacking, and that something needs “deciphering” or “filling up” in order for the holes to be “fixed.” Like most adolescent novels, this book is marketed as the typical story of teenage self-overcoming and liberation through a mixture of hard work, determination, and fate. The publishers tell us that “Stanley tries to dig up the truth in this inventive and darkly humorous tale of crime and punishment—and redemption” (book jacket). As we might expect, this blurb reinforces the ever-prevailing, modernist notions of revenge, redemption, and especially transcendence. However, this transcendence—an immanent transcendence—serves as the point of departure for discussing “post-oedipal” and “whatever” notions of subjectivity. Agamben, who has worked extensively with this idea, describes immanent transcendence as such: “Starting with Husserl, immanence becomes immanent to a transcendental subjectivity, and the cipher of transcendence thus reappears at its center” (Potentialities 230). Thus, as an example of this alternative way of thinking, Holes is not a lesson about self-overcoming and succumbing to fate, but instead shows a complex set of becomings taking place in and throughout smooth, striated, and holey space. Holes shows how all three spaces work with and communicate with one another to create the possibilities for multiple becomings (“learning”) instead of a reformed sense of (transcendent) immanent subjectivity ultimately leading to liberation. Through Deleuze, Agamben carefully explains this crucial difference:
With a striking etymological figure that displaces the origin of the term “immanence” from *manere* (“to remain”) to *manare* (“to flow out”), Deleuze returns mobility and life to immanence... immanence flows forth. (*Potentialities* 226)

This description of immanence as mobility, as *manare*, greatly helps articulate the postmodern, posthuman, postoedipal subject navigating through smooth, striated, and holey space. The major character in *Holes*, Stanley Yelnats, becomes an always already self-reflexive exemplar, a “whatever” who shows learning taking place not by self-overcoming, but within the forces, vibrations, and movements of holey space. Reread not only as a post-oedipal subject but also as a “whatever being,” Stanley breaks up the imparting of typical Enlightenment lessons; his becomings show a new metaphor for learning within the constraints of a striated, state system. However, the methodology of critique does not play a part in his learning and ultimate liberation from oppressive forces in control. *Holes* performs as an example that shows learning taking place among the simultaneous interactions of space, which creates a series of multiple becomings rather than a reformed and redeemed sense of subjectivity—a THOMPSON, a giant spirit hand.

Stanley is always in the wrong place at the wrong time (the legacy he inherited from his family line). Not surprisingly, then, he is falsely convicted of stealing a famous baseball player’s sneakers (they fall from a bridge out of a moving car and land on his head) and is sent to a reform camp “to build his character.” The camp rests on an immense, dried up lake, a deserted wasteland in Texas that has no vegetation, hardly any water, and several despotic adults in charge. But the lake was not always dried up; when Stanley’s ancestors lived on it, the lake was a luxurious place of escape. However, a curse, set off by members of Stanley’s extended family, was cast over the lake. Presently, the camp inmates dig holes all day on the dried up lake; presumably, digging holes will “straighten kids out.” Their holes are perfectly measured: five feet wide and five feet deep. The only instruction they have is to report to the warden anything “interesting” that they happen to find while digging their holes. What is “buried there” remains to be unearthed; the warden wants to recover what, in the past, had been lost.

The striated space of the camp regiments all behavior and action. Stanley has the legacy of his family’s unfortunate fate on his side, since he becomes the only camper to unearth something deemed “interesting” to the warden. However, he makes sure that someone else takes credit for
the finding, so the warden will never know exactly which hole the “important” thing originated from. However, Stanley dug that hole into his memory. Stanley’s actions were neither a result of fate nor done as a result of careful reflection on his cursed family history; instead, I suggest that they show Stanley becoming lizard: the lethal yellow lizard that will eventually liberate the boys. Sachar warns, “But you don’t want to be bitten by a yellow-spotted lizard. That’s the worst thing that can happen to you. You will die a slow and painful death. Always” (4). The smooth spaces of the former lake still resonate; after several weeks of digging, and after his friend attempts to run away from the camp, Stanley becomes intense with the flows of the earth. While digging holes and thinking about whether or not to go after his friend, he experiences the processes of smoothing, striating, and holing space simultaneously; these processes include Stanley himself, which leads back to Deleuze and Guattari’s description of haecceities. Instead of unearthing “things” or “objects” by digging holes, Stanley feels the holes becoming the very spaces where events take place and potential opens up. But he cannot yet articulate these feelings in language.

After taking part in a kairotic line of flight to the smooth spaces of the lake beyond the camp (he never consciously decided to go), Stanley finds his friend Zero on the other side of the lake, hovering under an old, sunken boat half-buried in the ground, eating one-hundred-year-old canned peaches that he unearthed. Aside from the peaches, Stanley and Zero have no food or water, and Stanley begins to fight to keep Zero alive. Thus, he gives up the shelter of the half-buried boat and climbs the mountain that they could only previously see from a great distance. The specters from the past residing both in Stanley’s memory and in the resonating energy from the old boat lead him up the mountain. It is here that he again begins digging, but this time, digging differently. Sachar explains: “He dug until he had a hole that was about as deep as his arm was long. There was enough water for him to scoop out with his hands and drop on Zero’s face” (172). While digging, Stanley comes across an onion buried in the earth; this one plus an excess of onions become that which sustain the boys during this deterritorialization until memories reterritorialize them and return them to the camp.

Stanley and Zero finally return to the camp and to that striated hole that Stanley dug into his memory. This return marks the beginning of their liberation from the despots at the camp—not by their reflecting, acting, and changing while on the mountain (a common motif), but by the energies they encountered flowing through holey space (among smooth
and striated). While the smooth spaces they encountered in themselves are not liberating, Deleuze and Guattari remind us that “the struggle is changed or displaced in [smooth spaces], and life reconstitutes its stakes, confronts new obstacles, invents new paces, switches adversaries” (Thousand 500). While standing in (not hiding in or trying to “cover up”) what would eventually become the fluid-like “chora,” Stanley and Zero proceed with no method to make the perfectly dimensional hole bigger. As the hole becomes larger and more and more out of control, it finally runs into another perfectly dimensional hole and causes a cave-in. Here, in-between the formerly striated holes, a large chest appears and they both accidentally step into a nest of the yellow, lethal, venom-possessing lizards: the action that always means death. However, the onions they excavated from the earth while living in their deterritorialized line of flight still resonate through their bodies. In another kairotic moment, without knowing why, Stanley and Zero proceed to remain in the hole among the lizards—not as “remains,” however. They flow with the remains of the past (the chest) not by resisting them but by diving into them; the lizards simply lie and rest among/between them, apparently in a trance from the onion energy resonating from the boys’ bodies. Lizards traverse Stanley’s face; the face literally becomes an opening that allows the onions and lizards to remain together. Simultaneously, the boys become onion, lizard, and earth—becomings (haecceities: the entire assemblage) that eventually free them from the despots and save their lives. Smooth spaces in themselves didn’t save them. The energies from smooth spaces that were traversed in striated and holey space saved them. Stanley did not find a new subjectivity and self-awareness; he “cracked up” his previous sense of subjectivity (I’m number 1!) through several becomings. It might be very easy to say that the line of flight to smooth space liberated the boys, or that this line was an “escape” that “empowered them.” But their return and reinscription into striated and holey space shows how all three spaces are always happening at once, without one eclipsing the others. It also affirms what rationality could not—remaining “on the threshold” immersed in a nest of lethal lizards, pure exposure.

For Stanley, deterritorialization (breaking out of the symbolic, the world of meaning) occurs twice: first on the line of flight to smooth space and again in holey space while becoming-lizard. Stanley’s double-deterritorialization momentarily avoids reterritorialization back into dominant codes and structures; he forgets his family’s curse, forgets for a moment everything that has been “put there” by the those in control. The hole he fell into receives ek-static communications previously tuned out
in the name/face of family "history." Previously, his memories served what Deleuze and Guattari call a "reterritorializing function" and have represented for him how his life might turn out according to its cursed fate. Deleuze and Guattari also speak of lines of flight that absolutely deterritorialize, that finally become outside of the symbolic, that release stratified memory into all memory. Stanley lives there for a moment (in the hole between de- and re-territorialization), the moment precisely when his memories are cracked up; then they become rearranged differently as he is reterritorialized into dominant structures. During his line of flight from the camp, Stanley “catches” memories as they resonate from the earth and create linkages, memories from the specters in his family’s past that have created certain moods and that impel him toward digging on the mountain. These actions are parts of a collage of events, which is shattered once he returns to the camp and his hole. But the energy from the hole, from holey space, reassembles these parts into new combinations create the conditions for the possibility of liberation.

The Post-Critical at Work

Both desire and knowledge must circulate freely and must interact in order for social justice to make progress.

—Marshall Alcorn

While Stanley and Holes provide quite a literal example of becoming/learning, which leads directly to a post-critical composition, I suggest that this same occurrence might also work within in the striated spaces of learning and writing within the university. Recall Ulmer’s “methodology” of choragraphy, which provides the space that evades meaning but that continuously asks how something works. To conclude, and as a complement to the exemplar demonstrated by Holes, the “writing” I have been describing can be linked to what is currently happening to music. In “Where Music Will be Coming From,” Kevin Kelly reminds us that “technology is changing music” now just like it always has. In other words, the space of music has changed, and the old, relied-upon methods of obtaining it are losing their effectiveness. Copies of music are not only flawless and cheap (as in years past), but are now fluid and free of charge. He writes, “Once music is digitized, it becomes a liquid that can be morphed and migrated and flexed and linked. You can filter it, bend it, archive it, rearrange it, remix it, mess with it” (30). This practice changes, at the structural level, how music functions and how it works for people.
No longer is it a "whole," the One recording that remains still and immortalized by way of tape, LP, or CD; rather, the recording is parts that remain parts, only to be assembled and reassembled in constant (re)production. The listener is active, (re)creating the recordings, remixing riffs, voices, and even audience reactions from a variety of different performances from the studio or from the live stage. The principal devices are decoupage (cutting) collage, and montage (assemblage). Cutting "breaks up" the structures that have sustained wholeness and releases forces and intensities previously stifled.

Recently, this practice has been given the name "mash-up." Mash-ups are Internet driven and composed of parts from wildly diverse musical performances and genres. Listeners/creators compose simultaneously familiar and unfamiliar musical pieces usually only available on the Internet but now becoming more and more mainstream after they began to be played at clubs and on the radio. According to an exposé on mash-ups, one of the biggest hits has been a mash up that "melds the guitar riff of Nirvana's 'Smells Like Teen Spirit' with Destiny Child's 'Bootylicious.'" Critic Tom Maurstad explains: "Listening to [a mash up] is an uncategorizable experience. This is not—as the genre's name implies—simply two songs mashed together [a hybrid]. What you hear sounds and feels like a new song, even as you recognize the old songs from which it was created" (6C). Herein lies the crucial difference between previous forms of analysis/hybridization and decoupage/montage: cutting and reassemblage are not controlled ways of linking. While montage appears at first to be creating a whole, we soon see that it remains a hole, for its meaning can only be felt and then articulated in another decoupage/montage. There are no categories available within which to place or critique something that can only be felt. In other words, while hybrids purport to reflect the best and most realistic parts of existing categories, montage does not reflect but directly changes reality, and the realities assumed by montage are created by associational logic, which defies categorization.

A post-critical composition challenges traditional practices of reading and writing (what passes for academic discourse); however, it should work alongside—not eclipse—these traditional practices. By performing the theory we are experiencing, by creating our own "mash-ups," we move critique from "what does it mean?" to "how does it work?" By asking how something works, we can never know (nor would we desire to know) for sure what something represents or means for certain, but we will always experience its force, intensity, and production. Asking how
something works allows the knowledge that resides in the body but cannot be articulated in language to emerge. Desire, or "emotional" knowledge, cannot be directly named and codified, yet it can be grasped. As chorography shows us, asking how something works requires listening and generating new sets of associations; the method of a post-critical composition works best in digital space, and resistance becomes the very thing that challenges and then redescribes the way writing works. Critique, which remains in the realm of the negative, is replaced by constant production: seeing and hearing how something works by not demystifying the narrative of ideology through critique, but by "cutting up" the narrative through a rewriting. Practice will be understood as the piecing together into new combinations elements left unarticulated by dominant institutions and knowledge. Diving into the very things that appear to oppose one's thinking and linking them accordingly (instead of resisting them completely) constitutes a non-negative mode of critique.

Jeff Rice performs a print-based example of post-critical composition; he places events together that might not logically connect but that allow a pattern to emerge. This is different from traditional argumentation wherein the hierarchical development of a pattern is determined in advance through a series of logical connections. Rice explains, "The parts are not greater than the whole; they comprise the whole. What emerges is not a hodge-podge assemblage of disparate items with no meaning other than their coincidental connections. Instead, we see a pattern form . . . something new about the subject matter at hand" (36). "Seeing" the pattern form indicates critique without critical distance between subject and object; the result is not fully known in advance: a critical distance is not achieved until after the writing has been produced. Rice reminds us that his essay "positions itself as both explanation and experiment"; therefore, as a post-critical performance, it will not tell us how to use hypertext markup language but will show a new methodology for writing. (24) While this statement might be problematic for some, I find it remarkably accurate. Learning how to write post-critically inherently includes engaging with new technologies and learning them as they are being used, thereby relinquishing the need for mastery. If technology is "trickling up," as Wired has suggested, then mastery is neither possible nor desirable. New versions of programs and applications emerge constantly, and each of us uses the version to which we are most accustomed. This practice will, no doubt, engender new forms of resistance from students who are not comfortable with the idea of mixing desire and chance occurrences with knowledge. Diving into the unfamiliar to
produce post-critical writing requires letting go of familiar terms and conditions for writing in an academic setting. However, if we listen closely, we will see that our students are already doing it; they are already writing post-critically and producing texts that cannot be contained in models or genres. We have come full circle, back to the question at the beginning of this essay: what happens when technological full fluency hits the university? It already has, and a post-critical composition can be a starting place for thinking about what writing in these new spaces will have become.

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Notes

1. Among other references to which I will refer throughout this paper, my title partially relies on John Marks' *Gilles Deleuze: Vitalism and Multiplicity*. Marks names one of his section headings “My Life: A Hole I Fell Into . . .” to mark the beginning of a section about the eight-year lapse between Deleuze’s first and second publication. In *Negotiations*, Deleuze suggests that perhaps it is in these holes (literal and figural) where movement takes place (138).

2. Interestingly, the article “Do Libraries Really Need Books?” appearing in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* on 12 July 2002 locates these changes in terms of university libraries, wherein more money is being spent on digital technology during renovation and construction processes than on actual printed books that have traditionally filled the shelves for the past several centuries. Thus, new and renovated libraries will have fewer “shelves” and more virtual space. While some might mourn this fundamental change, others celebrate it, for these types of responses show that traditions associated with the university structure are beginning to break apart. This essay will contribute to these celebrations and attempt to describe what learning might be like in, so to speak, a university whose library has more computers than books.

3. Lynn Worsham has provided a powerful explanation of the violence inherent in this misconception in “Going Postal: Pedagogic Violence and the Schooling of Emotion.” It is in this article that Worsham defines the “oedipalized subject” upon which Rickert expands. She defines it as follows: “Oedipalization—or the internalization and identification with an authority figure to which one is attached emotionally—is the specific way the patriarchal and bourgeois family produces individuals whose affective orientation to authority best supports the early period of capitalist development.” She elaborates on how this identification is currently missing. Worsham continues with a description of the de-oedipalized subject, which is crucial to my forthcoming use of Giorgio Agamben's “whatever” being. Worsham writes, “More specifically, postmodernism pro-
duces a subject who is variously described as de-oedipalized, narcissistic, feminized, lost, fragmented, and schizophrenic. The de-oedipalized subject is deeply ambivalent because it is locked in a perpetual crisis of abjection in which it oscillates between self-exaltation and dejection, between euphoria and hostility or rage.

4. My use of the word “praxis” indicates the integration of theory and practice.

5. This is primarily from Ulmer’s important essay, “The Object of Post-Criticism,” which describes the theory and practice of thinking post-critically.

6. These ideas follow a line of thinking from Bataille to Deleuze and Guattari, Agamben, and Ronell who work with the idea of singularities as a third term residing outside subject-object relations.

7. Agamben also returns to Duns Scotus and haecceity to describe the figure of the whatever singularity. He writes, “Decisive here is the idea of an inessential commonality, a solidarity that in no way concerns an essence. Taking place, the communication of singularities in the attribute of extension, does not unite them in essence, but scatters them in existence” (Coming 18). Agamben points out that a return to medieval philosophers is necessary, because such philosophers “held that the passage from potentiality to act, from common form to singularity, is not an event accomplished once and for all, but an infinite series of modal oscillations” (19).

8. “Methodology” remains in quotations; Ulmer’s method is not a method as method has been traditionally conceptualized. It is the “impossible possibility” of a postmodern method that is not contained in a hierarchy. Interestingly, Ulmer’s recent textbook (Internet Invention: From Literacy to Electracy) specifically puts this “methodology” (choragrophy) into practice. This book is created out of the theory I have been explicating and offers very specific explanations and provocative assignments created for electracy.


10. The pun on “holey” is what linked this discussion to Walter and to the chora.

11. Ulmer stresses this point in “I Untied The Camera of Tastes” 578. Additionally, Avital Ronell says something similar when she talks about how she writes. She tells us in Stupidity: “When I write I am always taking a call, I am summoned from elsewhere, truly from the dead . . .” (32). Kate Millett also greatly exemplifies this notion with her work The Basement: Meditations on a Human Sacrifice.

12. I would like to thank Lynn Worsham and the JAC anonymous reviewers for their insightful and detailed comments on this article. I greatly appreciate their responses and suggestions for improvement.
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