Writing Offshore: The Disappearing Coastline of Composition Theory

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There is no longer a rational explanation. Reason has awakened to its limitations and, embracing the reality of the paradox, is compelled to transform itself. The natural space for this transformation is the borderline.

—Lebbeus Woods

There is a seal or sepulcher to be broken, a rock to be broke open, to disclose the living water; an eruption. Begin then with a fracture, a cesura, a rent; opening a crack in this fallen world, a shaft of light.

—Norman O. Brown

It was quite possibly the coldest, wettest, and most frightened I had ever been, perched on the bow of a small converted seal-hunting boat as it chugged straight into the Arctic Sea, the coastline of Northern Norway barely visible above the mist, rain, and choppy seas whipped up by a storm into which, against all logic, we were apparently heading. I was torn between two worlds. I wanted more than anything to see a whale, but I was unable to take my eyes off the disappearing coastline, its security beckoning, the warm duvet on my bed, the clean wool socks I had forgotten to put in my backpack, the safety of the streets of Andenes, home to a handful of whale researchers and northern lights scholars. It occurred to me that I should have made out a will. When the coastline disappeared altogether, I turned to face the stinging rain and willed a whale to surface, to blow some warm air my way. I tugged my coat tighter and asked myself more than once what this Texan was doing on this boat.

The answer is, I was a tourist.

Lately, I have wondered the same thing about what I am doing in this field of rhetoric and composition. I would like to think that I think, among other things. And that thinking is doing, and not just some form of academic tourism, something “extra-curricular . . . [that] one pursues in the summer, at the end of the term after the ‘real’ intellectual labour is finished,” as Gary Genosko puts it (1–2). I have, however, donned the uniform of tourism often enough to recognize those of us who wear the glazed look of tourists flitting from theory to theory, or who document our rhetorical travels with snapshots of this pedagogy or that. Our professional byways are crowded with khaki and (gore-tex™)tual tourists, field glasses in one hand, the latest guide to teaching writing in the other. And yet, despite the tightly-built craft in which we entrusted our survival as a field, we kept too close to the shoreline, dragging the anchor of argumentative writing (a.k.a. critical thinking) until it took hold among the bedrock curricula of grammar and style, aims and modes, claims, grounds, and warrants. And now our most sound composition pedagogy has run aground like some leviathan, a beached whale that inexplicably (and paradoxically) crawls onto the shore—onto the ground of all ground, figuratively speaking. And thus begins our exhaustive search for the explicable in the inexplicable—the why, the reason, the rationale.

Why does the whale beach itself? Is it some kind of “will to strand”? Why does the whale, when returned to deep water, sometimes re/turn and strand itself again? These are rhetorical questions. The problem lies in the institution of why (for what reason?). We can pile reason upon reason, answer upon answer, and still never know the why. We can shift the ground/figure relationship and still never know the why. We can even supply a non-answer and continue to tell ourselves that a way of seeing is also a way of not seeing—and still be no closer to the why. The ground/figure analogy we are fond of invoking when pressed to explain rhetoric is actually not an analogy at all. It is a trick image—namely, the trick we pull on ourselves that there actually is a distinction between figure and ground, when ground is nothing but our most supreme invention, when ground is all we desire, tricked by the reified figurative field into believing figure is not ground. We are tourists on a search for why. The problem with this particular junket is that it has been made at the students’ expense. We need the why, so it stands to reason they must need the why.

Sharon Crowley argues against the dominant view that students “need” to write and think in particular ways. She situates the conventional wisdom of academia on this topic inside a powerful “discourse of needs.”
According to Crowley, "The discourse of needs positions . . . teachers as servants of a student need that is spoken, not by students themselves, but by people speaking for powerful institutions" (257). She goes on to conclude that the "claim that students need composition is 'privatized,' . . . in other words, the claim is so widely accepted in the relevant communities that it is simply not available for argument" (259). But what is available for argument? The teaching of argument itself? Conventional wisdom says no—argumentative writing is not up for argument. It has become the capstone of composition.

By now your suspicions that I have somehow foundered (and there must be a good reason) are well founded. No reason to be coy; it's true—I am dissatisfied with teaching writing that is primarily argumentative writing qua reason. And what leads me to think this through in writing here could not be defined as reasons per se; rather, it is a face that haunts me—that post-9/11 face of disbelief, disenchantment, and disaffection for writing arguments when so much defies reason. Those faces belong to students and graduate teaching assistants who look to me to supply reason enough for writing as a function of reason. But there is "no longer a rational explanation" (Woods). Airplanes hit towers, and structures implode with people in them. Refugees drown in sinking boats, and pernicious people traffickers (so-called "travel agents") camped on the fringe of refugee camps count their money. Illegal immigrants go "asylum-shopping" ("Huddled" 29), while boat people sabotage their own boats, desperate for rescue. To casuistically stretch Kenneth Burke's observation that we are "rotten with perfection," it is time to admit that we are also "rotten with reason" (16).
One could argue that I am merely joining the queue of those in our field perpetually dissatisfied with everything. Geoff Sirc astutely observed that the “reason the teaching of writing is permeated by dissatisfaction (every CCCC presentation seems at some level, a complaint) is that we—bad enough—don’t really know what teaching is, but also—far worse, fatal, in fact—we haven’t really evolved an idea of writing that fully reflects the splendor of the medium” (9). Furthermore, he adds, “much of what I hear in conferences and conversations suggests that we have already returned to a desire for something else (if we’ve every really left—Composition Studies as a perpetual scene of disenchantment)” (12). We have seen composition theory weather some damaging storms, but no squalls have threatened to blot out its theoretical coastline from our view as significantly as recent moves toward service learning and distance learning, or the dual topoi of actual and virtual streets.¹ This is not to say that service and distance learning form some kind of “axis of evil”; rather, it is that the theories driving such pedagogies need to be unmoored from the “street” jurisdiction in whose name they appear to elicit and value student writing rooted primarily in the “experience of everyday life” and grounded in, or armed with, the ubiquitous good reasons. Writing offshore suggests a mixed reality that privileges neither terra firma nor terra nullius², nor “castles in the air.” It is suggestive—an idea that will bear us (by indirection) toward non-sovereign outposts along transitory migration routes. In other words, we cannot land, and we must keep moving.

But this will be no call for movement for the sake of movement. While the lessons of deconstruction have propelled some of us into a maelstrom of moveable feasts, me included, movement is no panacea against totalizing centers, fortresses, and border checkpoints—or, against pedagogical regimes grounded in ground metaphysics. “And yet motion can have a direction,” suggests Diane Elam (24).³ According to Elam, “displacement must not be thought of as a movement from one ground to the next . . . but as a displacement which must concede that the grounds don’t exist . . .” 24–25. Calling for what she terms “groundless solidarity,” Elam understands the fierce resistance to the disintegration of the principle of grounding. Still, citing Gayatri Spivak, Elam holds out for “the possibility of ‘revolutions that as yet have no model’” (84). Equally charged, and similarly moved, I mean to probe the ground beneath teaching argument (née critical thinking) that compels us to teach good writing as the invention of good reasons. Student writing should not be labeled ill (writing lab mentality), nor should reason be conceived as the
panacean remedy (panacea—Gr. pan + akos; all-healing); it is always already both poison and cure (pharmakon). Perhaps it is best to describe composition theory thus situated as lashed to the hull of an itinerant aporia—Ahab at the helm, bearings lost, the image of Keats’ epitaph, “Here lies one whose name was writ in WATER.”

Unlearning a Pedagogical Apparatus

Casting Off
in September maybe most: that time
when the earth begins to take over again
something in me gets bogged down and
cries out for the grace of water

My task is to maneuver us in a different direction, to draw us away from the shoreline of philosophical reason and its alluring beacon of argumentation (housed in the heaviest of lighthouses). I am tempted to say that for this we need abstraction (Latin: abstractus. [abstere], abs + trahere; to pull, draw, Caputo, Mystical, 13), but that may commit us to the “dis-course of needs” about which Crowley warns. It would be more compelling to point us toward an abstract horizon, much as one does when adjusting the attitude or pitch of one’s satellite dish. This is the move in question; or, this will be the signal on which we will hone in: abstraction, not argumentation. In casting off from ground metaphysics (a difficult dissuasive move), we occupy a paradoxical position; we must stand with one foot on land and one foot on our vessel. Then the release—the letting go (gelassenheit)—shifts our stance in relation to footing in general. One does not lose the ground by stepping into the abyss, for it, too, assumes a finite ground. Rather, our footing depends on depth, and shifting depth at that, the ebb and flow of depth. Writing instruction, caught between a rock and a hard place, seems to have unwittingly opted for both. Teaching argument amounts to sheltering students from the deep (and too fluid) regions of language (and Being). Yet we know (don’t we?) that writing should be strange, that we should feel alienated, removed, and detached from our standard habits of reading and thinking. Taking a stand, we teach, means adopting a critical stance. But we are unwilling to relinquish the standardization of the methods and means for doing so; and, we are not exactly eager to look into the depths of how this particular pedagogy came about. As it happens, the link between logic/reason and pedagogy is a devastating link—one whose history we cannot ignore, one whose
power we ought not sustain—and we need to understand that ours is a
guild into which our students are meant to perpetuate the constant
churning out of pedagogues.

In his groundbreaking work on *Ramus, Method, and the Decay of
Dialogue*, Walter Ong excavates the history of a major shift in the
evolution of intellectual thought orchestrated by the French Renaissance
humanist, Peter Ramus (1515–1572) (*Ramus* vii). The key force in his
thought centers on the Ramist dialectic, marked by its decimation of
Aristotelian philosophy, its reliance on visualization and quantification
of thought, and the veneration of logic and reason. The explicit dangers
of his dialectic concern (among other things) are its severe limitation of
the scope of rhetoric, but we are concerned here more with the hidden
dangers. According to Ong, “Long after Ramus’ age, the importance
attached to logic in the general consciousness is due less to its association
with thinking than with pedagogy” (150). In essence, because the univer­
sity teacher “was also part of a corporation,” Ramus sought to reduce “the
personalist, dialoguing element in knowledge to a minimum in favor of
an element which made knowledge something a corporation could traffic
in, a-personal and abstract” (152). Thus, dialectic was “habitually thought
of as implementing not dialogue, but the huge pedagogical apparatus”
(143; emphasis added). Ong explains further how reason and teaching
became inexorably linked: “This tradition more or less took for granted
that teaching is carried on abstractly, since knowledge was generally
equated with abstract or scientific knowledge. What is not conveyed
abstractly and explicitly, is not taught. *Doctrina* is *scientia*. Teaching
something is the same as ‘proving’ it” (156).

To achieve this connection, Ramus blurs the distinction between *ars*
(art) and *doctrina* (teaching), often using them interchangeably (160).
Dialectic, effectively, was the “teaching of teaching” (161). Logic’s
function in this interchange was, surprisingly, not a philosophical one.
Ramus maintained that logic is “not the teaching of how to argue about
the precepts of logic; . . . logic is the teaching of how to discourse well”
(160). In short, according to Johann Piscator, a Ramist follower, “‘to
discourse (*disserere*)’ means ‘the same as to teach’ (*docere*)” (qtd. in Ong
161). Ramus had invented the supreme tautology; teaching logic (dialec­
tic) “teaches the teaching of teachings” (162). In Ong’s estimation,
Ramus believed dialectic should “govern all life” (167). By expanding
“the purview of dialectic . . . the purview of pedagogy was itself being
expanded so that the world outside the classroom purportedly governed
by dialectic was by that fact being assimilated to the classroom itself”
Reason is perfected in pedagogy, for pedagogy, by pedagogues. Trafficking in abstract thinking installs, brilliantly, the ultimate logic of containment inside a "huge pedagogical apparatus." Teaching's purpose, in this system, is to produce more teachers; and the proliferation of reason underpins such logic.

Composition pedagogy, having inherited what Ong calls the "pedagogical juggernaut," must unbuild this pedagogical apparatus. We must break with a system in which teachers are the sole possessors of abstract thinking, and students are taught as if they are nascent teachers. Teaching abstraction (as detachment from pedagogy), rather than argumentation (as learning to teach), would place in students' hands the power to resist teaching itself, would enact the necessary detachment (abstractus) that would unhinge the link between reason and pedagogy, and dissemble the assembly line model of education in whose grip we have been since Ramus so cleanly paired discourse and logic.

Where does this leave writing? Lynn Worsham suggested some years ago that "[o]ur emphasis should shift from the notion of writing as a mode of learning to that of writing as a strategy, without tactics or techniques, whose progress yields 'unlearning.' This result does not mean that writing produces ignorance; rather, it produces a sense of defamiliarization vis-à-vis unquestioned forms of knowledge. . . . Students may discover ways to make something of what has been made of them" (101–02). Writing that unlearns such a "pedagogical apparatus" is apt to be wildly unfamiliar to us. Hélène Cixous describes this writing:

Whoever wants to write must be able to reach this lightening region that takes your breath away, where you instantaneously feel at sea and where the moorings are severed with the already-written, the already known. . . . All great texts begin in this manner that breaks: they break with our thought habits, with the world around us, in an extreme violence that is due to rapidity. They hurl us off to foreign countries. (59)

Writing in a "manner that breaks," however, severs more than the disciplinary moorings at stake in the field of rhetoric and composition. Breakers crash as well onto the ethical and political shores from which we obtain our license to monitor the steady traffic of student writing. The politics of such cornerstones as process, propositional logic, and portfolio assessment, to name a few, are given to determine the acceptable rhetorical borders (breakwaters) within which we operate. Recurrent bouts with plagiarism, student diffidence, and service-oriented curricula
continue to plague composition programs and prompt further shoring up of each foundational outcome in each departmental strategic plan. To suggest that argumentation has reached its breaking point, or (more drastically) to break up the lofty and lucrative industry of argumentative writing pedagogy, will meet with the most stern rebukes and further entrenchment of argument upon argument. The clarion calls to resist the breakup will likely adopt the most political and ethical of arguments. Thus, we must first understand, as Derrida reveals, that when one’s politics or ethics is questioned, it is often because “the first defensive and reactionary reflex is to accuse of ethico-political irresponsibility, even of ‘nihilism,’ the very one who comes like this to question and disturb the doxa in its slumber” (“Canons” 202–03). Let me wear the moniker of irresponsibility if it means divesting oneself of responsibility in order to probe the depths of a more responsive relation to students, to each other, and to each Other. It is time to put off the mantle of autochthonous authority, to disavow our discourse of desired roots from which we erroneously believe we are giving our students the gift of ground.

The Ground of Reason

“Needing the Sea”
there’s no need friend to remind me
about the countless whose lives are far from such luxury
about starvation and misery the latest holocaust
of those who never got a dog’s chance oh
as I write I can hear the scream of
someone being carefully tortured while others
with their only life blindfolded face into
the high cement wall of one military or another
even the thought like that of Poland becomes
a kind of dying: what that hitcher from the North felt
as he watched the blaze of his cottage

It is not without noting the irony of opening a discussion of Heidegger with this section of Desmand Egan’s poem, “Needing the Sea” (hailing us as it does as with reminders of the absolute material conditions of the millions of victims of genocide), that I cringe as I prepare us to “need the sea.” I struggle to stand (literally); yet, my legs buckle in the face of past and present violent realities. Thus, it is crucial that we acknowledge a potentially crippling aspect of Heidegger’s thought—namely, the identification of elements of violence found in his language of “rootedness,
homeland, and native soil,” terms that implicate him in the rise of National Socialism, according to Charles Bambach (4). The precise tension I aim to scrutinize, however, is the unmitigated trajectory of Heidegger’s thinking from within the context of Nazi Germany toward his postwar critiques of logic and reason, though I do not trace Heidegger’s so-called “turn” in quite the same manner as others who focus on his shift from questions of Being to questions of language. I want, rather, to call attention to a shift in Heidegger’s thought from anchoring Being in the “rootedness” of the “homeland” to releasing Being into its essence as the principle of ground itself. Admittedly, it is impossible to reconcile Heidegger’s thinking, starkly demonstrated in a 1934 radio address (“Creative Landscape: Why Do We Remain in the Provinces?”) in which, Bambach notes, he concentrates on the “folkish constellation of themes around the notion of ‘rootedness,’ or Bodenständigkeit,” themes intimately implicated in “the oppression, exclusion, violence, and terror that [Ernest Bloch] identifies as belonging to the essence of an Alemannic-Swabian-Bavarian form of National Socialism” which Bloch (in 1929) termed “pastorale militans” (qtd. in Bambach 4). In Bambach’s analysis, this oxymoron belies a decidedly less than “bucolic” association between “blood and soil”:

For Bloch, the language of the homeland and of an Alemannic rootedness in the soil betrays a political longing for “a myth that has its fantasy not in the distance but embedded beneath the soil as it were.” This mythic attraction of German fascism for “blood and soil” rhetoric “constitutes the chloroform practice of Hitlerism.” As early as 1933 Bloch will lament that “the eternally same, ignorant arias that Hitler sings to his petit-bourgeois followers do not become any better when the university whore who he found (just as Wilhelm II found her in 1914) latinizes the kitsch and improves the deception with refinements à la Schmitt or Freyer or Heidegger. (4–5)

Nevertheless, other influences upon Heidegger must be taken into consideration when held up within the constellation of themes circumscribed by mythic attractions—namely, influences infrequently attributed to Heidegger’s thought, such as the distraction of mysticism and its pull away from reason and logic toward theology and abstraction. If, however, we are to discern the autochthonous roots of “reason” and its priesthood of logicians, we cannot simply retract thought from the realm of Western onto-theological metaphysics; it is necessary, as Heidegger knew, to extract thought from the bedrock itself: the principle of ground.
In John Caputo’s compelling *The Mystical Element in Heidegger's Thought*, he traces Heidegger’s affinity for Meister Eckhart (von Hochheim), a thirteenth century Dominican preacher from Central Germany. Caputo examines Eckhart’s vernacular sermons, written primarily to the “religious orders of women” of the time who could not read Latin, having never received the “formal theological training accorded to men,” and for whom he resorted to a more vernacular style of writing (101). According to Caputo, Eckhart was driven by a desire to undo “the onto-theo-logical God,” that is “what men call God, whether on the basis of metaphysical theology or even of revealed faith” (xviii). He wanted to rid us of the need to understand God by exerting “the sway of human knowledge” and, instead, to bring us to a point in which we “suspend operations of subjectivity, to disconnect the *ego cogito*, and let God be, let God be *God*” (xviii). Eckhart believed the “highest work of the soul is to let Him go, to let Him be, to remain open to the *lethe* [withdrawal], indeed to shelter Him from the fire of metaphysical conceptuality, to preserve Him in His withdrawal” (xix). Similarly, Heidegger also held that “withdrawal, *lethe*, concealment is inscribed in the ‘essence’... of Being,” although he addresses a secularized unfolding of the history of Being, rather than Eckhart’s mystical desire for the “unity of the soul with God” (xxii, xvii). While similar, Caputo notes, in Heidegger there is a danger in this line of thinking not present in Eckhart’s religious mysticism—namely, that because “we ourselves are the beings at stake,” the “stakes are high” in this “game [Spiel] whose outcome is dark and uncertain” (xvii–xviii). “Es ereignet weil es ereignet. Es spielt weil es spielt. It does what it does, groundlessly. It plays because it plays” (xviii).

In order not to mistake my Heideggerian interlude for an obscure (and abstract) sidebar (or worse, jeremiad), let me align our discussion of reason and composition pedagogy with the same telescopic (and equidistant) horizon. Reading the effects of the history of reason in the field of rhetoric and composition requires in us an awakening to the withdrawal, though not one that frees us from reason’s sway. Caputo’s explication of Heidegger’s exposition (his exposing the “‘debilitas’ of reason”) is useful:

On Heidegger’s own terms, oblivion, withdrawal, is *ineradicable* [emphasis added], and possesses what might be called, in a language we can no longer trust, a structural necessity. If withdrawal is the very condition which grants the possibility of history, then there can be no point in history where oblivion is overcome. To “awaken” to this oblivion, which is what
“overcoming” means, can have no historical correlate, cannot be instan-
tiated somewhere inside history—whether in a “brief but magnificent
time” in the first beginning or in some “new beginning.” Wakefulness
does not emancipate us from the oblivion, but to it. It does not point back
to a primal time nor does it hail a coming future, but it gives us a certain
way of reading that history—as the history which is effected by the
withdrawal. (xxii–xxiii)

In effect, until we awaken to the oblivion, reason’s sway continues to call
to us from inside the history of rhetoric (its first beginning), but also (and
thus more insidiously) from inside the “new beginning” of the rhetoric/
composition fray, thus denying us a way to read that history or to wrest
(from Old Norse, reista, to bend) ourselves from reason’s grasp without
doing so violently. It rises to the surface—can you see it? Just there,
beneath the seas of Eckhart’s theological detachment and Heidegger’s
secular withdrawal, we witness the thunderous breach of our whale—
abstraction. But unlike Melville’s Ahab, we do not slaughter the abstrac-
tion and lash it to our vessel in order to preserve some divine balance
between Kant’s a priori and Locke’s tabula rasa. We let it be abstract;
we withdraw, move away, and tread in astonishment.6 Into its wake I
would have us sail as awakened teachers of writing and rhetoric, inviting
students to detach themselves from us, from the ground—and to think in
the abstract, in writing. Still, it’s a concrete world in more ways than one;
and abstraction cannot be established by reason if we mean to detach
composition from its argumentative foundations (its leviathan). We need
to hear this word, and we need to tread slowly.

In “On Detachment,” Eckhart uses “the Middle High German word
abegescheidenheit as a translation of abstractus, that which is ‘drawn
away’ and ‘removed from’ matter and the conditions of matter’” (qtd. in
Caputo 11). To issues relating to structure, matter, and concrescence, I
will return later, for I do not wish to commit what Alfred Whitehead
termed “the fallacy of misplaced concreteness” (to mistake “what is
abstract for what is concrete”; Kwinter, Anatomy 267–68). To do so
would merely rehearse Henrik Ibsen’s drama, The Master Builder, in
which Solness (an architect) promises to build a young woman (Hilda) a
fairy-tale kingdom with “castles in the air” (371). Eivind Tjønneland
interprets Solness’ symbolic goal as “‘artificial and unrealistic’ . . . He
loses all sense of reality, the juxtaposition between ‘the foundation’ and
‘the castle in the air’ becomes what Kierkegaard calls ‘an untrue exag-
geration’” (qtd. in Tostrup 166). The master builder wanted nothing to
build: "Nothing really built; not anything sacrificed for the chance of building" (Ibsen 380); nevertheless, when Hilda asks, "a real castle in the air?" Solness replies, "Yes. One with a firm foundation under it" (371). Allegorically speaking, if unbuilt material designs constitute an abstract materiality, the realization of which would result in a "diminished" abstraction, "it stands to suggest" that writing that abstracts itself in order to re-present abstraction results in a built meaning, rather than an unbuilt (excessive) and infinite source of meaning. Our conundrum is not unlike the "methodologically impregnable" leap of Heidegger's. We cannot leap from ground to ground unless we keep moving; and we cannot build castles in the air on solid foundations. The master builder was only half right; the problem lies not only in the nothing, it lies in the principle of ground. But Eckhart and Heidegger knew we must go through the nothing in order to accomplish the abstraction of, and detachment from, the sphere of matter and reason.

There is a saying in Norway, "Av måneskin gror det ingenting"—Nothing grows in the moonlight. It means that some things are beautiful, or of value, despite their seeming lack of purpose, their lack of ground metaphysics. Heidegger takes up the problem in Der Satz vom Grund, a series of lectures he delivered in Freiburg in 1955–56. His concluding lecture, "The Principle of Ground," dealt with the famous principle of Leibniz, "nothing is without reason" (sometimes translated as "nothing is without ground"). Caputo suggests that in order to bring the problem of ground into relief, and thus critique the history of logic and rationality, Heidegger takes Leibniz's principle as a "touchstone of the entire Western metaphysical tradition, i.e., of the history of philosophy and reason in the West" (Mystical 47). Placing the emphasis differently, Heidegger rereads the phrase in a new key as "nothing is without ground" (67). To penetrate the destructive force of philosophical reason, Heidegger chooses to elucidate the verse of a mystical poet, Angelus Silesius, called "Without Why" (from The Cherubic Wanderer):

The rose is without why; it blooms because it blooms;
It cares not for itself; asks not if it's seen. (qtd. in Caputo 40)

That Heidegger chooses a mystic poet is not insignificant. The rose does not obey the principles of logic and reason, as humans do; it is detached from representational thinking. In order to enter this other region outside representational thinking, we have to suspend our role as a representational subject looking to supply grounds for the rose (Caputo, Mystical
We should understand that we are like the rose—without why, which is different than being without because. Very different. In according the rose its place in the *principium reddendae rationis* (principle of sufficient reason), the poet, Heidegger is suggesting, “speaks of the rose not as it stands before the representing subject, but as it stands in itself. The poet lets the rose be the thing which it is, without reducing it to the status of an ‘object.’ He detaches [*abstractus*] the rose from the demands of representational thinking. For the poet, the ‘rose remains without a relationship to the ground, a relationship which questions and which expressly represents the ground’” (64).

According to Heidegger, philosophy, as a thing of reason, is the result of an oblivion of the fact that things do not depend on human justification, that they emerge before us on their own. Yet, Caputo notes, Heidegger’s critics (especially Laszlo Versényi, Paul Hühnerfeld, and Walter Biemel) find his leap from representational thinking to the non-representational thought of Being (via mysticism) difficult to accept since he has not passed through the “trial of reason” (42). Such a leap involves a discontinuity; it is accomplished without a bridge—that is, without propositional logic—and this leap has the appearance of being methodologically impregnable (41, 70). That is, Caputo explains, if one criticizes “Heidegger’s thought from without . . . one will inevitably adopt the language of metaphysics and, in so doing, distort what is important about it, viz., its very overcoming of metaphysics. The alternative to this, Biemel notes, is ‘to arrive at Heidegger’s position with a leap and then to remain there’” (41).

If we explore Heidegger’s critique of logic further, however, we come to see that the danger in the leap shifts not toward the leap itself so much as to the logic that compels us *not* to leap. In his “Letter on Humanism” (1947), Heidegger takes humanism “offshore” by refusing to shore up a technical interpretation of thinking, an interpretation that, he maintains, has been seized by logic and grammar, both operating under the banner of metaphysics and acting on the strength of metalinguistic positions aimed at disarming all that threatens the autonomy of reason, rationality, and logic (194). The problem, he argues, is that thinking should not be “judged by a standard that does not measure up to it. Such judgment may be compared to the procedure of trying to evaluate the nature and powers of a fish by seeing how long it can live on dry land. For a long time now, all too long, thinking has been stranded on dry land. Can then the effort to return thinking to its element be called ‘irrationalism’?” (195). Furthermore,
Because we are speaking against humanism people fear a defense of the inhuman and a glorification of barbaric brutality. For what is more "logical" than that for somebody who negates humanism nothing remains but the affirmation of inhumanity? ... With the assistance of logic and ratio—so often invoked—people come to believe that whatever is not positive is negative and thus that it seeks to degrade reason—and therefore deserves to be branded as depravity. We are so filled with "logic" that anything that disturbs the habitual somnolence of prevailing opinion is automatically registered as a despicable contradiction. ... Following this logical course we let everything expire in a nihilism we invented for ourselves with the aid of logic. (225–27)

The fear of being groundless and the risk of being branded inhuman (or post-humanist) are compelling (irresistible) reasons for not taking the leap of thought, for not forsaking the principle of ground. But surely we are not mere puppets of first principles, or statues rooted in reason. The question is mir(ror)ed in Heinrich von Kleist’s essay, “On the Marionette Theatre.” Kleist explains that marionette puppets are, in a way, weightless. “They are not afflicted with the inertia of matter, the property resistant to dance. The force which raises them into the air is greater than the one which draws them to the ground.... Puppets need the ground only to glance against lightly, like elves, and through this momentary check to renew the swing of their limbs. We humans must have it to rest on, to recover from the effort of the dance. This moment of rest is clearly no part of the dance. The best we can do is make it as inconspicuous as possible.” Resting in our not-leaping poses the ultimate hazard: we become so rooted in reason that our feet sink deep in the sand at low tide, and each attempt to step out and up is futile. “The more we pursue grounds, the more we lose our footing” (Caputo, Mystical 57). The tide returns, and we can only stand staring out to sea, desperate to swim free. We are no more than iron statues, standing rooted, up to our necks in ground, beautifully illustrated in British sculptor Antony Gormley’s group of one hundred iron figures semi-buried in the sand and water, looking out to sea along the Norwegian coast at Stavanger (see Figure 2). Asked what their stance means, he replies, “The sculptures do not take their belonging to the world for granted, they are trying to find their place in it and they do not take the act of standing as a given; they are learning to stand” (“Extracts”).

Composition and rhetoric must relinquish its role in teaching students to rest rather than dance, to reason rather than detach, to face the eroding coastline of ground metaphysics rather than the open sea. Converting our rhetorical latitude against the groundswell of urban argument requires
equal pressure on both reason and region. Thus, we must understand the equally disabling coordinates of coercion that have been handed down through philosophical pragmatics, cognitive science, formal logic, and legislated consumerism thinly disguised as education. We can continue to embrace this legacy, or step away, step back, and remain detached. This

Figure 2: "Another Place," Antony Gormley. _Cast iron_ 100 figures 189 x 53 x 29 cm (photo from installation at Stavanger, Norway, June, 1997).

requires not fortitude, but forbearance—not rationality, but a deconstructive heart—and an ear to hear the language of abstraction. One trajectory, ours at the moment, offers to outsmart old alibis (street smarts) by adopting new allegories, new cosmo-politics, and avant-pedagogy. It is now or never, no time to lament, writes Nietzsche:

We have left the land and have embarked. We have burned our bridges behind us—indeed, we have gone farther and destroyed the land behind us. Now, little ship, look out! Beside you is the ocean: to be sure, it does not always roar, and at times it lies spread out like silk and gold and reveries of graciousness. But hours will come when you realize that it is infinite and that there is nothing more awesome than infinity. Oh, the poor bird that felt free and now strikes the walls of this cage! Woe, when you feel homesick for the land as if it had offered more freedom—and there is no longer any land. (180–81)
Street-Smart Writing Students

Street Smarts

we all know about the houses of hopes blown up blown out
we all bump into the local alcos the druggie
youngersters their adult faces mugged by less than poverty
just off the O'Connell Street of our new towns

In her 2002 CCCC convention call, Shirley Logan challenged us to "connect the text and the street." In the call, Logan wrote, "When asked about her sources of inspiration, Chicago poet, novelist, and teacher Gwendolyn Brooks once said, 'I wrote about what I saw and heard in the street. I lived in a small second-floor apartment at the corner, and I could look first on one side and then on the other. There was my material.' Brooks connected her texts to the Bronzeville streets around her." In answering the call, our fields of rhetoric and composition gathered around and collectively celebrated (and critiqued) our hipper version of the promenade. As I reflected on the call, I became increasingly convinced that the institutionalization of the "street" as source material, among other things, effectively hails our students into the romantic subject position of the (masculine) flâneur. Charles Baudelaire describes the flâneur: "It is not given to everyman to take a bath of multitude; enjoying a crown in an art . . . The solitary and thoughtful stroller finds singular intoxication in this universal communion. . . . He adopts as his own all the occupations, all the joys and all the sorrows that chance others" (qtd. in Jarvis, "Mind/Body" 106). More recently, critical theorists of various stripes have adopted the flâneur as a means of resolutely connecting (and valorizing) the principle of ground and social realism, the effect of which is a dizzying turnstile through which passes the flotsam of so much bohemian slumming. According to Chris Jenks,

The flâneur, though grounded in everyday life, is an analytic form, a narrative device, an attitude towards knowledge and its social context. It is an image of movement through the social space of modernity . . . The flâneur is a multilayered palimpsest that enables us to move from real products of modernity, like commodification and leisured patriarchy, through the practical organization of space and its negotiation by inhabitants of a city, to a critical appreciation of the state of modernity and its erosion into the post-, and onwards to a reflexive understanding of the function, and purpose, of realist as opposed to hermeneutic epistemologies in the appreciation of those previous formations. (148)
Rob Shields further situates the flâneur at the apex of urban street life, as one who "jealously guards his individuality and agency by obscuring it beneath the mask of the anonymous and insignificant 'man of the crowd,'" pursues a course which alienates him from even the possibility of a deeper inter-subjective exchange with the other members of the crowd scene. . . . Flânerie is a sociability of Ones. . . . This is the life of watching the world go by, not ever exchanging a word acknowledging the presence of an Other" (76–77).

Perhaps this is not precisely descriptive of the student writer, but it is eerily allegorical in its semblance between the classroom and "a sociability of Ones," between our social epistemic rallies for student agency and this one who "jealously guards his individuality and agency"—the student as man-about-town, member of the "leisured patriarchy," his writing safely hidden by anonymity and insignificance, ironic in its aimlessness in an aims-driven rhetorical industry. Cyberflânerie constructs our students as lurker/browsers of the internet. To be sure there are multiple and exemplary counter texts to the activities and alienation emerging from my close rendering of the flâneur as student writer. More indirect than direct, my tactic here is to splice scenarios together in order to glimpse an unhappy association in whose folly we are unwittingly complicit by connecting "the text and the street." Leaving aside the feminist leverage we should make out of the student as romantic man-about-town, I want to focus on the questions urgently posed by our ongoing romance with the topos of street, questions that involve not only its thorough rootedness in ground metaphysics, but also its franchised reproduction of the generic site of an agonistic and violent topography.

The word street is what Gayatri Spivak would term a normative catachresis in that its original referent is the result of an arbitrary abuse of the metaphor of ground (Critique 14). Put in a more vernacular context, "the street" serves as a metonymic substitution through which the old "bait and switch" of "reinventing the university" is accomplished. Gerald Graff sets such an agenda in the lead article of the new journal, Pedagogy. According to Graff, "Inside every street-smart student (which is to say, every student) there is a latent intellectual trying to break out, an identity that it is my job somehow to tease out and help to articulate itself" (23). What Graff terms "Hidden Intellectualism" must be "translated into academic discourse" or street smarts "will have limited influence on the public sphere": "To emerge as critical theory, street smarts have to undergo transformation" (23). Yet, the transformation Graff calls for is
little more than a thinly disguised transformation of street fighting, and it is not clear whether and to what degree Graff distinguishes street conflict from street smarts in his claim that street conflict has to be channeled into academic argumentation. But there is nothing new under the sun in Graff's argument.

Walter Ong (in addition to his history of Ramism) has studied the agonistic residue of Hellenic male ceremonial combat within contemporary critical practices. Ong lays partial blame for academic agonistics on the ancient practice of "fliting," in which heroic fighters hurl verbal insults at one another as a prelude to physical combat (Fighting 108). Other elements of bravado, such as bragging, taunting, ridicule, and insult were also important parts of the these ancient ritual contests. Ong concludes that only when literacy subsumed orality and exterior combat turned inward, did these aspects of agonistic behavior begin to manifest themselves on two fronts: "the narrative and the scholarly-scientific fronts" (186). Given this history, and in response to a world that seems to breed adversarial cultures, Ong calls for an increasing number of self-styled "conflict engineers" who practice various ways of eliminating, circumventing, or reducing such adversary relationships (17). Graff clearly sees himself as just such a "conflict engineer" given his view that "encouraging students to argue can escalate into violence, but repressing argument can lead to violence, too" (31). And, interestingly, Graff bears out Ong's analysis by admitting that one critic of his work suggests that "the pedagogy of 'teaching the conflicts' and the joys of literary critical contention became [for Graff] a kind of street fighting by other means" (31).

An ominous confluence of conflicts emerges in this analysis when considered alongside T.R. Johnson's recent article in CCC, "School Sucks." Johnson makes a compelling case for viewing the university as, "essentially a machine for the production of masochism" (642). As he suggests, students frequently experience writing as a painful process, and while we may bristle at the implication that we are somehow turning our students into "happily bound and gagged" masochists, it does not take much for me to see the proverbial writing on the wall (642). The street, and all the subcultural resistance that the term evokes, is emblematic of a well-oiled logic of containment at work. And if that is not chilling enough, the day is not far off when street smarts may appear on writing program outcome statements.

In fact, the Educational Testing Services (ETS) is currently investing in research they call "Extending Intelligence," which explores "wide-
ranging phenomena on the modifiability of general intellectual capability, such as development of age-related increases in 'crystallized intelligence' and 'wisdom,' cultural-specific abilities (e.g., 'street smarts'), control of affect and emotion, motivation,' and so forth. If ETS believes it is possible, and desirable, to develop "street smarts," you can be assured they will be only too willing to sell you the software to teach it and the systems to assess it. Of the many questions raised by this research, we should ask at least three: if street smarts is culturally specific, exactly which cultures develop street smarts?; what does ETS perceive as beneficial in modifying intellectual capability to include street smarts?; and how do they propose we teach it? Equally perplexing is a new software product demonstrated at an ETS-sponsored conference, "Extending Intelligence," in Sydney, Australia (September 2001). The Reason! project markets a program called Reason!able, a "kind of practice environment for reasoning on any topic." According to project director Tim van Gelder, there is "little evidence" that critical thinking instruction actually improves critical thinking skills. With this software, students can construct argument maps "by adding claims, reasons, and objections, and moving them around as necessary in order to clarify the reasoning. Arguments thus become concrete, manipulable structures rather than abstract objects which must be held in the mind." Van Gelder maintains that argument maps have "various advantages over more traditional prose formats" because "prose is basically limited to monochrome text in linear order, [and] argument maps can use shape, line, colour and position to convey information. The visual display spares the user much of the cognitive burden involved in interpreting the text to figure out what the reasoning is." (emphasis added).

Taken to its logical conclusion, ETS and Reason!able figure (symptomatically) in the current popularity of both "reality" and "weakest link" television programs—the survivor and/or the street smart contestant ("Street Smarts," a Warner Brothers comedy game show "where contestants prove how smart they are by predicting how dumb other people can be"). I would call this an urban lesson, one designed to render illusive the boundary between urbanity and the banal—city streets filled with street smart people spared from the cognitive burden of reasoning—commonplace concepts that happen to share the root word ban (to proclaim or command under threat or penalty). From there it is but a short distance to banish (deport) what is learned by other means, what is written in other forms, and what is thought outside the turf of reason.
What Should Not be Built

Architecture Allegories
is the world which so many miss
realised for them you’d wonder through others
do we carry it for this mongol child that
bucketful of abortions in the sluice room?

The question becomes, then, how to deconstruct the topos of the street and its abject ground zero. John Rajchman would have us move away from stories rooted in soil toward stories that trace trajectories. He writes, “Ungrounded movement is [a] movement that is no longer bound to move from one fixed point to another but rather traces its own unbounded space through the trajectories or paths that it takes” (85). Rajchman takes his cue from Paul Virilio, who claims that “between the subjective and objective it seems we have no room for the ‘trajective,’” that being of movement from here to there . . .” (24). Virilio laments the “loss of the traveller’s tale”; he longs for the “essence of the path, the journey” (25, 23). But Rajchman parlays Virilio’s romanticized view of travel into the geophysical language of the dispossessed:

Perhaps . . . we need to get away from the picture that social life has roots in the ground or soil that supplies it with its basic sense and circumscribes the movements of which it is capable—that the life-world is in the first instance a grounded world . . . The modern world unleashes patterns of demography or migration that put people in situations where, in relation to themselves and to one another, they are no longer able to tell straight narratives of their “origins.” They become originals without origins; their narratives become ungrounded, out of joint, constructed by superposition or juxtaposition rather than by development or progress; a “time” of socially ungrounded movement is thus introduced into their being. (87–88)

Rajchman’s question, which I adopt here, is: “What would an architecture of such trajectories and movements look like?” (86). Using the question as a linchpin around which our periscope pivots, we will name two primary arcs of interest: the ungrounded and unbuilt. One aim of this dual trajectory is to deploy my figurative (but no less inflammatory) substitution of the flamboyant flâneur with the figure of the dispossessed (refugee), a provocative denomination for the student writer in the intensive zone of offshore pedagogy to be examined in the section following. Manuel De Landa reminds us that we
live in spatio-temporal [extensive] zones bounded by . . . familiar borderlines. . . . But there are other zones that we inhabit, too, but which are less familiar than extensive zones. These are “zones of intensity,” such as differences in temperature, zones of high pressure explored by deep-sea divers, high or low gravity zones [e.g., commercial airliners conducting High-G maneuvers to thwart a hijacking]. These zones are bounded by intensive borderlines, critical points of temperature, pressure, gravity, density, tension, connectivity, points that define abrupt transitions in the state of the creatures inhabiting those zones. . . . The role of the philosopher and artist is precisely to reveal this other world, these intensive nuomena behind the extensive phenomena. We are certainly not the first generation to discover intensities, but we may be the first one to be called to revive the forgotten craft of living creatively within intensive zones.

It is appropriate here to conspire with Geoff Sirc again, to wield our uncanny (because unintentional) collaboration along similarly unbuilt lines. As a consistent theme in Sirc’s work over the past decade, avant-garde architectural theories have energized his prescient thought to connect movements such as the situationists and happenings artists of the 1950s and 1960s to composition in general. Sirc recognizes in these architects and artists “a need for a new intensity” with which he calls for a “new urbanism in Composition Studies” and thereby “return the favor, in a sense, and use a few ideas in architectural theory (especially as they relate to city-planning) in order to read the scene of the writing classroom” (26, 187). Sirc wants to immerse us in the topos of street with the aim of shocking and intensifying it as an intensive zone, but his is a trope from the street as mere topos to the street as event. For Sirc, composition as a Happening “silences that tedious, already-wrote drone of knowing, selecting, evaluating, reporting, concluding, and arguing. It is a pedagogy designed to un-build our field’s spaces, a standard-stoppage, a composition theory (like Schoenberg’s) that values the eraser end of the pencil (or the delete key)” (278). Tripping on happenings’ neo-angst, Sirc revitalizes a tired composition-assembly-site by daring to “see Versailles in the A&P parking lot . . . to see the (other) story that dwells in the (purported) story” (193). In groundless solidarity with Sirc, so to speak, I would have us un-build our field’s royal discourse and make of argument an urbanished structure, thereby turning a pretender-to-the-throne into an underground fugitive sovereignty. But my design is not meant to actively un-build spaces so much as to step back and view the unground (der
Abgrund—abyss) beneath the structures, and to sketch a rhetoric of the un-built.

The question of what we should build has an inverse: what should we not build? Architects rarely offer answers to that question, but not in the case of Lebbeus Woods. Woods understands that “[b]ecause architecture is allied with centers of economics and political power, which are concerned first and foremost with extending, or at least maintaining, their hegemony, and denying or suppressing any signs of its instability, this is architecture’s most likely role” (36; emphasis added). A theorist of architecture since 1976 (following a stint with the Eero Saarinen firm), Woods has been primarily concerned with the excessive rationalism of contemporary architecture. His artistic renderings and models are frequently exhibited in international installations, and Woods’ publications portray his remarkable mesh of sociocritical politics and design. More famous for what he has never built, Woods straddles the threshold between the abstract and concrete, often locating his critiques at the borderline of troubled port cities, where land and water meet.

A rhetoric of the un-built is most aptly poised to consider first and foremost the effects of architecture commissioned by those that require a “rational, that is, predictable, stability” (36). It also suggests a mode of transgressing the threshold between the inside and outside. Woods frames the potential in terms of borderline conditions, or “between zones,” which “no longer separate certainties, but become spaces where uncertainties meet, interact, fuse or are repelled” (32). Using the examples of two coastal urban districts, Kraljevica (Croatia) and La Boca (Buenos Aires), both of which were “once vital” shipyards and docks, and both suffering “from varying degrees of pollution that impinges heavily on the quality of living,” Woods redefines critical architecture by naming such places as “experimental zones, where problems already present in the surrounding territories, but concealed by appearances of normality, are confronted and engaged” (36). While their governments solicit building projects in the hope of attracting tourism, Woods suggests the possibility of doing so is slim. Recycling reason is not the answer, so Woods offers ideas for reconstructing Kraljevica with “new types of buildings, ones that float or amphibiously move from sea to land; or re-frame the harbor as a laboratory for the study and development of noise-control technology” (37). In La Boca, he imagines building a “floating community of river-cleaners, who make houses of their floating pollution-eating machines . . . [and] a ‘museum of sunken boats,’ which reveals the long-hidden spaces they have created under the river’s surface; a
museum of raised boats,’ which turns them fully in space, revealing their sensuous resurrected forms” (37).

In “The Storm,” a recent exhibit at Cooper Union, Woods’ words marked the entrance: “War and Architecture / Architecture and war are not incompatible. / Architecture is war. War is architecture. / I am at war with my time, with history, with all authority that resides in fixed and frightened forms. / I am one of millions who do not fit in, who have no home, no family, no doctrine, no firm place to call my own, no known beginning or end, / no ‘sacred and primordial site.’” There are no doubt many examples evoked by Woods’ declaration, but one site seems eternally destined to fit a rhetoric of the unbuilt: Jerusalem. Occupying a contested plot of land, Woods’ observation that standing inside “the borderline are other borderlines” is aptly illustrated by two key vectors, the vertical Western Wall and the horizontal flat rooftops of Jerusalem (38). Standing for thousands of years, the Western (Wailing) Wall in Jerusalem is a site of prayer and blood, the sacred topos of religious certainties rendered uncertain by politics and war. To study its façade is to study “the communication between the inside and the outside”—to probe the depths of a single surface polished by hands, to step back from the wall, to detach (abstract) ourselves from its visceral wail—is to study its sign of disunification as an unbuilt text of “full-scale realities that have not yet been made concrete” (Tostrup 13, 12). Architects Deborah Natsios and John Young have realized the paradox of such border politics by deconstructing an above-ground horizontal plane of the Divided City utilizing the rooftops of Jerusalem.

In their essay, “Jerusalem SKY,” Natsios and Young propose a radical conjuncture of military and ecological topoi as a means of subordinating “pernicious surveillance to the knowledge-based act of seeing Jerusalem anew” (“SKY”). Opting for reclaiming the sky as ecological space (redefining total air supremacy), their project aims to track and monitor migratory bird populations whose trajectory takes them over the divided city of Jerusalem. Using the thousands of flat rooftops of Jerusalem, Natsios and Young lift the plane of conflict above ground, yet they utilize existing structures for participation in an ecological intervention into the troubled reality of Arab-Israeli relations. They envision “bird’s-eye-view perspectives of Jerusalem [that would] construct the city along the pilgrim’s spiritual horizon, a vertical axis whose vanishing points converge into sanctified sky—the allegorical airspace of Jesus’ and Muhammad’s respective ascensions.” The project would retrofit military technology in the service of the migratory winged
pilgrims making their journey south every year. Natsios and Young explain:

*Jerusalem SKY*’s new bird’s-eye views of the city have emerged out of regional conflict-resolution initiatives precipitated by birdstrike hazards. Catastrophic birdstrikes—symptom of unresolved spatial conflict between militarized airspace and transboundary avian flyways—are being mitigated through innovative remediation that relies in part on national security technologies. Today, migration conservationists are tracking and mapping their mobile subjects using what was once the exclusive paraphernalia of war—real-time surveillance radar warning systems, satellites, unmanned military drones, motorized gliders, and satellite intercept radio-transmitters.

Other projects undertaken by Natsios and Young include a transboundary peace park to be built in the DMZ between North and South Korea, where
fifty years of "no-man's-landscapes" have harbored "rare flora and fauna, including some of Northeast Asia's most endangered migratory species, despite the prevalence of antipersonnel land mines, razorwire and tank bunkers" ("Parallel"). Such projects remind us that a rhetoric of the *unbuilt* must also consider (and render in *in/visible* textures) *unqualified* hope. Churning into the storm of reason necessitates strong measures for survival, and hope is above all crucial. The texts of hope are, however, often latent in some landscapes (those no-man's-landscapes that wiped out all mankind).

To render them visible requires that we ask what coordinates mark the sites of those who did not survive *the* storm of reason? Daniel Libeskind, son of two Holocaust survivors from Poland, is an architect for whom such coordinates are more than residual traces of genocide. Recently chosen to design the new World Trade Center in New York, Libeskind

Figure 4: *City Edge* 1987 (from Daniel Libeskind's *The Space of Encounter*, photo © Uwe Rau)
first arrived in the U.S. with his family by boat in 1959, but now resides in Berlin after a lengthy stint during the construction of his Jewish Museum there. Earlier, in 1987, Libeskind entered an Urban Competition in Berlin and won. The plans, however, were “shelved post-unification” (Mackenzie). In Libeskind’s vision of Berlin, called City Edge, the unbuilt text is reticulated, or networked arbitrarily, as a means of wrapping architectural space in language. He explains that “[v]ery thin paper—like that of architectural drawings, Bibles, maps, telephone books, money—can be easily cut, crumpled, or folded around this indestructible kernel. Then the entire unwieldy construction can be floated on water like the tattered paper making its Odyssey on the Liffey. . . . In this way reality, as the substance of things hoped for, becomes a proof of invisible joys—Berlin of open skies” (55).

After twenty years of theorizing and writing about architecture, Libeskind was awarded the commission for building the Jewish Museum Berlin:

When the museum opened in 1999, it opened empty by public demand. In its first year, all the time empty, there were half a million visitors; people queued round the block. A curious idea in itself, a museum with no exhibits. If the traditional idea of a museum or an art gallery is to provide a window through which you look, safely, as into another world, and where the space itself is invisible, Libeskind turned this on its head. (Mackenzie)

Learning our lessons with a rhetoric of the unbuilt means searching for that which permits isomorphisms between non-territorial (and non-foundational) versions of composition. As Libeskind writes in “An Open Letter to Architectural Educators and Students of Architecture,” “Why spend time tediously applying gold leaf onto a pinnacle of a tower (impressive!) when the foundations are rotten? Before that delicate task will have been completed, the entire edifice will collapse, destroying both the work and the worker. Invisible disasters precede those that can be seen” (Space 20). The lessons of the Holocaust are, for Libeskind, not the sole province of historians. After an invitation to a competition that would determine how the land next to the Sachsenhausen concentration camp would be used, Libeskind struggled with whether to participate. In the end, he submitted a radically different idea from the other five architects, who had all willingly agreed to design housing (as stipulated by the competition organizers). The first prize went to another architect, but after further negotiations among the committee members, Libeskind was
invited to speak to the city mayor and the committee to present his ideas, after which the decision was reversed and the housing idea scrapped. Against the historians, who wanted to “reconstruct all the Nazi buildings in order to preserve the history,” Libeskind believed that the expense required to stabilize the decaying foundations, and build new walls and windows, would “have produced a mockery, a kitsch, a misunderstanding of history” (90). Explaining his original idea, Libeskind proposed

that the S.S. buildings disintegrate over time. It is very difficult to do this ecologically, but one could do it in a controlled manner, in order to see the history, not as a simulation of the Third Reich, but to see what is there invisibly, the infrastructure between the S.S. lands and the Sachsenhausen concentration camp. I argued with the historians and pleaded that they think about the invisible traces of history, the history which never had a chance to be expressed; a history that should not be seen simply as an outline of a building. (90)

Libeskind’s proposal “shifts, detaches, and reconnects the competition site in its relation to the equilateral triangle that forms the visible apex of the all too invisible symbol worn by the thousands of prisoners within the camp” (91). By reconnecting, and thus altering the relationship among, the three points “deliberately built to define the outer limits of the triangle” (“the crematorium for incineration, the villa of the commandant, and the administrative headquarters of all the concentration camps in Europe”), a “new orientation has been created along the line pointing toward Lübeck, where the infamous Sachsenhausen Death March was to reach its conclusion in the drowning of the victims” (91). The planned site “splits into two areas that are treated in two wholly different ways in order to displace the imagery of the past and to reconsecrate the land. One part of the plane is excavated, and the remaining buildings on it are flattened, exposing the foundations and interconnections of the machinery and its brutality. This part is then flooded with water from the adjacent canal, creating a sunken archaeological zone. The newly formed lake refers not only to the slave labor connected to the waters, but also frees the water from its historical role by using it as a new ecological element to restructure the topography of the place” (91).

The exposition of brutal foundations followed by the flooding of a site of mass extermination goes much further than my mere expository attempt to locate (and appropriate) permissible isomorphisms between theoretical architecture and composition theory. It is offered here as a corrective, as a means of deploying a perpetual reconsecration of all
ground that uses the alibi of reason to perpetrate homologous desecration. It is also offered as evidence of the material force effected by the conjoining of language and design. The introduction of language as a “material intervention in the urban continuum” began with visionary architects like Antonio Sant'Elia, whose Messaggio text and futurist designs of the early twentieth century put an end to the differentiation between politics and architecture. Sanford Kwinter suggests that such avant-gardes understood that their designs “were yet too primitive or ontologically conventional to express the conditions of a revolutionized cosmos. What clearly was needed were not new objects, but a new orientation toward a phenomenal field of events and interactions—not objects, but the abstract regimes of force that organize and deploy them” (84). In the intervening years, architecture has succumbed to the pressures of economical and technological constraints, and Elizabeth Tostrup rightly suggests that one problem in contemporary architecture consists of “not getting caught in the dissolving and mirroring illusions of technological supremacy, but of turning the focus back to the earth and dealing with the neglected realities of human needs” (170).

We find ourselves, then, between a (practical) rock and a (theoretical) hard place. On the one hand, we do not want to commit the sort of Kierkegaardian “untrue exaggeration” exemplified by Ibsen’s castle in the air (“they are so easy to take refuge in”), nor do we want to cleave to the ground in the name of not neglecting the “realities of human needs.” It is not as simple as countering the ground with air or water, nor is this deconstructed landscape the sole province of newly-sovereign subjects. Writing offshore designates classrooms of students as what Spivak terms “clusters of alterity” (“Decolonizing”), and what I submit are clusters of sub-urban provincials living not on the border between refinement and uncultivation, but in the interregnum between danger and persecution—in a word, refugees. In today’s fractious geopolitical climate, new meaning (in doublespeak) has been given to refugees: “ambient noncombatant personnel” (Lutz 176). In today’s reality, refugees are denied place, passage, and papers; and, if given land at all, they are often relegated to contaminated ground—terra contagio. In the space of this politico-juridical crime is the crux of a tested ambivalence—namely, the simultaneous desire to ground our pedagogy and our desire to reject the self-awarded subjectivity of the rational subject. But, as Spivak also suggests, if (in the classroom) we make disappear what we cannot desire (like Narcissus), then we disappear, too; and this is “the pharmakon that cannot be swallowed” (“Decolonizing”)—or, the Jonah rejected by our
erstwhile whale. This is the cantilever with which our abstract detachment, offshore trajectory, and rhetoric of the unbuilt can bridge the expanse between reason and refuge.

Pedagogy and the Refugee

Refugees from reason
I need the sea
my being as if on strike soundlessly cries out
to come on it high above the road I
want to stand on that rock which tells no lies and
feel the grass green otherness making the mind reel
see the wide slow gathering of a watershadow rising rising up
into the wash the rush the clatter spreading down a beach
hear the strangely comforting clicking of pebbles

One answer, then, to the question of what an architecture of trajectories would look like is: a boat in an intensive zone. The offshore world is as dangerous as it is sublime; but this is a pharmakon that we must swallow if we are to abide in the intensive zone between a deconstructed ground and the guarded question of our figurative offshore refuge. As such, I freely admit that my whale tourism experience is a far cry from the experience of hundreds of Afghan refugees who that same summer, half a world away, bought passage on an Indonesian trawler only to end up frightened, cold, and wet, huddled on a sinking boat (two weeks prior to 9/11/01) while governments argued over who would rescue them, who would allow them entry, who would "process" them, these people sans papier, living without papers. A Norwegian cargo ship finally picked them up and, ignoring warnings against entering Australian territorial waters, did so anyway and gave them temporary sanctuary offshore from Christmas Island. In a letter to the Australian authorities, written while circling the island waiting for word about their status, the refugees wrote this: "We request from Australian authorities and people, At first not to deprive us from the rights that all refugees enjoy in your country. And in the case of rejection due to not having anywhere to live on the earth and every moment death is threatening us. We request you to feel [ . . . ] for the life of (438) men, women and children" ("Boat People’s Plea"). The Australian government later agreed to transfer the refugees to the tiny island of Nauru, the smallest independent nation, once a lush tropical island, now only a "barren refuge" (terra contagio). According to BBC News, "In 1899 a British prospecting company discovered that Nauru was
nearly solid phosphate. Since then, phosphate mining has devastated the environment. Nauru's "topside" is a barren landscape of gouged earth inhabited by packs of wild dogs" ("Pacific"). Nauru is now notorious for its four hundred plus offshore banks, where it is estimated that over seventy billion dollars in funds generated by the Russian mafia have been handled.

![Figure 5: Kein mensch ist illegal (No one is illegal)—a Swiss organization http://www.sanspapiers.cjb.net/](image)

There is no longer a rational explanation. The rose is without why. *Åv måneskin gror det ingenting*—nothing grows in the moonlight, especially at sea. As in the case of the Afghan refugee crisis, we hardly need reminding that reason operates on every level of political, economic, and institutional power relations, including the critical intimacy that even the most radical teacher presumes shields them from the will-to-remarginalize the marginalized. Thus, let me quickly say that I am no less at risk of committing an act of *reason* by naming the *refugee* as the subject of an *unreasonable* pedagogy and seeker of an *abstract* asylum. I offer, then, these perturbations (disturbing *urbanity*) as substitutes for what would otherwise be an unreasonable plea to frame our problem with a particularly abject approach. Other sectors of abject existence suggest equal exigency: nomad, gypsy, emigrant, evacuee, fugitive, expatriate, deportee, exile, diaspora. While it maintains an affinity with other displaced people, the refugee occupies a more *generic* condition affecting one's relation to home, land, and nation that crosses beyond other defining markers of marginalized people such as race, ethnicity, religion, class, or gender. The generic condition of abject forced mobility could happen to any of us, at any time. And in fact, the dissolution of ground metaphysics
with which I have been concerned effectively throws us all into the sea, or on the move, in one fell swoop. *We are all boat people.*

Thus, I want also to concern us with the effects of this throwness on our students, for whom forced mobility is constitutive of their constant moving from classroom to classroom, from pedagogy to pedagogy, from discipline to discipline, from technology to technology, from this settlement to that camp. Still, treading other cautionary waters, again siding with Spivak, requires us to “arrest the understandable need to fix and diagnose the identity of the most deserving marginal” and also to “suspend the mood of self-congratulation as saviors of marginality” (*Outside* 61). It cannot go without saying that removing the ground has profound implications for re-moving students into the murky waters of border politics. It also cannot go without saying that the “critical poetry of flow,” movement, oscillation, trace, and becoming should not serve us too easily. We (academics) traffic in such migrant metaphors while right now, on some distant sea, desperate people drift on and on and on, in boats, on rafts—or line the borders of war-torn nations—against all odds of surviving. In “The Trouble with Borders,” Aleksandra Wagner and Alexander Stein put a face to the problem:

> There is no “receiving country” on the horizon: the right to leave may be universal, but the right to enter is not. Thus the whole critical poetry of *flows* liberates borders for goods better than it does for people; goods and services flow, while people must stay in line. . . . The border is no longer a heroic spot; it is, rather, the space where so many people are . . . “[people described elegantly by Bharati Mukherjee] ‘[people] dressed in shreds of national costumes, out of season, the wilted plumage of intercontinental vagabondage. We ask only one thing: to be allowed to land; to pass through, to continue.” (91)

Such poignant evocations of the refugee also remind us that *refugee* is not a *catechresis*, a sign for which there is no longer a literal referent, or an arbitrary abuse of the metaphor. Nor is the *refugee* an inflection of Burke’s “representative anecdote,” which prefers that a selection of reality performs as a reflection of reality; in our case, that *refugee* performs as a reflection of *student writer* (*Grammar* 59). It is, rather, a term that necessitates more of a reduction than even Burke would have predicted. It shares in what Giorgio Agamben calls the “materialization of the state of exception,” the *camp.* Striking at the heart of the *essence* of the concentration camps, Agamben suggests that “it would be more honest, and above all more useful, to investigate carefully how—that is,
thanks to what juridical procedures and political devices—human beings could have been so completely deprived of their rights and prerogatives to the point that committing any act toward them would no longer appear as a crime” (41). In Agamben’s terms, the camp’s inhabitants “have been stripped of every political status and reduced completely to naked life” (41).

Placing the birth of the camp as a phenomenon of “our time,” Agamben also marks its birth as a rupture forming in the structure of the modern nation-state, “founded on the functional nexus between a determinate localization (territory) and a determinate order (the state), which was mediated by automatic regulations for the inscription of life (birth or nation)” (43). What defines this rupture is that this political system “enters a period of permanent crisis and the state decides to undertake the management of the biological life of the nation directly as its own task” (43). In essence, it takes place not in the aspects that previously constituted it (territory and order), “but rather at the site in which naked life is inscribed in them (that is, there where inscription turns birth into nation). There is something that no longer functions in the traditional mechanisms that used to regulate this inscription, and the camp is the new hidden regulator of the inscription of life in the order—or, rather, it is the sign of the system’s inability to function without transforming itself into a lethal machine” (43). The “materialization of the state of exception” (that is, the camp) “intended as a dislocating localization is the hidden matrix of the politics in which we still live, and we must learn to recognize it in all of its metamorphoses” (44).

In his most disturbing analysis, Agamben fears that an “even more extreme” form of the camps has recently reappeared in the former Yugoslavia, where there has been not just your ordinary run-of-the-mill “redefinition of the old political system according to new ethnic and territorial arrangements”:

Rather, we note there an irreparable rupture of the old nomos as well as a dislocation of populations and human lives according to entirely new lines of flight. That is why the camps of ethnic rape are so crucially important. If the Nazis never thought of carrying out the “final solution” by impregnating Jewish women, that is because the principle of birth, which ensured the inscription of life in the order of the nation-state, was in some way still functioning, even though it was profoundly transformed. This principle is now adrift: it has entered a process of dislocation in which its functioning is becoming patently impossible and in which we can expect not only new camps but also always new and more
delirious normative definitions of the inscription of life in the city. The
camp, which is now firmly settled inside it, is the new biopolitical *nomos*
of the planet. (44–45)

What differentiates the “rape camps” in Bosnia from the long history of
rape as a byproduct of war is that in this instance the Serbian conquerors
of Bosnia were *ordered* to rape Muslim women as a principal tactic of war
(Gutman; Vranic). In an interview about her book, *Breaking the Wall of
Silence*, Seada Vranic explains that because there is no genetic difference
between Bosnian Muslims and Serbs, other strategies of ethnic cleansing
emerged. According to Vranic, “behind it all lay just one idea: to expel
the population of other nationalities from a given territory. Rape is a very
effective means for that purpose: if three or four raped women arrived in
a village, all the villagers would quickly take flight. They couldn’t kill
everybody, you see.” It is hard to find a more compelling example of
Agamben’s “materialization of the state of exception,” a flagrant instance
of which marked people who “have been stripped of every political status
and reduced completely to *naked life.*” In Agamben’s account, we hear
echoed Heidegger’s thought concerning the *unconcealedness* of Being.
Keeping in mind our *refugee*, we will take her through a poetic self-
reflection that, in Heidegger’s terms, understands Being as the “gathering
release” and “flinging loose” of beings into “the daring venture” (“Poets”
101). We will, with Heidegger, confront her not as naked in the narrow
sense of disrobed, nor in the generic sense of revealed, but in the
fullest notion of life as “that which arises” and, as a consequence, that
which is unshielded yet upheld because it hangs (daringly) in the
balance (101–03).

We have already witnessed Heidegger’s critique of ground meta-
physics in which he accuses philosophy, as a thing of reason, of being
oblivious of the fact that things do not depend on human justification;
they emerge before us on their own (“the rose is without why”). Now, it
is important to gather into our trajectory Heidegger’s meditation on
the nature of Being as disclosed in his reading of a short, improvised verse
from Rainer Maria Rilke. In some sense, we are tracking Heidegger’s
critique of reason and ground metaphysics metaleptically, that is, having
worked through (briefly) his later thought in *Der Satz vom Grund* (1957),
and now pondering an earlier examination of Being’s ground in an essay
written in 1946 on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of Rilke’s
death. In this way, we are, to expound on the nature of *metalepsis*, sending
this fragment through time by means of a metaleptic transference. Such
an approach mirrors Heidegger's own method of trans-lation of the various fragments of presocratic philosophers, which (according to Rapaport) functions by "describing the wear and tear of words which act upon the fragment through time by way of tran-scribing the transcriptions, or of trans-lating the trans-lations" (30). In Rapaport's account, Heidegger's critique of philosophy via translation and transcription forms the basis for his notion of destruction, which means "to open our ears, to make ourselves free for what speaks to us in tradition as the Being of being (Sein des seienden). By listening to this interpellation we attain the correspondence (Entsprechung)" ("What" 69–71; qtd. in Rapaport 32). Heidegger's two modalities will later be called by Derrida, deconstruction.

Derrida, however, describes Heidegger's tactics a bit differently. Unhappy with Heidegger's demystification of the term Geist (spirit) in Being and Time and his rehabilitation of the term much later in his Rectorate's speech, Derrida notices that Heidegger is in the habit of "putting terms under watch or arrest—an imprisonment or quarantining of terms—that is at a later time lifted so that these terms can undergo a rehabilitation or reappropriation" (Rappaport 158). I bring this to our attention to advance the notion that in both "What are Poets For?" and Der Satz vom Grund Heidegger puts the term ground under quarantine in order to rehabilitate it when he calls Being the ground of all grounds, and he does so in both places through analyses of poetic language. As we learned earlier, there are problems associated with Heidegger's usage of "rootedness" (Bodenständigkeit) in his mystical passages on the "play of Being." If, however, we place under quarantine his use of rootedness in order to learn more about his quarantine of the term "ground," we can (perhaps) hear Caputo's analysis more favorably—namely, that for Heidegger, "the true 'ground' of human existence is Being itself" (Mystical 58). As Caputo has it, in Heidegger's leap of thought, "which we will learn to make by listening to Leibniz's principle more carefully, we will arrive at a new ground, a new rootedness which is Being itself, although to metaphysical reason this ground must needs appear as an 'abyss.' In so doing we will attain a new way of thinking which is not confined to 'giving reasons'" (58).

In order to prepare us to hear the plea of the Afghan refugees in a new light ("And in the case of rejection due to not having anywhere to live on the earth and every moment death is threatening us. We request you to feel [. . .] for the life of (438) men, women and children.")), it is necessary to understand the degree to which we are unprepared for confronting their
‘naked life’ from inside the same realm in which their unshieldedness puts them at risk. It is also necessary to understand that we share equally in Rilke’s prescient recognition that Nature “grants none special cover” (qtd. in Heidegger, “Poets” 102)—equally with the Bosnian rape victims in Vranic’s report, such as “the testimony of a woman from Rogatica, a village in eastern Bosnia: her two daughters, four granddaughters and four daughters-in-law had been raped, and the rest of the family burnt alive in their house.” I know this is hard; it is impossible. It is (nevertheless) necessary to implicate the poet in our face-to-face with these ravaged “clusters of alterity”—to stand over their same abyss and give ourselves over to what Heidegger terms the “flinging loose” that (nevertheless) “gathers everything in the play of the venture” (“Poets” 105). To press together words like ravaged and play is the hard thing. To ponder, deeply, the sheer violence of the relation we are establishing between ravaging and venturing—this is the hardest thing. Whereas Rilke speaks of turning our unshieldedness into the Open and thereby affirming it, “to read the word ‘death’ without negation” (125), Heidegger puts it in terms of living Being: “The hard thing is to accomplish existence” (138).

That is why it is useful to look closely at how Heidegger begins his essay, the timing of which is not insignificant (1946). In the first sentence, Heidegger puts us directly into the conversation of poetry: “... and what are poets for in a destitute time?’ asks Hölderlin’s elegy ‘Bread and Wine.’ We hardly understand the question today” (91). Heidegger sets forth an ambitious, yet simple, poetic trajectory: to turn mortals around to face (and experience and endure) the abyss (the Open), then to identify those mortals who reach sooner into the abyss, the poets, and thus effect the return of the gods. For Heidegger, our foremost danger in this destitute time lies in the withdrawal of the holy (hale) from our understanding and health. Thus, he tenders, the “world becomes without healing, unholy” (117). In this light, one option becomes most urgent; we must depend on certain mortals (the poets) to see “the threat of the unhealable, the unholy, as such” (117). This means that “[t]hey would have to discern the danger that is assailing man. The danger consists in the threat that assaults man’s nature in his relation to Being itself, and not in accidental perils. This danger is the danger. It conceals itself in the abyss that underlies all beings. To see this danger and point it out, there must be mortals who reach sooner into the abyss” (117). It seems, then, that we are in greatest danger not from accidental (or worldly) perils, but from being turned away from (and against) that relation into which we have been born and into which we are destined: Being itself.
The nature of our destitute time rests in the following formulation: “Mortals have not yet come into ownership of their own nature. Death withdraws into the enigmatic. The mystery of pain remains veiled. Love has not been learned. But the mortals are” (96). And they are insofaras “there is language” (96). Essentially, what Rilke terms the Open bears a resemblance to what (elsewhere) he calls “the globe of being,” reflected in the verses we have been following by the phrase “in widest orbit somewhere.” Heidegger refers us to a letter of 1923 in which Rilke says that “like the moon, so life surely has a side that is constantly turned away from us, and that is not its opposite but its completion to perfection, to plenitude, to the real, whole, and full sphere and globe of being” (124). The turn, or conversion, that Heidegger draws out in Rilke’s verse consists in our converting the unshieldedness of standing apart from the Open into the unshieldedness of standing in the widest orbit. And this is what poets are for.

Poets are on the track “leading to the trace” of the fugitive gods, who, having failed to arrive, are (nevertheless) waiting for beings to turn toward the realm of their ground, and who do not reach as far into the abyss as mortals because mortals are “touched by presence, the ancient name of Being” (93). The poet is the one who, being the most capable, is able “to say worldly existence, to say out of the haleness of the whole pure draft and to say only this” (138). By putting us into the conversation of poetry, Heidegger is not conducting some academic exercise designed to preserve the realm of letters for the educated elite; rather, he brings us all into proximity with our own Nature, the ground of our being, Being itself. The poet, he whispers, sings the song of existence. They are, to cite Rilke’s verse, “more daring by a breath” (139). This breath is “another breath, a saying other than the rest of human saying” (140). To further impress upon us the singular significance of this breath, Heidegger quotes Johan Gottfried Herder: “A breath of our mouth becomes the portrait of the world, the type of our thoughts and feelings in the other’s soul. On a bit of moving air depends everything human that men on earth have ever thought, willed, done, and ever will do; for we would all still be roaming the forests if this divine breath had not blown around us, and did not hover on our lips like a magic tone” (139). In one breath, Heidegger (via Rilke, Hölderlin, and Herder) let’s us in on a secret. “It is not for nothing,” he writes, “that the words ‘more daring by a breath’ are followed in the original by three dots. The dots tell the secret” (140). Just as he opens the essay by drawing us into the conversation of poetry, he ends by leading us out with poetic language, which is not the end of life, but the beginning
of our ability to hear what the poet has to say for us—what must be said for us: "[t]hat which this way never lapses into the flux of perishing, overcomes from the start all perishability. . . . What is presumed to be eternal merely conceals a suspended transiency, suspended in the void of a durationless now" (142).

Having ventured such a rapid sketch of Heidegger's thought, I feel now that we are better prepared to hear Rilke's "improvised verses," which have provided each link in the gathering of Heidegger's answer to the question "what are poets for?" But I leave them to their own saying / singing of the song of Being, believing I could scarcely improve on Heidegger's reading. These verses were inscribed in a volume of Rilke's book of poems, *Malta*, given by him to Baron Lucious:

As Nature gives the other creatures over to the venture of their dim delight and in soil and branchwork grants none special cover, so too our being's pristine ground settles our plight; we are no dearer to it; it ventures us. Except that we, more eager than plant or beast, go with this venture, will it, adventurous more sometimes than Life itself is, more daring by a breath (and not in the least from selfishness). . . . There, outside all caring, this creates for us a safety—just there, where the pure forces' gravity rules; in the end, it is our unshieldedness on which we depend, and that, when we saw it threaten, we turned it so into the Open that, in widest orbit somewhere, where the Law touches us, we may affirm it.

(qtd. in "Poets" 99)

Thus far we have scarcely issued a reading that can properly stand beside the refugee without addressing the incongruity of poetizing in the face of their immediate and devastating dangers. Some will no doubt view it as absolutely inhospitable, certainly unreasonable. It is, however, more than a question of what is proper; it is the province of the ethics of irreducible translation and the politics of intellectual courage. What cannot be translated (their pain, loss, suffering, fear, raw terror), must. What should not be legislated, must not. In the space of this aporia is an other means of intervention, a deconstructive move we will call (t)reason.
Unbuilding the Logic of Containment

*Committing *(t)*reason*

I need
to be consoled by the rush of my own smallness
to swim my soul awhile in the pure space let it go adrift
where one wave can hide the shore

In the heady days of deconstruction before the discovery in the early 1980s of Paul de Man's wartime journalism, there was ample cachet in donning the garb of its *metaphysical homelessness*. In the intervening years, deconstruction has undergone a crisis of legitimation that undermined (unfortunately) its ability to *read* ethico-political issues as effectively as readings undertaken within the sphere of (and in the name of) *practical reason*. Reason begat reason and falsely accused deconstruction of not living up to the rules and structures it sought to implode, spawning illegitimate descriptions of deconstruction held to standards and models defined solely by reason. But, Donna Haraway reminds us, “illegitimate offspring are often exceedingly unfaithful to their origins” (151). Thus, rather than deconstruction’s refusing the ill-conceived moniker of illegitimacy, it commits an act of *(t)*reason by putting *legitimacy* under quarantine (as we saw in Heidegger) in order to pressurize the realm of decidability so cleanly ruled by the lockstep “jackboots” of reason. The *(t)*reason we have in mind, however, is not defined by some exchange of state secrets (as in a spy game); rather, it is an affirmative act of betrayal, a leading astray. It is a material abstraction caught in the act of detachment.

While *(t)*reason is no mere benign form of treachery, neither is it a destructive agent hell bent on some secret mission. According to Caputo, deconstruction is “not some stealthy, cunning agent of disruption, is not an agent at all”; rather, it simply passes “the word along that one is rather more on one’s own that one likes to think” (*Against 4*). Caputo explains, “Deconstruction shows how a film of undecidability creeps quietly over the clarity of decisions, on cat-soft paws, clouding judgment just ever so much, so that we cannot quite make out the figures all around us. But do not be mistaken. *Deconstruction offers no excuse not to act....* Undecidability does not detract from the urgency of decision; it simply underlines the difficulty (4; emphasis added). Addressed to the refugee, then, pressing matters not only demand pressing actions, they must first (and continuously) demand *pressing* readings. It is a question Derrida
addressed in his essay, "On Cosmopolitanism," delivered in 1996 to the International Parliament of Writers, which formed the nexus of a network of asylum sites called cities of refuge. As with Diane Elam ("groundless solidarity") and Gayatri Spivak ("revolutions that as yet have no model"), Derrida joins in the call for cities of refuge that are "as independent from the other and from the state as possible, but, nevertheless, allied to each other according to forms of solidarity yet to be invented" (Cosmopolitanism 4).

It is in this context that rhetoric not only shares the burden of such urgency, it is poised to constitute a form of refuge as well. It is not difficult to discern this shadow trajectory when histories of rhetoric are viewed through this lens. Thus, Derrida's call for "forms of solidarity yet to be invented," achieves a stronger rhetorical bite when he says that "[t]his invention is our task; the theoretical or critical reflection it involves is indissociable from the practical initiatives we have already, out of a sense of urgency, initiated and implemented" (4; emphasis added). Derrida's (t)reason consists in probing the dual concepts of hospitality and cosmopolitanism, and doing so in the face of the "multiplicity of menaces, of acts of censorship (censure) or of terrorism, of persecutions and of enslavements in all their forms" (5). Seeking neither to lapse into the "compulsory rhetoric of electoral programmes," nor the "rhetorical alibis" lurking in the discourse on opportunistic refugees, Derrida understands that one must keep an eye on the conflation of the economic and political, of the status of the refugee and the political immigrant (12). One must, for example, recognize the "tendency to obstruct" by the states in the European Union, which "under the pretext of combating economic immigrants purporting to be exiles from political persecution . . . reject applications for the right to asylum more often than ever" (13).

Common sense tells us that the everyday conflation should not measure up to the efforts of countless countermeasures launched every day along the lines of Derrida's reconceived notion of hospitality, most notably among groups such as "Doctors without Borders," "Women on Waves," and other humanitarian trans-sovereign initiatives. Unfortunately, there is a common perception that thinking and writing (especially of the sort in which Derrida is engaged) pale by comparison with the practices of such groups. But should we distinguish between, for example, one form of courage (real) and another intellectual courage (virtual)? In an interview appropriately titled "Intellectual Courage," Derrida tackles the question head on. Asked whether intellectuals can
“take courage again” because of recent elections in Great Britain and France (the new majorities of Labour and Socialist), Derrida replied, “Certainly they can permit us to hope for a more vigilant political and social resistance to the economism and monetarism which tends to dominate the new European spirit. But the ‘pragmatic realism’ claimed by these two governments risks reproducing exactly what they pretend to interrupt. . . . I perceive at most nuances of adjustment, rhetorical changes (and that is not nothing), but no rupture with the immediate past.” Asked whether the “left” is “too occupied with questions of cultural identity and of having forgotten questions of social justice,” Derrida restates the question, asking, “Why must one choose between the care for cultural identity and the worry about social justice? They are both questions of justice, two responses to anti-egalitarian oppression or violence. No doubt it is very hard to lead both of these debates in the same rhythm, but one can fight both fronts, cultural and social, at the same time, as it were, and one must do so. The task of the intellectual is to say this, to mediate the discourses and to elaborate strategies that resist any simplistic choice between the two.”

Derrida’s participation in the International Parliament of Writers’ Cities of Refuge project extends, also, to the IPW e-journal, *Autodafe* (The Censored Library). In his “Displaced Literatures,” Derrida outlines the stakes of writing for those who are denied the right “to choose their place, to move about freely” (notable examples are the fatwah issued against Salman Rushdie and the assassination of Algerian writer Tahar Djouat): “A new literary space has been opened up and its stakes are less than ever confined, today, to philosophy or science, to poetics or literary theory, in an abstract form, a classical or not-so-classical form. The displacements we will have to talk about are also becoming (and there are too many examples of this) questions of life or death. Every day it is the body of languages, the body of works, and the body of writers that are at stake.” Whether arrested, under surveillance, or confined to a cell, Derrida writes, these writers live with the constant threat of imprisonment, torture, execution, or assassination. In these dire straits, rhetoric may be their only refuge. Derrida underscores my point: “In order to accede to the daylight of the public space, in the muffled resistance of a clandestine or cryptic literature, it also happens that still other places, the ‘commonplaces’ of rhetoric this time, become the ultimate recourse for tricking the censor.” Recognizing that this is nothing new in the history of literature, Derrida acknowledges that these questions “demand that we take account of the most ancient resources,” even though these forbidden
places exist "well beyond the academic example of 'Plato-and-the-poets-driven-out-of-the-city.'"

Rhetoric as refuge rearticulates the paths of the poets and illuminates their abstract trajectories. Displacing argument is rhetoric's supreme task; disinventing *logos* is rhetoric's sacred duty. Rhetoric and composition theorists on the fringe have voiced similar manifestos in recent years, yet their rejections of argumentation pedagogy have too often been perceived as having infringed upon the hallowed ground of critical thinking and are, finally, relegated to the ranks of renegade rhetorics. Show me a mainstream composition textbook that teaches Greg Ulmer's *Heuretics*, a trajectory in which he ventured: "This difference in 'logics' is the point of departure for imagining what a new rhetoric will do that does not argue but that replaces the logic governing argumentative writing with associational networks" (18). Find me a Braddock award-winning article that reports on classroom practices based on Geoff Sirc's piece, "Writing Classroom as A&P Parking Lot" (first appearing in *Pre/Text* and later in *English Composition as a Happening*), which ended with a quote from Bataille (mirrored in the opening epigraph to my essay): "It is too late to be reasonable and educated—which has led to a life without appeal. Secretly or not, it is necessary to become completely different, or to cease being" (Sirc 233). Supply me with the syllabus that is fashioned upon Lynn Worsham's refashioned view of "writing as a strategy . . . whose progress yields 'unlearning'" (101). Tell me a *mystery* of composition theory that decants Victor Vitanza's "paralogic pedagogy," a *moratoria* montage that drifted our way in "Three Countertheses." Read me the job description for Chair of an English Department who would hire D. Diane Davis, whose laughter both literally and figuratively breaks up totalities that would reconstitute *community ad nauseum* across the great divide between rhetoric and literature. Each is consubstantial (I believe) with Vitanza's desire to reconceive argument as "*dissoi paralogi*":

Argument in this modification is not a means of achieving or accounting for consensus. It is, instead, a means of continuous "dissensus"; it "counterhopes" to achieve an occasional, if not permanent, place of misology (i.e., a distrust of *logos*), a place that Plato and Socrates saw as anathema (*Phaedo* 89d1–90c7) but that must be seen as the beginning of what Deleuze and Guattari would call a "nomadology" (*Thousand 351–423*) or what Montaigne and Lyotard combined would see as "just drifting/gaming." It is a place outside the philosophical and rhetorical polis; it is places (exploded and) realized through diaspora/dispersion. It is the *pagus.* (165)
Into these uncommonplaces, I submit rhetoric as refuge, writer as refugee, and abstract pedagogy.

In the proximity of such "counterhope" (which is not the lack of hope—that is, despair), we can scarcely overestimate the value of setting up (and setting going) a telling congruity between the seemingly incongruous terms: destitution and institution. In this setting forth, there must be a move that sets off what has disabled the field from seeing its complicity in the pragmatic disenfranchisement of the kind of intellectual work represented by the aforementioned (among others). What Sirc identifies as the disenchantment of composition is (quite possibly) also a blatant co-option of despair, a wresting away of the lack of hope from those who most define it, and an institutionalization of desperation in the guise of critical pedagogy. It seems that while we have been preoccupied with injecting composition theory with the more urgent pharmakoi of ideology, cultural criticism, and process pedagogy, a quiet desperation has settled over our field. The odd thing is that we have come to love and nurture it, even will it, because we need the "discourse of needs" (Crowley) upon which it is grounded; and, it supplies a convenient rationale for force-feeding argumentation to our un/sophisticated "clusters of alterity" on a daily basis. We seem to have established (instituted) deprivation (destitution) as our reason for teaching reason. It has become the scapegoat tethered to the stake in the center of our village, and we feed it and nurture it until such time as the sacrifice is necessary—until our pedagogical despair becomes unbearable—until we are so desperate that we find new grounds for our despair, new reasons for sustaining despair as our raison d'etre.

Here is my tiny (t)reason. On April Fool's day, 1983, the Dean of Liberal Arts at the University of Texas at Arlington, Thomas Porter, submitted an ambitious proposal to the National Endowment for the Humanities to establish "a lower-division undergraduate sequence of courses that integrate composition, text analysis and critical thinking (CACTIP)" (Porter). Fueled by a collaborative approach to teaching composition, and a marriage between philosophy and rhetoric, the proposal was accepted, implemented, and largely successful in its initial phase. Twenty years later, the program is dead, the result of what many involved believe was the steady poisoning of rhetoric with the principle of reason. Others believe it was the other way around. Regardless of which version is the correct diagnosis, to read the proposal rationale is to glimpse the symptoms of a gathering danger (to coin the phrase of a desperate political ruse for going to war), and to hear the death rattle of
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an unquiet (collective) desperation. It was, for its time, considered far ahead of its time. It represented the most advanced theories and practices in composition pedagogy, and mirrored the clarion call around the country for more integrated approaches to literacy education. In the rationale we are told that:

When the instructor in History 303 tells his class to “write a paper on the causes of the First Punic War,” the odds are that most of the essays he receives, even from the so-called better students, will be semi-literate. Errors in mechanics—grammar, spelling, syntax—will be only the tip of the iceberg. The substance of the presentations is likely to contain global generalizations, gratuitous opinions, free associations, non-sequiturs and semantic approximations. Considering the range of deficiencies, the instructor correcting the papers will have a difficult time deciding where to begin. After a few such experiences, the instructor may decide to forgo essay assignments. When one considers the complex of abilities the student must exercise to fulfill the typical “paper” assignment decently, it is no wonder that students quail and instructors are tempted to despair. . . . In 1974 a publication of the Associations of Departments of English stated: “we are faced with an increasingly desperate attempt to overcome the semi-literacy of most incoming students, who have had little or no practice in reading and writing” (8).

Year after year, English departments (or their counterparts) in colleges and universities across the U.S. pen similar reports for a variety of reasons: to seek funding, to revamp composition programs, to respond to mandated writing assessments, to construct strategic plans, to create curricula, to justify hiring new faculty, and so forth.

In a white paper issued from the Center for Communication in Science, Technology, and Management at North Carolina State University, the authors found similar attitudes about teaching composition dating back to the late nineteenth century: “For example, the Harvard Overseers commissioned four reports in the 1890s about the ‘composition problem’—that is, the poor quality of student writing and the ‘mental drudgery of the most exhausting nature’ required to read and evaluate student writing” (qtd. in Carter et al.). “One teacher in 1903 voiced the feelings of many even today: ‘I thank God I have been delivered from the bondage of theme-work into the glorious liberty of literature’” (Carter et al.).

Such high-minded desperation echoes what Lester Faigley discovered in his analysis of Vopat and Coles’ textbook, What Makes Writing
Good—namely, that while contemporary methodologies employed in teaching writing are at odds with the kind of writing that teachers value, standards of judgment in composition have not shifted significantly since those valued by the field during the 1930s.\(^\ast\) Faigley cites “a 1931 report of an external review of the College Entrance Examination Board’s 1929 English examination.” According to the commission (published by Harvard UP and comprised of professors from Harvard, Yale, Cornell, Vassar, among others), “the goal of teaching writing . . . ‘is not the mere composition of some indefinite entity known as “a theme.”’ [The student] must understand that true originality will be the result of discriminating and vigorous perception and thought” (114, 118).

Such sentiments, voiced variously by noted professors since the late 1800s until today, fit squarely within Sirc’s characterization of the field mentioned at the outset: “Composition Studies as a perpetual scene of disenchantment” (12). The striking thing about current debates about teaching argument is that there seems to be no question that teaching argument is necessary. Disputes revolve more around which methods, which heuristic strategies, and which modes are best suited to teaching students how to construct effective written arguments. Occasionally we have seen efforts to stem the power of argumentative tactics, or to question the gendered nature of agonistic styles of inquiry; but for the most part, argument remains the cornerstone of composition pedagogy, and reason remains the earth beneath. Far from being seen as refuge in this scenario, rhetoric is more like a bunker from which reason may be volleyed with greater accuracy and force—teaching students that positioning matters more than thought, and reason more than distance sought.\(^\ast\) Our collective (f)reason will be necessary to dismantle this edifice. Our collective trajectories will be more effective if deployed in a quaquaaversal-omnidirectional, in every direction at once. There are indications the work has begun. Sirc hopes to “put pressure on Compositions’ canon, recalibrating the field according to a general economy of the compositional arts—a destabilized site of various competing schools, undercut by an on-going, productive tension between the academic and the avant-garde: to liberate thinking in our field from the strictly semantic, re-opening Composition as a site where radical explorations are appreciated, where aesthetic criteria still come into play, but criteria not merely cribbed off an endless, formalist tape-loop” (32). Ours is an other tape-loop.

There is no longer a rational explanation. The rose is without why. Av måneskin gror det ingenting—nothing grows in the moonlight. We are
all boat people. The question is how to speak the language of boat people and refugees (a language not ruled by the sovereignty of ground logic) and how to unbuild the logic of containment, the camp.

Writing Nomadically
In Vitanza’s “Three Countertheses,” in which he suggests a “moratorium on attempting to turn theory into praxis/pedagogy,” he also cuts to the crux of the matter with the following inauspicious declaration: “What we want is a way to proceed without foundations and without criteria (the first counterthesis) and without knowing as a subject (the second) and without conventional theory and pedagogy (the third)” (160, 165). The following series of links are offered as consubstantial ad hoc suggestions, keeping still to my desire to remain suggestive. We need the sea, and so must cast off the principle of reason. We must take the leap, glance off the ground if only to keep the dance in motion. We must take off the garb of the flâneur and leave the topos of the street. We must unbuild our ground metaphysics and establish cities of refuge, instant cities, walking cities. We must take to the rooftops and wailing walls and sinking boats, heed the call of the poets drawing us out to sea. We must un-define our despair and undo the institutionalization of destitution in the name of the refugee, against whom we must neither argue nor teach argument. We must dispossess our monopoly on abstraction and teach it to our students to help them detach from us, from the teaching machine, the “huge pedagogical apparatus.” We must be (t)reasonous. We must be intensive and hospitable; we must be without why. We must let them pass through, let them write rhetorically—in the safety and refuge of fathomed havens (Old Norse> hav> the sea).

We must unbuild our built environments for writing and infiltrate the language of building. In 1972, British architect Warren Chalk announced an end to the repetition of empty debates with buildings: “What we must look for now is the linkage of the simultaneous and not the vista of the successive” (Cook, Archigram 138). As members of an experimental architecture movement chronicled in the collected writings and drawings of its quasi-journal, Archigram (1961–1974), Chalk, Peter Cook, David Greene, Ron Herron, Denis Crompton, and Michael Webb rendered radical creations such as capsule apartments, walking cities (on the ocean), instant cities, university nodes, most of which were never meant to “take up a finite configuration” (68).
For this radical group, Archigram was a "more urgent and simple item than a journal, like a 'telegram' or 'aerogramme'... It was as important to break down real and imagined barriers of form and statement on the page as in built form on the ground" (8). Their interest in movement sparked a gradual detachment from building. As Chalk stated, "So once again the pedestrian, the gregarious nature of people and their movement is uppermost in our minds and the built demarcation of space used to channel and direct pedestrian patterns of movement" (16). Peter Cook lamented that "one of the greatest weaknesses of our immediate urban architecture is the inability to contain the fast-moving object as part of the total aesthetic... The representation of movement-objects and movement containers is consistent with the rest, and not only because 'speed' is the main gesture" (29). Cook also conceived of the plug-in university that could adapt to both the philosophical and physical changes that it undergoes over time. Students would have traveling dorm rooms that would infiltrate the teaching spaces as they became more nomadic. Of course none of their ideas took the form of "finite configurations," yet their ideas turned architecture into a form of communication. Hans Hollein lists the key elements of their philosophy as "flexibility, mobility, impermanence, [and] ad hoc" (Archigram 6).

If Archigram perfected the unbuilt spoof in response to their view of traditional architecture as a hoax, as "an impossible attempt to rationalize the irrational" (85), a British urban studies professor, Bob Jarvis, takes
the spoof one step further by publishing a mock course description for BA Urbanity in the April 1995 issue of *Urban Design Quarterly*. Ostensibly offered in the School of Deconstruction of Utopia University, Jarvis' course outcomes are described as follows: "Learning will be through a series of 'depth probes,' participating in archetypical routines and standing behaviour patterns. Assessment will be through a series of mixed media time based event structures. BA Urbanity graduates may expect to progress rapidly in café society, cultural animation and 24hr TV" (43). Students would "undertake eight modules," such as *Doing Nothing* (aspects of stillness in chaos), *Cities in Motion* (on the phenomenology of movement), *Born to Shop, Eat to Live, Midnight to Six*, and *Mass Cult*, among others. The key lesson in Jarvis' spoof course is the assignment genre of the "depth probe."18 Though not fleshed out, we can imagine (fathom) how depth probes could be construed for composition pedagogy. Thus, as my concluding gesture I bring Ann Berthoff's "abstraction as a speculative instrument" into proximity with Jarvis' "depth probes" to further deconstruct composition's unrelenting rush to reason.

In the early 1980s, the central debates in composition pedagogy were shifting rapidly in reaction to a number of theoretical influences ranging from research in cognitive psychology, poststructuralist theory, ethnography, social constructivist theory, psychoanalytic theory, and feminist theory, among others (see Faigley 25–47). Clearly, the field was inundated with speculative theories, and some took hold more so than others. One that failed in the long term to capture a foothold was Berthoff's work on "abstraction as a speculative instrument." In her article of the same name, published in the collection, *The Territory of Language*, Berthoff rightly observed that abstraction is "rarely well defined as a term and the complex concept it names is not generally well formed. For some, abstraction is a power of mind to be encouraged and trained; for others; it is a stylistic fault to be avoided" (227). She goes on to explain why the "distrust of abstraction in current rhetorical theory is more fundamentally an epistemological matter" (228). When language is viewed as a "map for the territory of reality, the Ladder of Abstraction," the linguistic perspective considers abstraction "to be hazardous" (228). The problem occurs when abstraction and generalization becomes conflated by positivists. Berthoff wishes to redefine their relation and argues that "generalization requires abstraction, but we can have abstraction without generalization" (229). Her point is that models such as S.I. Hayakawa's "ladder of abstraction" are an inadequate means of accounting for nondiscursive elements of abstraction, such as imagination, mythic ideation, context,
perspective, purpose, poetics, and other holistic activities (228, 230). Working instead from Susanne Langer’s notion of “direct insight,” Berthoff recasts abstraction as “the recognition of form; as the symbolic representation of our recognitions” (229). But Berthoff not only theorized that abstraction benefits the process of composing, she put her theories into practice in her textbook, Forming/Thinking/Writing.

John Clifford explains that Berthoff’s textbook “embodies a philosophy of composition” because she “takes seriously her call to weld philosophical frames of reference to classroom techniques” (331). Students are encouraged “to be reflective as they look for relationships in paragraphs as diverse as those of Gertrude Stein, William Blake, and Claude Lévi-Strauss” (331). But, Clifford is concerned that “the mental gymnastics needed for this kind of composing is heady and demanding” (331). Students will become disoriented and frustrated. Thus, he writes, “Berthoff is taking a calculated pedagogical risk through her optimistic leap of faith about the forming abilities of the mind” (332). As we saw in Heidegger’s leap, criticized because he had not passed through the “trial of reason” (Caputo, Mystical 42), Berthoff’s leap also involves a discontinuity; it, too, is accomplished without a bridge—that is, without propositional logic. Clifford sympathizes with Berthoff’s frustration when “seemingly broad-minded theorists... refuse to see how far from shore we can drift on theoretical currents” (338). Obviously, composition theory has drifted on many theoretical currents in the two decades since Berthoff’s work and Clifford’s subsequent assessment of it. Yet, we have not drifted far enough away from the disappearing coastline for more than small recoiling bursts; and, in fact, we seem to have moved farther inland with each recoil. If, however, we refashion and extend Berthoff’s abstract trajectory, drawing on Heidegger and Eckhart’s more originary conception of abstraction as detachment (das Abgeschiedene) instead, we set up the conditions of possibility for writing nomadically—as refugees from reason.

Writing as such would not, however, diminish the urgency of teaching students the relation of language to decision-making, nor would it circumvent the necessity of teaching rhetoric in the interest of resolving problems simply by abandoning a pedagogy grounded in reason. Our task would be to teach an inflected rhetoric—that is, a redirected course of writing. In the retraction from reason we would rethink our contract with reason and reflect on reason’s sway. Abstraction would be a shuttling between retraction and contraction. Some may assume teaching abstraction involves teaching higher-order thinking; but we are not after rein-
venting the hierarchies of Hayakawa’s “ladder of abstraction.” An example of rethinking our current vocabulary: “taking a position” would become testing contradistinctions. Advancing a course of action through writing would replace the formulaic problem/solution argument. Shoring up one’s argument would become distilling objections to one’s abstraction. The diverse senses of converting argumentation pedagogy to teaching abstraction could also include teaching how to achieve distance, to detach from one’s preconceptions, distill concepts, condense language, and translate meanings. Learning to abstract would involve learning the alluring nature of language, how it draws you away, how it seduces you. Rendering abstract ideas would entail understanding the problem of representation, its rhetorical role in homogenizing difference. Writing in the abstract also suggests learning the rhetorical device of brevity and the rhetorical power of the aphorism. Teaching the value of exploring something in the abstract, without practical purpose or intention, would return composition pedagogy to its sophistic ethos (I dare not say roots). In other words, finding new touchstones means leaving touchstones behind. It means plumbing the depths of abstraction. It means obliterating the ground.

   at times I need this deep
   forgive me

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Notes

1. This essay is the opening chapter in my book, *Beta Rhetoric: Writing, Technology, and Deconstruction*, forthcoming from SUNY Press, who has graciously consented to its advance publication in *JAC*. It is an expanded version of a CCCC presentation (March 2002) in which I responded to the CCCC theme “Connecting the Text and the Street.” I want to thank Sidney Dobrin and Raul Sanchez for inviting me to present on their panel. I am also grateful to the following colleagues who read it at various stages: Michelle Ballif, Jenny Bay, Lisa Coleman, D. Diane Davis, Byron Hawk, Thomas Rickert, Geoff Sirc, Victor Vitanza, and Lynn Worsham. And to my husband, Jan Rune Holmevik, goes my supreme gratitude for taking me offshore and opening my eyes.

2. *Terra Nullius* was a legal fiction used by the invading forces of the British to deny the legal rights of the indigenous people of Australia.
3. Elam’s project involves feminism and deconstruction, but there is an isomorphic relation between her project and mine: each seeks to deal a blow to the ground metaphysics that anchor two relatively new (and still evolving) disciplines—namely, feminism and rhetoric/composition, respectively.

4. Desmond Egan, an Irish poet, evokes an achingly stark tribute to “Needing the Sea,” and his poem, begun here, will introduce each section of this essay (for the full text of the poem and an introduction, see the Hungarian Electronic Library at http://www.mek.iif.hu/porta/szint/human/szepirod/vilagir/egan_d/selected/html/index.htm). Csilla Bertha explains the poem thus: “Desmond Egan is keenly aware of the historical, social, political, religious and other dichotomies continuously tearing into Ireland’s texture, just as he is of the dualities of individual and communal existence, past and present, tradition and modernity, rootedness in nation, landscape, culture and foreign influences. . . . Thus, for instance, his ‘Needing the Sea’ speaks first of all about the poet’s personal longing for revival—the image of the sea being the image of spiritual-psychological purity and redemption, somewhat similarly to the sea in ‘Wedding,’ the long-poem by the Hungarian László Nagy—but it also contains the feeling that ‘you cannot escape’ as the Hungarian Gyula Illyés puts it, when Egan apologizes for this luxury, knowing how many people are suffering from poverty, slavery, genocide, violence in the world.”

5. It is tempting to follow, also, the trajectory of Heidegger’s critics who resort to “feminizing” him (or emasculating him) in order to discredit his thought. I can think of few systemic (and institutionally sanctioned) forms of critique more intellectually violent than the feminization of thought. See my sampling of misogynic critiques of Heidegger in “LogosSpermatikos, Heidegger, and the Consummation of Ethos,” also a chapter in my forthcoming book, Beta Rhetoric.

6. Heidegger points out that the arché of philosophy is astonishment. “In astonishment we restrain ourselves (être en arrêt). We step back, as it were, from being” (What is Philosophy? 79, 85).

7. In a purely serendipitous moment, my husband and I happened to see Gormley’s installation of “Another Place” on a stormy day in June, 1997, while staying at a hotel on the beach near Stavanger. From our room we were able to see the beach, and at first I thought the people I could see were real. It was hard to believe that in that storm, with driving rain and winds and a temperature of about 40°F, these people would be swimming in the sea. But then, I thought, this is Norway. An hour later, when I went back to the window, I saw the same people in the same places, and it dawned on me these were not real people. We bundled up and went out to the beach to see the most amazing sight—one hundred identical iron sculptures scattered along the beach and into the sea, some semi-covered by water, some buried in sand to their waists, and all staring out to sea. The image has never left me.

8. A more extensive discussion of Ong’s analysis appears in Haynes.

10. I wish to thank Victor Vitanza for pointing me to Agamben’s work on refugees and the camps and Norman O. Brown’s Love’s Body. I also thank him enormously for careful readings of my work for the past twenty years.

11. That last sentence is, in the original: “Sie sagen das Verschwiegene” (Wozu Dichter 293). Unhappy with the Hofstadter translation (“the dots tell what is kept silent,”), I prefer to translate it as follows: “The dots tell the secret.”

12. Following the Afghan refugee crisis in Australia, the BBC reports that “[l]egislation is being rushed through Australia’s parliament to tighten up definitions of refugees, and put strict limits on their rights to challenge asylum decisions” (Knox).

13. Rebecca Gomperts, founder of Women on Waves, offers free abortions offshore in international waters, ignoring threats from antiabortion terrorists. “She is also arguably the first abortion rights activist aggressively to cross international borders” (Corbett).

14. As a graduate student at UTA from 1984–1994, I can personally attest to the rise and fall of the CACTIP program, the ramifications of which are still being acutely felt by all the faculty and students involved in the twenty-year history of that program and its integration with the Graduate Rhetoric program, which has also now been reduced to a mere shadow of its original conception.


16. If the CCCC Braddock award essays are salient barometers registering the pressures in our field, it is interesting to note that of the winning essays between 1975 (when the award was first announced) and 1998 (collected in Lisa Ede’s edited volume On Writing Research: The Braddock Essays 1975–1998), only one deals explicitly with teaching argument. In “Moments of Argument: Agonistic Inquiry and Confrontational Cooperation” (published in 1997, winner of the Braddock in 1998), coauthors Dennis Lynch, Diana George, and Marilyn Cooper take issue with the practice of asking students to “establish their position before they interact with those with whom they disagree” (394). Arguing that this pushes “students to reproduce their disagreements rather than [move] towards negotiated and temporary resolutions of disagreements” (394), the authors recommend engaging students in negotiating “not ‘conflicts of knowledge,’ so much as conflicts of positioning and power” (395). Understandably, they hope to teach students to sort through “the complexities of an issue” rather than “stark controversies” (404); but their goals seem less motivated by a desire to teach students strategies for writing than a desire for them to change. When composing their assignments, the authors explained: “We reminded ourselves that the risk in argument is not that you may lose but rather that you may change.” Further: “We also knew full well the rhetorical force of the
questions we asked; thoughtfully pursued, these questions could and did prompt change in our students” (407).

17. The logic of containment detains boat people on the high seas and on shore. Woomera is Australia’s largest onshore internment camp. It is also the site of nuclear weapons testing, uranium mining, and a U.S. CIA spy base pivotal to Bush’s Missile Defense Shield. Woomera2002 was March 27–April 2, and Boat People Day was Good Friday (2002). Woomera2002 organizers declare: “We refuse the death, pain, and confinements that are manufactured in the name of The Economy. We refuse the caging behind razor wire and the new world borders fashioned so that capital, by reserving for ITSELF the ‘right’ to move around the world, can better enforce austerity, misery, the earth’s destruction”.

18. According to Jarvis, this was a phrase coined by the existential sociologists, Jack Douglas and John Johnson (Jarvis personal e-mail).

19. Heeding Vitanza’s moratorium on turning theory into praxis, yet mindful of the urgency of deregulating the argumentation industry that has our field so tightly in its grip, I offer the following assignment in the spirit of my title—writing offshore. Give your students (or yourselves) this depth probe assignment: Write something offshore (that is, put a message in a bottle) in response to this statement: WE ARE ALL BOAT PEOPLE. Now take your paper and make a paper boat. Leave it in a prominent place such as a doorstep, a computer terminal, the university administration building, or wear it on your clothes, whatever. Then imagine its trajectory, where it will go, who will see it, what they will think (what you would like them to think). And then, put that in writing; trace the trajectories, and give it ballast—so that the main question you should ask yourself as you write is this: WILL IT FLOAT? (See BoatPeople site to download instructions to make origami paper boat: http://www.boat-people.org/downloads/origami_boats.pdf).

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