

# THE PUBLIC VOICE

by

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(Under the Direction of Barbara A. Biesecker)

## ABSTRACT

This dissertation theorizes publics as a voice by drawing on both psychoanalysis and classical rhetorical literature. Currently, scholars theorize publics, and the public sphere, either as an empirical entity or as an imaginary construct. Instead, this dissertation argues that publics derive social force from their status as a perennially lost object. Drawing on the work of Jacques Lacan, I argue that publics are an elusive object of desire, or *objet petit a*. Lacan's notion of voice, otherwise known as the object voice, enables a theory of publics that centers upon their role as a prosthetic device rather than their presumed status as empirical or imagined social entities. To demonstrate this new theory of public objects I turn to classical texts in order to articulate the object voice to contemporary theories of public formation. Each chapter returns to a classical text that elucidates a particular aspect of the public as a lost object of desire. Chapter two reads the pears theft from Augustine's *Confessions* as an exemplar of how the invocation of God (Lacan's symbolic invocation) leaves an aphonic public as an excess or remainder. Chapter three then reads the discourse on love from Plato's *Symposium* to theorize the temporal circularity of the public's voice as an object cause of desire. Chapter four reads the orator Crassus from Cicero's *De Oratore* as an example of how publics are radically prosthetic and exchangeable objects. The fifth and final chapter of this dissertation reads Michel Foucault's

“This is Not a Pipe” in order to bring the contributions of these classical readings back into the present. After synthesizing the dissertation’s theoretical concepts into an ethics of counterpublicity, I then argue that Foucault’s analysis in “This is Not a Pipe” encourages a rethinking of counterpublic formation from an ethical standpoint.

INDEX WORDS: Publics, Voice, Psychoanalysis, Lacan, Prosopopeia, Invocation

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## DEDICATION

To my family, who have loved and supported me through every trial.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

In *Listening with the Third Ear*, Theodor Reik wrote of a most unusual case among the patients in his psychoanalytic practice. Reik, a prominent student of Sigmund Freud, wrote of a college student in her senior year who “had suddenly become unable to speak in public, although she had previously been a well-poised speaker.” (114) Reik recounted the circumstances of this student’s newfound aphonia:

Each student was to speak before a microphone in an empty room. In contrast to many other occasions upon which she had addressed her fellow students, and addressed them well, she now suddenly became inarticulate. She was very frightened, her heart beat rapidly, and she could not get the words out. From then on, she was also unable to speak when she faced teacher and class and when no microphone stood before her.

(115)

The account Reik provides is not foreign to the experienced speech teacher: the student, whom often displays a degree of proficiency in speaking, indeed an eloquence, suddenly locks up in a bout of public speaking anxiety. But Reik’s particular patient, a woman who was already an experienced speaker and a senior in college, displayed a symptom that was transferred from the immediate circumstances (the empty room before a benign microphone) to the populated classroom. Highlighting the discrepancy between audiences and publics, Reik wrote “On the conscious level this audience consisted of her teacher and her classmates. Unconsciously, it meant more: it was public opinion which would judge.” (116) Reik’s account raises some

troubling questions about our publics.<sup>1</sup> Where did this public speaking student's public go? What kind of public facilitated her aphonia before this unhinged microphone and why did her anxiety persist even after her classroom audience had been replaced?

Reik's microphone example challenges us to rethink the role of our publics. Reik's microphone is a condensed analogue for the argument forwarded by this dissertation: that publics are an object of desire, or what Jacques Lacan terms an *objet petit a*. This dissertation, in its more provocative moments, challenges its reader to think of all publics in the same way as the microphone of Reik's patient. This provocation, the idea that the public is an *object*, has two entailments. First, Reik's microphone challenges us to abandon the notion that publics are (exclusively) imagined or imaginary constructions. The anxiety faced by Reik's patient stems from an inability to imagine her public beyond the microphone itself. However, Reik tells us his patient becomes all the more "unable to speak in public" on account of the microphone. For Reik's patient a certain kind of public becomes even more prevalent since nothing was on the other end of the line. Indeed, the tie between the microphone and her public becomes so strong that once an audience is reintroduced they can no longer be addressed as a public. In a way, trapping Reik's patient with a microphone (detached from all audiences in a privative space) had paradoxically left this student quite *alone* with her public. Second, Reik's microphone challenges us to think of publics as a prosthetic device rather than a (living or dead) social entity. The microphone, an object one uses to address a public, serves as a proxy or substitute for a public. However, the microphone's role as a substitute object in no way requires that an actual social entity be given life. Since no living public is necessary, the pedagogical exercise "to

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<sup>1</sup> One might note my own use of the public "we" or phrases like "our publics" used throughout the dissertation. My selection of these terms and phrases is to emphasize how publics are taken in advance as an object cause of desire. My position is in no way that "we" ought to stop taking "our publics" in advance, but rather that "our" theories of public formation have yet to fully incorporate the temporal circularity of Lacan's *objet petit a*.

speak before a microphone in an empty room” can potentially backfire as it does in Reik’s account. Indeed, Reik’s account of the microphone notes how a key factor in his patient’s sudden bout with aphonia is that this microphone is neither animate nor inanimate, and neither living nor dead. (116) Hence, Reik’s microphone shows how a public becomes more forceful in its absence.

### **For the Love of Publics**

For nearly a century now, scholars of many disciplines have chased after the public, asking over and over again, “What is a public?” in an effort to define and clarify it. By many accounts, this hundred-year search finds its beginnings in Walter Lippmann’s *The Phantom Public* (1925) and John Dewey’s rebuttal, *The Public and its Problems* (1927).<sup>2</sup> Lippmann and Dewey are often cited as intellectual precursors and archetypes of theoretical approaches in the literature on publics. Indeed, Lippmann and Dewey continue to serve as points of condensation in contemporary conversations about publics; these proper names have become ways of capturing contemporary attitudes towards publics at a glance. For that reason, I will take Lippmann and Dewey as a microcosm of where much of the scholarship on publics (still) sees itself today in order to read their separate positions as a common attachment to the public as a lost object.

On the one hand, Walter Lippmann’s *The Phantom Public* (1925) lamented the public as an “unattainable ideal.” (13) But despite Lippmann’s attempts to characterize the public as an

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<sup>2</sup> Gerald Hauser, for instance, returns to the debate between Lippmann and Dewey as a “starting point” for “rethinking the rhetorical character of public opinion.” (“Vernacular,” 84) And in his introduction to *The Phantom Public Sphere*, Bruce Robbins discusses even contemporary divisions on publics in terms of the battle lines drawn between Lippmann and Dewey. (x-xii) Other scholars who discuss Lippmann and Dewey as provisional ‘origins’ of the public sphere include, for instance, Goodnight (2012, 206), and Warner (2002, 86-87).

ineffectual “phantom,” he often embellished its loss.<sup>3</sup> For instance, when Lippmann wrote that the public “is a false ideal” he hastened to add the qualification “I do not mean an *undesirable* ideal.” (29) Hence, Lippmann never fully jettisoned his *desire* for this “phantom” democratic public despite taking the position that no such thing was possible. As Lippmann’s treatise continues, the little embellishments that symptomize Lippmann’s desire continue to mount. For example, only a few words after admitting that the public is a desirable “ideal,” Lippmann vividly embellished the incompetence of the democratic public by likening it to “a fat man [trying] to be a ballet dancer.” (29) Lippmann’s analogy is sustained by a latent desire that even his “phantom” public ought to fulfill a higher calling. Lippmann supplements one “phantom” public with another: the unattainable or lost public of his desire.

On the other hand, John Dewey’s *The Public and its Problems* (1927) continues to frame the public as a lost object even as it rebuts Lippmann’s more negative outlook on publics. Entitling his first chapter “The Search for the Public,” Dewey’s counterpoint to Lippmann similarly frames the public as an elusive object right from the outset. And embellishing the public again, Dewey’s characteristically dry and calculated analysis takes a romantic turn when discussing the desirability of the public.<sup>4</sup> Dewey increasingly turns to celestial tropes in his

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<sup>3</sup> A close reading of Lippmann’s text would be inappropriate here, but there are more instances of Lippmann’s embellishments than the “fat dancer” example. Lippmann’s wording vacillates wildly. For instance, Lippmann writes that the public “can do nothing usually but meddle ignorantly or tyrannically,” (60) that public opinion acts “crudely, by wholesale, and spasmodically,” (61) and that the public is “heavy-handed, stupid, imperious, even predatory.” (62) He characterizes publics as “the spectators of action, [who] cannot successfully intervene in a controversy.” (93) Lippmann’s words become almost angry when he writes that “The public must be put in its place [so we may] live free of the trampling and the roar of the bewildered herd.” (145) And again, notably setting God into the position previously accorded to the ballet dancer, Lippmann writes “I have conceived public opinion to be, not the voice of God, nor the voice of society, but the voice of interested spectators of action.” (187) At other points, Lippmann characterizes the public almost in sexual terms by using words like “amateur” and “hasty” (138), or as he does in his conclusion, by again admitting that the “frustration” of “men” over the unattainable public “stimulates and inflames the passions.” (188, 190)

<sup>4</sup> Beyond the celestial romanticism of the public, Dewey often turns to fertility and reproduction in his characterization of publics. For instance, Dewey describes collective formation in the terms of natural reproduction: “There are trees which can grow only in a forest. Seeds of many plants can successfully germinate and develop

“search” for the public. In a chapter entitled “The Eclipse of the Public” he begins with the line, “Optimism about democracy is to-day under a cloud.” (110)<sup>5</sup> And as his treatise comes to an end, Dewey returns to these high flying embellishments by writing that “the winged words of conversation in immediate intercourse have a vital import lacking in the fixed and frozen words of written speech.” (218) Indeed, as Dewey’s treatise concludes his terms go from romantic to downright amorous. To be sure, Dewey wanted his public to be characterized by the “dissemination of print” or the prevalence of “dialogue,” but he also insisted on the presence of “personal intercourse” as well. (219) And perhaps no example more clearly exemplifies how Dewey’s public remained a lost object, indeed an amorous one, than his concluding claim that no public is fully formed until communication “pass[es] from mouth to mouth.” (219) Despite how dryly most of the treatise reads, Dewey uncharacteristically embellished his public as if he wanted to smooch it right on the lips, and under the moon and stars.

The “search for the public” as a lost object has continued unabated since the days of Lippmann and Dewey, but the desirous pursuit of publics has rarely (if ever) been directly addressed by scholars. Of course, theories of public formation have become much more intricate

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under conditions furnished by the presence of other plants. Reproduction of kind is dependent upon these activities of insects which bring about fertilization.” (22-23) Dewey would further romanticize collective formation by turning to the physical and celestial when comparing human relations to the “assemblies of electrons, unions of trees in forests, swarms of insects, herds of sheep, and constellations of stars.” (24) While procreation would strictly be considered part of the private for Dewey, the use of procreation as a natural basis for publics is occasionally used nonetheless. For instance, Dewey writes “man is not merely *de facto* associated, but he *becomes* a social animal in the make-up of his ideas, sentiments and deliberate behavior. *What* he believes, hopes for and aims at is the outcome of association and intercourse.” (25)

<sup>5</sup> Over the course of his chapter, Dewey discusses the public as “confused and eclipsed” (121) only because “There is too much public, a public too diffused and scattered and too intricate in composition.” (137) In this regard, Dewey’s “eclipsed” public is quite similar to Lippmann’s “fat dancer” because each posits a public as a desirable object. Dewey’s celestial tropes for the public may also be found earlier in his treatise. For instance, Dewey discusses publics in celestial terms when he writes “The planets in constellation would form a community if they were aware of the connections of the activities of each with those of the others.” (25) This romantic terminology is sometimes set against an uncharacteristically aggressive terminology applied to the critics of the public Dewey champions. For example, Dewey indicts the criticisms of those like Lippmann for their “peevisish and indiscriminating tone.” (110)

and have been taken up across a host of disciplines: including ethics, history, law, literature, philosophy, political science, and rhetoric. Following the early efforts of Lippmann and Dewey, come a host of contemporary investigations of publics, the most influential and popular touchstones including Jürgen Habermas' *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1962), Thomas Goodnight's "The Personal, Technical, and Public Spheres of Argument" (1982), Gerald Hauser's "Features of the Public Sphere" (1987), Nancy Fraser's "Rethinking the Public Sphere" (1992), Jodi Dean's *Publicity's Secret* (2002), and Michael Warner's *Publics and Counterpublics* (2002).<sup>6</sup> In more recent years the steady march of literature on publics has continued with Robert Asen's "Seeking the 'Counter' in Counterpublics" (2006), Christian Lundberg's *Lacan in Public* (2012), and Fraser's recent *Transnationalizing the Public Sphere* (2014).<sup>7</sup> Investigations of queer publics, subaltern publics, and feminist critiques of the distinction between the public and the private are notable as well.<sup>8</sup> For all their important differences, let it simply be said that the "search" for the public continues.

The "search" for this elusive public continues unabated even when scholars code it in different terms. For instance, Michael Warner's etymology traces the term "pubic" not only to the "private" but also to the Latin *poplicus* (the people) and the *pubes* (public maturity):

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<sup>6</sup> Other notable writings on publics include Hauser and Blair's "Rhetorical Antecedents to the Public" (1982), Hauser's "Vernacular Dialogue And The Rhetoricity Of Public Opinion" (1998), and Robert Asen's "Imagining in the Public Sphere" (2002). See also Asen and Brouwer's edited volume entitled *Counterpublics and the State* (2001). For supplementary accounts on the publics literature in rhetorical studies, see Phillips (1996), Doxtader (2000), and Asen (2015).

<sup>7</sup> An in-depth investigation of any of the major treatises on publics listed here would entail extensive detours from the point I am after: that publics are an *objet petit a*, even in the theoretical literature. In addition to the literature I have listed as key touchstones, my own investigation of publics has benefitted from Slavko Splichal's "Manufacturing the (In)Visible" (2006), and Barbara Biesecker and William Trapani's "Escaping the Voice of the Mass/ter" (2014).

<sup>8</sup> See Felski (1989) and Griffin (1996).

A child's earliest education in shame, deportment, and cleaning is an initiation into the prevailing meaning of public and private, as when he or she locates his or her 'privates' or is trained to visit the 'privy.' (The word 'public' also records this bodily association: it derives from the Latin *poplicus*, for people, but evolved to *publicus* in connection with *pubes*, in the sense of adult men, linking public membership to public maturity)[....] Public and private are learned along with such terms as 'active' and 'passive,' 'front' and 'back,' and 'top' and 'bottom.' (23-24)

Warner's etymology suggests a host of alternatives to the term "public" in language.<sup>9</sup> Over the years, scholars have found proxies for publics in terms like "the people," "populism," and more recently "the multitude." In rhetorical studies alone, the search for the "public" is tied to Kenneth Burke's<sup>10</sup> notions of identification and consubstantiality, Michael Calvin McGee's "In Search of 'the People'" (1975), Lloyd Bitzer's "Rhetorical Public Communication" (1987), and Maurice Charland's "Constitutive Rhetoric" (1987). Indeed, proxy terms for the "public" serve as devices for scholars' explicit attempts to turn away from the "public." Ernesto Laclau's *On Populist Reason* (2005), for example, foregoes the term "public" in favor of the term "populism;" in Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's *Multitude* (2006) the term "multitude" works to distinguish this project from a search for the public. Regardless of purpose, all of this scholarship orients itself towards the public as a lost object in one fashion or another. Whether scholars elect to take up Dewey's "Search for the Public" or abandon it for Lippmann's

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<sup>9</sup> Classical scholars find analogues to the "public" in the Greek *demos* and the Latin *res publica* and *vulgus*; terms which suggest both the desire for the state, on the one hand, and the fear of the mob, on the other.

<sup>10</sup> Purely on its own terms, I would not associate Burke's work on identification/consubstantiality directly with an investigation of the public or the public sphere. However, Burke is often referenced as a precursor by rhetorical scholars in discussions on publics, and Burke's concepts have been highly influential in the theorization of collective formation.

“unattainable ideal,” a desirous relationship (of one kind or another) is established with publics nonetheless.

At the very least, my own account of how the “public” has become a lost object (in scholarship) is not alone. In his introduction to *The Phantom Public Sphere* (1993), Bruce Robbins also notes the public’s role as a lost object across the scholarship on public(s) writ large. Harkening back to Lippmann and Dewey, Robbins writes that “Today, as in 1925, the public’s name once again rumbles prophetically through the best-seller lists.” (viii) Robbins’ account of the literature on publics, however, does not stop at addressing the sheer quantity of these books and articles. The desire for publics, as Robbins identifies, persists even in the conceptual depths of the theoretical literature. Robbins observes, “The list of writings that announce the decline, degradation, crisis, or extinction of the public is long and steadily expanding. Publicness, we are told again and again and again, is a quality that we once had but have now lost, and that we must somehow retrieve.” (viii) Like Robbins, I would argue that the role of the “public” as a lost object only becomes more evident as public(s) scholarship expands. The more we “search” for a public, the more elusive it becomes.

In my view, the preeminent work on publics at present, Michael Warner’s *Publics and Counterpublics*, is no exception to the trend Robbins describes. At one level, Warner largely agrees with Robbins’ claim that the public has become a lost object when he writes that “Publics are queer creatures. You cannot point to them, count them, or look them in the eye.” (7) However, the theory of public formation Warner laid out in “Publics and Counterpublics” never reclaims the sense of radical queerness that his opening lines suggest. Instead, Warner actually continues to construct publics as a lost object rather than theorize them as such. For instance, at the conclusion of this chapter Warner addresses the “counterpublic” as a kind of lost object by

cautioning against the way counterpublics “enter the temporality of politics and adapt themselves to the performatives of rational-critical discourse. For many counterpublics, to do so is to cede the original hope of transforming not just policy but the space of public life itself.” (124)<sup>11</sup>

When Warner bemoans the lost “original hope” of the counterpublic he, like Dewey before him, frames his (counter)public as in recess or eclipse.

Today, the scholarship on public(s) continues to have difficulty *theorizing* the public’s function as a lost object precisely because it is too busy *constructing* the public as one in its own discourse. It seems, in other words, that the theorization of publics has failed to account for its own *love* for its object of study. Of course, this is not to say that having an affection for our publics is necessarily a bad thing. But I do mean to suggest that a continued theoretical neglect for how publics function as a lost object will ultimately cause us to miss a fundamental dimension of how publics emerge and operate. Therefore, the aim of this dissertation is to explain how the desire for public(s) impacts theories of public formation. In the following section, I argue that requisite to doing so is the incorporation of a psychoanalytic notion of the voice as a lost object. To borrow the words of Mladen Dolar, I argue that a public is a “voice and nothing more.” (3)

### **Public – Voice**

I am less interested in asking the age-old question, “what *is* a public?” than in theorizing what a public “does” and how it functions. How does the public’s role as a lost object change the way it operates? And how does the desire for public(s) change the way scholarship thinks about them? Psychoanalytic theory is well positioned to address both of these questions due to its emphasis upon desire and its relation to the lost object, what Lacan calls *objet petit a*. In

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<sup>11</sup> Warner’s concluding comments on counterpublics in “Publics and Counterpublics” stem from the dangers of a counterpublic becoming a social movement (which, in Warner’s account, seems to entail cooption by state interests).

brief, psychoanalysis can contribute the following supplement to current theories of public formation: the public, any public, *is a voice*. By insisting upon this articulation between publics and voices I aim to both extend and specify the way in which the public appears as a lost object.

The public is a voice object because it never speaks in a proper sense. Of course, publics can be made to speak and they can be personified as if they could be heard. However, always absent from any public is *its* voice. Psychoanalysis is uniquely positioned to provide an account of the public's permanent case of aphonia through Lacan's "object voice." A voice, in other words, is never more potent than when it appears as aphonic. Importantly, the object voice is directly indebted to, indeed isomorphic with, Lacan's *objet petit a*:

This object, which is in fact simply the presence of a hollow, a void, which can be occupied, Freud tells us, by any object, and whose agency we know only in the form of the lost object, the *petit a*. The *objet petit a* is not the origin of the oral drive. It is not introduced as the original food, it is introduced from the fact that no food will ever satisfy the oral drive, except by circumventing the eternally lacking object. (Lacan, 1973/1977, 180)

Jacques-Alain Miller rightly notes that voice as *objet petit a* emerged in Lacanian psychoanalysis with the shift from a developmental to a structural perspective (Miller, 137). For Miller, the Lacanian object voice is in no way reducible to sensory perception or "modalities of intonation," since the "function of the voice" is "*a-phonic* [*a-phone*]." (Miller, 139) Hence, Miller describes the notion of the object voice as functioning purely on the level of the unconscious:

[I]t is from the phenomena of mental automatism [...] that Lacan extracted the object voice. Here one speaks of voices, although these voices are all immaterial—they are nevertheless perfectly real to the subject. They are even what he cannot doubt, despite

the fact that nobody can record them. Their sonorous materiality is not what would be at the fore here. (Miller, 140)

For Miller, the structural role of the object voice is as a “third term between the function of speech and the field of language.” (140) In this view, voice staunchly resists any conflation with speech, signification, language, or even the body; instead, it operates as the principal mode of attachment to any and all of these registers. I quote him at length:

[T]he voice comes in the place of what is properly unspeakable about the subject, what Lacan called the subject’s “surplus enjoyment” [*plus-de-jouir*]. Castration [...] means that one does not hear a voice in the real, that one is deaf to it. Where then is the instance of the voice when I speak? It is not the tone that I adopt [...] It is not simply that my recorded voice will appear to me to be that of somebody else. The instance of the voice is always present as soon as I have to locate my position in relation to a signifying chain insofar as this signifying chain is always situated in relation to the unspeakable object. In this respect, the voice is precisely that which cannot be said.

It has been said that there is something in the voice that escapes the instrumental effect. Of course I use the signifier in order that the Other would answer—every signifying chain is an invocation—but, more radically, I am waiting for the Other’s voice, the one that will tell me what I have to expect, what will become of me and what has already become of my being as unspeakable. And this is precisely what makes me attached to the Other: it is the voice in the field of the Other that makes me attached to the Other.

(Miller, 144-5)

Such a concept strictly divorces the notion of voice from the vocal apparatus or the modalities of vocal intonation in speech. Similarly, the object voice is also nothing like a ‘stage’ of human

development, but a part-object that even if attained (as a sort of food) will fail to satisfy the invocatory drive. No attainment of ‘voice’ is anything more than provisional and, indeed, in this conception, any ‘attainment’ of voice only serves as another detour.

The object voice requires us to staunchly refuse to conflate voice with bodies and languages. Mladen Dolar’s *A Voice and Nothing More* contends the object voice forms the tie between bodies and languages, “but the nature of this tie is paradoxical: *the voice does not belong to either.*” (72) On the one hand, the object voice is not a sonorous projection from the body. Miller puts the dichotomy between voice and body bluntly when he writes “the voice as object *a* does not in the least belong to the sonorous register.” (Miller, 139) Yet on the other hand, the object voice is not a signifier either. As Dolar explains the object voice is an “extra-linguistic element” that “*does not contribute to making sense.*” (Dolar, 15) Dolar’s “*dichotomy of the voice and the signifier*” (17) does not mean that voice is altogether unrelated to speech, but that voice cannot be reduced to or quarantined within our theories of signification.<sup>12</sup> For Dolar, “voice is not simply an element external to speech, but persists at its core, making it possible and constantly haunting it by the impossibility of symbolizing it” (106). Simply put, object voice is a persistent and agitating obstacle to making sense. And yet, the object voice is also the force of articulation between bodies and languages.

Theorizing publics as a voice object therefore demands a similar refusal to collapse our publics into the trappings of bodies and languages. The importance of Dolar’s dichotomy between voice and signification means that public(s) are neither simply a signifier nor an embodied social entity. Instead, publics are something that a signifier attempts (but fails) to capture. So long as publics remain identified with bodies and languages, our theories of public

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<sup>12</sup> Joshua Gunn’s (2008) book review “Speech is Dead; Long Live Speech” describes object voice as “something more in voice than voice” (347) and “something that is conveyed by voice yet that is beyond meaning” (348).

formation, and possibly even our publics themselves, remain complicitous with an ostensibly modern notion of voice.<sup>13</sup> Hence, the dissertation cannot draw a strong rhetorical theory of voice from contemporary rhetorical studies because they are too steeped in bodies and languages. So where does the project turn? Dolar provides a clue: a theory of voice must take its point of departure from that which is outside bodies and language but is also simultaneously constitutive of both, namely, *prosthetics*, which Dolar describes alternately as “instrument,” “vehicle,” or, most tellingly, “the material element recalcitrant to meaning.” (15)

Investigating the public, then, demands attending to texts that simultaneously operate outside the contemporary rhetorical economy of bodies and languages and in which publics appear as--or rather the desire for publics is marked by--a remainder or prosthetic instrument. All three of the texts of this dissertation satisfy these two criteria: the pears from Augustine’s *Confessions*, the crown of Alcibiades from Plato’s *Symposium*, and the Tusculan villa of Crassus from Cicero’s *De Oratore*. In each text, a prosthetic that is neither body nor language serves as a proxy for a public that is desired but does not appear. Of course, it is neither incidental nor insignificant that these texts all belong to the classical tradition. On the one hand, the desire for publics is both perennial to and deeply embedded with the western tradition. Yet on the other

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<sup>13</sup> My argument concerns itself more with how publics remain effectively modern than the extent to which they have become postmodern. The particular modality of public voice today as modernist in scope will be laid out more explicitly in the concluding chapter. For the moment, suffice it to say that the notion of voice used to articulate publics today remains linked to a modernist form of representation as *darstellung*, which suggests identity, ideality, or a portrait as in philosophy or art. For more on how Dolar’s dichotomy between the voice and the signifier is tied to the modern and postmodern see Badiou (c2009, 1-9). Badiou’s claim about the reduction to bodies and languages extends to both the modern and is indeed accentuated in the postmodern. Specifically, Dolar writes that “Alain Badiou begins [...] *Logiques de mondes*, with an assertion which exemplifies the basic tenet of what he calls “democratic materialism”: “There are only bodies and languages.” This is indeed a doxa which can be seen as modern—postmodern—avatar of more illustrious predecessors: let us say, of Descarte’s division into *res extensa* and *res cogitans*, where both parts have undergone considerable change [...] Nevertheless both parts remain as the firm evidence, the dual substance, of what there is. But in this double world—this is Badiou’s whole point—there are also truths, which are neither bodies nor languages nor mixtures of the two, nor are they somewhere else either, in some special Platonic spot.” (59-60)

hand, classical texts consistently frame the public as a *device* or *instrument* that cannot be pinpointed in either the bodily or linguistic sense.

With this framework in place, chapter two turns to Augustine's *Confessions* as an exemplar of the way in which public(s) are formed as an excess or remainder of what Lacan calls the symbolic invocation. Chapter two makes the most basic case for theorizing publics as an excessive voice object. To demonstrate the emergence of aphonic publics as an object voice, chapter two reads the *Confessions* of Saint Augustine for his youthful theft of some pears. The public of Augustine's invocation is exemplary because it is almost completely unrecognizable in the terms provided by Lippmann, Dewey, Habermas, Fraser, and (more recently) Warner. Augustine's public appears as a remainder, a leftover object, of the symbolic invocation – indeed it is a public that forms and reforms itself despite Augustine's best efforts to confess it. The invocation, a little known classical variation of *apostrophe*, is a rhetorical figure that triangulates the audience by repositioning the judge as a mere witness to the invocation. Augustine's pears confession demonstrates how Augustine's invocations of God leave an aphonic public voice as an excessive remainder, such that at every turn Augustine finds himself once again fornicating with his little childhood friends (the public that his pears theft was meant to please). In short, Augustine's pears confession illustrates how the invocation of the big Other entails an excessive convocation of a public.

The example of Augustine's pears shows how publics cannot be reduced to the category of a fantasy (in Lacan's algebra, the  $\mathfrak{S}\langle\circ\rangle a$ ).<sup>14</sup> The invocation of the Other is not a privative

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<sup>14</sup> Miller has characterized Lacan's formula of the fantasm as a "sort of molecule, in the sense in which a molecule is a set of particles or atoms [...] The fundamental fantasm, as a molecule, is [...] composed of a significance atom and a *jouissance* atom." (19) Based on this characterization, I am arguing that publics are "atoms" rather than "molecules" in Miller's sense. Publics are, in other words, something at work *in* the fantasm rather than the fantasm itself.

“demand” upon the Other but, rather, leaves an aphonic public remainder. In contrast to the common claim that the public is a fantasy<sup>15</sup>, chapter two suggests that publics are a ‘deep’ fantasy structure (in Lacanian terms publics are *sinthomatic* rather than *symptomatic*), meaning that publics have roots in both the Lacanian Symbolic and the Real. Augustine’s pears confession demonstrates how publics are an excessive voice object, an object that is both lost and leftover from the symbolic operation that Lacan calls the “symbolic invocation.” In other words, chapter two argues that our publics are fantasies so deeply embedded in the unconscious that they are effectively non-traversable; as a *sinthome*, publics are a symptom for which there is no cure, or a symptom that runs all the way down.

Chapter three then analyzes the speeches on love in Plato’s *Symposium* in order to radicalize the temporal circularity of the (public) voice as an “object cause” of desire. Chapter three’s reading of the *Symposium* concentrates on the role of public(s) as an amorous object. To put it a little too simply: we all love our publics. Hence, chapter three takes the *Symposium*’s discourse on love as an opportunity to introduce a Lacanian notion of psychoanalytic transference into the way publics are formed. The transference, or the tendency of the analysand to fall in ‘love’ with the analyst, radicalizes the temporal circularity of public formation. To illustrate, chapter three reads three episodes of Plato’s *Symposium* for their play of transferences: the hiccups of Aristophanes, Socrates’ invocation of Diotima, and finally the *agalma* that Alcibiades sees within Socrates. Each of these episodes demonstrates not only that publics are

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<sup>15</sup> The reference to publics as a fantasy structure has become increasingly common. In Warner’s *Publics and Counterpublics* (2002), for instance, publics are consistently referred to as imaginary formations, but on occasion are also characterized as fantasies. (146, 180-181) In similar fashion, in *Publicity’s Secret*, Dean argues that “Ideology critique begins to answer the question [of public formation] by considering the fantasy that holds the belief in the public together.” (9, see also 17-18, 34, 42, 52, 78) The tendency to characterize publics goes at least as far back as Lippmann’s “Phantom” public. In my view, the association of publics with “imaginary” or “fantasy” structures is symptomatic of a general understanding of publics in scopic terms (“spheres” and so on). What I am suggesting here is that a voice object does not behave in the same “imaginary” or “phantasmic” sense as a gaze object. At the close of Lacan’s Seminar X, he casts “the scopic level” as “strictly the level of the fantasy.” (292)

an object of desire, but also that the love for publics becomes temporally circular. Specifically, to associate publics with the transference love of psychoanalysis suggests that a key tenet of any theorization of public formation must be that the public (as a voice) is taken in advance as if it were a cause. Lacan's notion of the "object cause" suggests what classical rhetoric knows as a *post hoc* fallacy: that the effect of the signifying operation is taken (up) as the cause of desire.

My reading of Plato's *Symposium* shows how the temporal circularity of public formation must be radicalized. The theoretical contribution of chapter three is that theories of public formation must account for the "object cause" function of publics. Specifically, I articulate this argument in Michael Warner's terminology of the circulation and uptake of texts. In other words, chapter three introduces the temporal dimension of Lacan's *objet petit a*, a remainder taken as cause, as a supplement to Warner's notions of uptake and circulation. Plato's *Symposium*, I argue, supports theorizing both circulation and uptake as effects of the public's "object cause" function both due to its speeches and the ways the *Symposium* has been taken up by scholars. Hence, I argue the mere attention to a circulated text is an insufficient condition for uptake. Rather, as chapter three contends, uptake must be rhetorically 'trapped' as if it had been a sure thing all along.

Chapter four then reads Cicero's *De Oratore* to show how publics are radically prosthetic and exchangeable objects. In other words, chapter four attempts to provoke its reader into entertaining the idea that "any object can be a public." Of course, the wording of this claim is both simple and a bit absurd. How can *any* object *be* a public? But as we have already seen with Reik's microphone, sometimes a benign (public) object, even in isolation, can bear with it a strong force of desire. The key point of chapter four is that not all publics have to speak or be personified in order to have force. To demonstrate this claim, chapter four returns to a principal

orator of Cicero's *De Oratore*, Lucius Licinius Crassus. Crassus is so important, not because he has the best approach to oratory, but because the interactions between himself and *De Oratore's* other speakers circumscribe the limit of public speech. The lesson Crassus teaches, in other words, is that speech is only one of many objects in oratory, and on occasion, the orator itself becomes a public object.<sup>16</sup> *De Oratore* frames Crassus as a kind of object of desire by linking his person to his *domain*. Crassus attains his authority as a speaker not only from his speech, but from this *domain*, which is figured as his own Tusculan villa, or his status as a public object.

Chapter four then attempts to translate *De Oratore's* more classical notion of the orator as a public object into contemporary terms by offering three (speechless) analogues of the orator: the *fistula* of Gaius Gracchus, the shofar of Reik and Lacan, and finally the bullhorn of President George W. Bush. In each case, I argue, the prosthetic object can be thought of as a public voice, or a benign object that nonetheless bears the desirous weight of our publics. The challenge posed by these analogues is deceptively simple: think a public voice that does not speak. The stakes of this challenge are high because they circumscribe the potentiality of public formation today. Drawing on Jacques Derrida's "Call it a Day for Democracy" and Ernesto Laclau's *On Populist Reason*, chapter four argues that publics in the active or passive voices are provisional rather than structural, and that a public need not be accorded speech (or life) at all. In rhetorical terms, chapter four aims to challenge the *prosopopeic* formation of publics.

The fifth and final chapter of this dissertation reads Michel Foucault's "This is Not a Pipe" in an attempt to both synthesize concepts from the preceding chapters and bring the classical back into conversation with the present. Chapter five's reading of Foucault promotes a rethinking of counterpublics from an ethical standpoint. Of course, it goes without saying that

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<sup>16</sup> I have selected the term "itself" to describe the orator in order to accentuate the division between the orator's role as a speaker (herself/himself) and the orator's role as an object of uptake (itself).

“This is Not a Pipe” is undoubtedly *not* a counterpublic. Instead, I argue that Foucault’s “This is Not a Pipe” is exemplary of an ethics of counterpublicity due to the way it takes up Magritte’s painting as a series of proxies rather than a single unified portrait. Specifically, I argue that Foucault’s analysis suspends the *prosopopeia* of various elements of Magritte’s paintings through a series of invocations. Foucault’s playfulness in his analysis of Magritte provides a window into how an ethics of invocation can redirect our desire for a public object. Through his very own series of invocations, Foucault’s analysis separates Magritte’s painting into its constituent elements and play those elements off against one another. On the whole, Foucault’s own uptake(s) of these elements exhibit how an ethics of counterpublicity must be predicated upon an *aversus* within the formation of publics themselves, or a competition between the devices and objects upon which our publics are staked.

Chapter five therefore addresses counterpublics at the level of their representation as either proxy or portrait. Chapter five asks: what does a ‘counterpublic’ look like at the level of an *objet petit a*? I argue that theories of counterpublic formation must be supplemented by an ethics of counterpublicity, by which I mean a fundamentally different ethical orientation towards public(s) as object(s) of desire. My turn to ethics extends criticisms of how counterpublics have been framed on precisely the same terms as dominant publics. From these criticisms, chapter five outlines two key characteristics of an ethics of counterpublicity: a notion of publics in the middle voice, and a rhetoric within the representation of publics. First, drawing on Bradford Vivian’s rhetoric beyond representation, I argue that an ethical orientation towards public formation requires a formation of a public in the middle voice, or an invocatory or aphonic public. In short, a public in the middle voice is more of a circumscribed position or a rhetorical device rather than an active social agent. Second, drawing on Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s

twofold distinction within representation as *Vertreten* and *Darstellen* in “Can the Subaltern Speak?,” I argue that an ethical approach to counterpublicity is marked by a departure from the *prosopopeic* formation of publics. *Prosopopeia*, or the attribution of life or speech to voiceless objects, is a rhetorical figure that (I argue) is committed to a fundamentally apolitical notion of representation (Spivak’s *Darstellen*, or the formation of a portrait). By returning to figurations of publics as proxies rather than portraits, I argue that a rhetoric within representation leverages one rhetorical device of public representation (*invocatio*) against another (*prosopopeia*). In short, an ethics of counterpublicity adopts a way of representing publics as exchangeable objects rather than social essences.

## CHAPTER 2

### STAGING PUBLICITY

Jürgen Habermas' landmark investigation into the constitution of the bourgeois "public sphere" made repeated use of the figure of the "stage" to punctuate its historical narrative. These "stages" included the court, the *salon*, the diner, the coffee house, and even the theatre itself. Hence, each of Habermas' structural transformations were, from the very start, rhetorically "staged." Even before Habermas' "On the *Genesis* of the Bourgeois Public Sphere" the reader was primed by a brief "Excursus" on "the Case of Wilhelm Meister" from a novel written by Goethe. Habermas wrote that the novel's protagonist, Wilhelm (whom lacks noble birth), tragically endeavors to become a "public person" by seeking out "the stage as a substitute, so to speak, for publicity" (14). Wilhelm plays Hamlet in an endeavor to appear more refined – a classic case of fake it till you make it. Wilhelm's mistake, however, is that the public itself is pulled out from under his feet. Habermas' "Excursus" would conclude that Wilhelm's mission failed because his public "was already the carrier of a different public sphere" and that he was "out of step, as it were, with the bourgeois public sphere whose platform the theatre had meanwhile become. Beaumarchais's Figaro had already *entered the stage* and along with him, according to Napoleon's famous words, the revolution" (14, my emphasis). In short, Wilhelm miscalculates how he has carried his very own public up on stage with him, and how his imaginary public had been given the hook by another. The tension between the imaginary and empirical dimensions of publicity is alive and well today, and the stakes anecdotally dramatized by the conflict between Wilhelm's imagined public and his supposedly real public remain

relevant.<sup>17</sup> The problem of thinking publics today is that, like Wilhelm, rhetorical theory remains caught between one imaginary public and another. It seems no matter what, one public or another always claws its way back on stage.

The real problem is that we keep thinking of publics as if they were only operable on the imaginary register. To use Lacan's terminology, we treat publics as a symptom rather than at the level of the *sinthome* (a symptom unavoidably anchored in the unconscious). Hence I contend publicity be theorized in the form of a trinity no less operable on the symbolic and the Real than on the terrain of the imaginary. Publicity must be freed from the constraints imposed upon it by the phantasm such that our publics might be known, as Jacques-Alain Miller puts it, "not as condensation but as functioning" (61). To truly re-theorize our publics from the "ground up", as Biesecker and Trapani have suggested, we must analyze them at the level of their voice. The public is not *just* an imaginary formation, nor is it *just* a structural position within the symbolic, rather, the public *qua* public must also be understood as (*a*) *voice* – understood in the Lacanian sense of an excessive remainder of the signifying operation. I propose that a new theory of publicity be staked on this ground: the public's voice is an excessive remainder of the *invocation* of the Other. By this I mean that our publics are formed as the byproduct of a special class of figure involved, for Lacan, in the formation of the unconscious. In the most provocative sense, thinking publicity at the level of the Real is to seriously posit the (seemingly absurd) claim that

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<sup>17</sup> The tension between the empirical and imaginary approaches to publics is evident in many quarters. It is particularly salient even in recent work. For instance, Christian Lundberg's *Lacan in Public*, which investigates the rhetorical relationships between publicity and economies of *jouissance*, quite literally bifurcates its notion of publicity as the "habituated modes of imaginary affiliation" into its analytical and empirical components (125). More recently, Barbara Biesecker and William Trapani have suggested that publicity itself be rethought from the "ground up" and have adapted Joan Copjec's provocation "imagine there is no woman" into an ethical injunction to "imagine there is no public(s)" (25). I align myself with the latter effort to "imagine there is no public(s)" as a useful provocation. However, I do not read this statement as an effort to traverse publics, which presumes a public is structured as a phantasm. In my view, the reduction of publics to fantasies has yet to transition from the psychoanalytic notion of symptom to the Lacanian notion of *sinthome*.

the *invocation* of the Other is the *first and only mode of public address*. The figure of *invocation* holds a special place in our economies of *jouissance* as the principal rhetorical device involved in the staging of publicity. In short, the public voice is an *objet a* of the most fundamental order. Not only are our publics unconsciously staged in-advance of their own constitution (circulation/uptake), but publicity is already at work even before publics become imaginatively condensed.

This essay proceeds in three sections that draw attention to how the rhetorical figure *invocatio* structures publicity. First, I argue for restaging our emphasis upon the Other in rhetorical studies. I briefly review the big Other in rhetorical studies and argue that rhetorical scholarship is uniquely suited to theorize the address to the Other. Second, with this new emphasis in mind, I attempt to answer the question: What is an *invocation* of the Other? Here I hope to show that the figure of *invocatio* both has a rich conceptual history, dating to Quintilian and Augustine, and a theoretical currency today. Finally, with Habermas serving as inspiration, I offer a new “excursus” that reads Augustine’s pears confession at the level of its *sinthomatic* publicness.

### **Restaging Emphasis: From ‘big Other’ to Invocation**

The status of the big Other as a conceptual bulwark among rhetoricians predisposed towards psychoanalysis has not always been uniform and uncontroversial. The differing ways in which rhetorical studies has imported the “Other” from Lacanian psychoanalysis are exemplified in a brief exchange between two psychoanalytic rhetorical scholars, Joshua Gunn and Christian Lundberg, in the *Quarterly Journal of Speech* in 2004. In brief, this debate over the big Other was a turf war between the imaginary and symbolic registers. Let us revisit a few highlights. The first article in the series, Gunn’s “Refitting Fantasy” attempted to suture Bormann’s fantasy

theme analysis together with the increasingly popular psychoanalytic approach to fantasy championed by Žižek and others. On its surface, Gunn's argument was benign enough: that "the mediation or reconciliation of the Self and Other" was facilitated by rhetorical fantasies. (1) Yet this statement rings as heresy in Lacanian ears. The problem? The conflation between the symbolic category of the big Other, signified by the capital "A" within Lacan's algebra, with a host of spectral others, the lower case  $i(a)$  in Lacan's algebra, at the level of the imaginary. In response, Lundberg contended, among other points, that "the Other whose desire we desire is not the desire of specific *others* (readers of an essay, or therapists, in Gunn's example) but the desire to be made whole by the Symbolic order, not to be disfigured by our entry into speech" (498). Gunn's mistake, Lundberg continued, was his "tendency to slip between  $a$  as an object of desire and A as the ground for all thought" (498). In other words, the Other, in the Lacanian lexicon, is not interchangeable with the 'receiver' of the communication model. Lundberg wrote that "specific others are epiphenomenal [since] they mediate the more primary relationship for the desire of the Symbolic order, for a transcendental foundation in the order of language" (498). Lundberg had effectively caught Gunn with his proverbial "A" down.

But there was also a slippage even within Lundberg's correction – specifically between the object of desire or *objet a*, the 'a' of Lacanian algebra, and its instantiation within an imaginary frame indicated by the 'i(a)'. Gunn's conflation, by Lundberg's own account, is in no way between the *objet petit a* (breast, voice, or gaze...) and the big 'A' Other but between this big Other and an imaginary substitute  $i(a)$ . Of course this second slippage appears purely technical, but the slippage from  $i(a)$  to the little  $a$  suggests a corresponding tendency to omit or repress the function of the imaginary in the hopes that the symbolic might become more transparent. However, there are ways in which even the Lacanian 'algebra' on the symbolic

register is persistently saturated by an imaginary frame. I will get to the specifics shortly, but I want to suggest that this imaginary framing of the big Other remains unanalyzed today.

In fact, at the conclusion of this exchange, Gunn exploits the dynamic of the transference to bail himself out of trouble. Gunn would write that “The Other means much more than the Symbolic: it is also the unconscious and, secondarily, *can be* a specific other or person insofar as she represents the order of language and the law” (504). What Gunn italicized as “*can be*” is precisely the function of the transference – the tropological slippage that allows any imaginary other to provisionally occupy the position of the symbolic order itself, what Lacanians call the big Other. Albeit more carefully, Lacan performed this slippage all the time – arguing that God, Socrates, the analyst, and any number of others comes to occupy the ‘position’ of the Other under specific circumstances. Quite faithfully, Lundberg borrowed this conflation when he defined the Other *as* the symbolic order writ large. To define the Other in such a way places it in a synecdochal position which personifies a set of signifiers, condenses them, such that they may be addressed in the singular.

This is why we cannot let this little (i)maginary variable drop from Lacan’s *i(a)*: because it is not absent at the level of the symbolic big Other in the least. Note how in the conversation between Gunn and Lundberg all of the attention was given to the *noun* rather than the *verb*. Their concern is over whether the privileged noun, big Other, may be appropriately addressed by way of its imaginary substitutes (my God, my teacher, my leader, my analyst, and so on...). At the level of the verb, however, we have another imaginary frame lodged within even the most formulaic accounts of the Other: the rhetorical formation of an *address* to the Other itself. The pivotal nature of the addressivity to the Other is exemplified in the subject’s demand to the

Other: *Che vuoi?* - What do you want from me? Which becomes the basis for the corresponding question: What do I really desire?

At stake in what Lacanians refer to as “*Che vuoi?*” is the way rhetoricians identify and analyze situational exigencies. Let us asterisk a seemingly innocuous problem, noted by Jacques-Alain Miller, regarding the misleading translation of “demand”:

It is only on the level of the drives that the English word “demand” is valid, as in English the word “demand” has the meaning of an exigency (unlike the French *demande*, which means a request). Thus, the English term is not entirely appropriate to translate the demand formulated by the speaking subject; the correct translation would be “to ask,” “to ask for” (13).

We will be making extensive use of this little dynamic. What it means is that a demand taking place on one register, the level of the drive, may not resemble (in any way) the demand everyday speech. Hence even the request (a demand deprived of its antagonistic force) in an imaginary frame may be grounded upon a more urgent force of desire than it appears. There are three consequences to Miller’s point regarding an exigency at the level of the drive. First, on the imaginary level, the psychoanalytic notion of the demand challenges rhetoricians to ask: even though this demand is prevalent in a situation, is it *really* all that pressing? Second, on the symbolic level, the inverse may be the case. Even the most urgent demand upon the Other may appear in the deceptively benign language of an “I ask” in common parlance. Hence, it is not only that “the unconscious is structured like a language,” as the Lacanian one-liner goes, but also that the unconscious is structured like a rhetorical situation. Meaning that Lacanians, for better or worse, consistently discuss the address (*Che vuoi?*) to the Other *as if it were* uttered in public, in the form of exigency/demand, to a unitary but nonetheless staged addressee. This is why we

cannot let Lacan's little (i)maginary variable slide, because every time we refer to the "Other" we are deploying a specific rhetorical figure, a type of apostrophe, which repositions the symbolic order as an addressee.

### **What is an *Invocation of the Other*?**

Let us summarize: the structural category of the "Other" is conditioned in-advance by a "demand" that is rhetorically figured as if it were a public address. Indeed when Lacan referenced this dynamic in his seminars he consistently referred to it as the *invocation* of the Other. In other words, even as Lacan referenced the big Other as a structural position within the symbolic he simultaneously articulated it to the *invocatory drive* – which is to suggest that the Other is sustained by the voice as an *objet petit a*. Lacan's word selection is also a happy coincidence that frames the unconscious in terms of the little known and rarely discussed figure of *invocatio*. Why is this significant? Because we have isolated a rhetorical device operating as a gatekeeper between the speaking subject and the symbolic order – an intermediary device conditioning both categories *depending on its rhetorical (mis)usage*. In short, in order for any "demand" to be made upon the Other, the subject must first rhetorically figure its invocation. Furthermore, whereas the "demand" upon the Other suggests an active voice I argue that an *invocation* of the Other is conducted in the middle voice. The question becomes neither "What is the relation between self and other?" nor "How is the subject structured by the symbolic order?" but instead: How does the invocatory mode finesse the contours of *both* the speaking subject *and* the symbolic order itself? The answer requires the formulation of a rhetorical theory of invocatory speech which I begin with this hypothesis: The invocation of the Other leaves a *public (middle) voice* as its remainder. And hence, an inquiry into the invocatory mode means to begin thinking publicity on the level of the Real.

Let us start with the basic question: what is an invocation? The *Oxford English Dictionary* gives the modern definition: “[t]he action or an act of invoking or calling upon (God, a deity, etc.) in prayer or attestation; supplication, or an act or form of supplication, for aid or protection”. Hence, an invocation is commonly understood as a speech act in which an entity or authority is called upon in humble prayer or supplication. In this modern deployment of the term there are three rhetorical dimensions to invocative speech: solicitation, supplication, and appeal. One, invocative speech entails the *solicitation* of an outside auditor or authority which may or may not directly respond to the call. The “authority” understood as broadly ranging from an auditor to a deity, from an actually existing individual to a law or even a God. Two, an invocation requires the speaking subject to *supplicate* his or her voice to this external authority. In supplication, a laudatory operation (Lacanianians also know this as sublimation), the speaker attests to the eminence, even prominence, of the invoked authority. Again, the authority may be virtual or actual. Three, the invoked authority serves as a ground for further *appeal*. That is to say, supplication advances to the status of a postulate such that the authority may be wielded in the service of further solicitation.

Invocation may be understood not only as a selectively deployed rhetorical device but also as a modality of speech in general. Nearly fifteen centuries ago, Augustine insinuated this much near the midpoint of the fourth book of *On Christian Doctrine*, identifying invocation as the key to eloquence and recommending that the Christian orator always take as his point of departure the “discern[ment of] the poverty of his own speech:” “[D]raw on the riches of Scripture,[...]and he [the orator himself], though small and weak in his words, may gain strength and power from the confirming testimony of great men” (126). Having in this passage inflected the intimate affiliation between invocation and eloquence, Augustine returns to it again: “there

is a kind of eloquence that is becoming in men who justly claim the highest authority, and who are evidently inspired by God” (127). And again:

[Our Christian orator] will succeed more by piety in prayer than by gifts of oratory; and so he ought to pray for himself, and for those he is about to address, before he attempts to speak. And when the hour is come that he must speak, he ought, before he opens his mouth, to lift up his thirsty soul to God, to drink in [*biberit*] what he is about to pour forth, and to be himself filled with what he is about to distribute[....] For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you’ (145).

This sentiment, recurring throughout Augustine’s short treatise on rhetoric, makes an appearance even in its last line which insists that the Christian orator pray so that “all the praise may be His ‘in whose hand are both we and our words’” (174). In sum, what we find imbricated between *On Christian Doctrine*’s pardon of rhetoric and its treatise on eloquence is the recognition that speech owes itself to (the) invocation (of God).

More than a millennium later, embedded in the notes of Jean-François Lyotard’s incomplete and posthumously published *The Confession of Augustine* is the opening onto a conception of all speech—sacred *and* secular—as invocatory in the general sense. One of the many gifts of Lyotard’s enigmatic attempt to rewrite Augustine’s *Confessions* without resorting to phenomenology is its notion of all authorship-as-deferred-voice that pivots on the *invocatio*. Lyotard speaks of invocation as a “tone” and “leitmotif” that runs throughout the *Confessions*. He writes: “This *invocatio*, the voice through which I call upon your voice to come and speak within mine, is repeated throughout the thirteen books, my voice recalls itself to your voice, appeals to it, like a refrain” (65). This invocatory knot, for Lyotard, exerts a destabilizing force upon the symbolic order when he (re)writes, “[If I wonder] how can I know that it is *you* that I

invoke, and not some idol, then I can respond that I do not invoke you because I know you, but *so as* to know you. The invocation is a quest and search for you, you who have already found me” (69). Belief in this Other is strictly an auxiliary product of the rhetorical appeal that precedes it. Augustine, far from reassured by the wisdom he has received from his “inner human,” must return to his invocative plea again and again, resulting in what Lyotard describes as a “chase after your voice” disseminated throughout the *Confessions* (73). So, even as Augustine trumpets the absolute authority of wisdom he *performs* the necessity of invocation within speech. The radical alterity of ‘your voice,’ the silent voice of the Other, tortures wisdom such that the “you, the silent one, pulls all the strings of the confessive sentence [and] occupies all strategic positions” (76). Once “wisdom” is placed under erasure by Lyotard, we find that the invoked voice is more akin to a voice deferred. But while laudable for bringing to our attention the deferral of voice, Lyotard is noticeably cryptic when it comes to the contours of invocation.

*The Sacrament of Language*, by Giorgio Agamben, is similar to Lyotard in that it locates the invocatory mode in a position logically prior to the formation of the symbolic, but gives us little regarding what this device actually *does*. Over the course of a book that endeavors to furnish an “archaeology of the oath” as both a “juridical and religious” institution, Agamben illuminates how invocation is nestled within any oath (2, 11, 65). Reading a range of Western authorities from Cicero and Augustine to Benveniste, Agamben argues that the oath has long been understood to be formed in “the conjunction of three elements: an affirmation, the invocation of the gods as witnesses, and a curse directed at perjury” (31). Secularizing these accounts, Agamben argues that invocation (calling upon the authority of a *logos*) is an implicit and basic function of any speech act where “oath, witness, and god coincide in the utterance of the formula” (33). But for Agamben, it is language (the divinity of *logos*) which takes the stand.

Agamben's brief discussion of invocation is a precursor to his later "reread[ing] [of] the theory of performatives or 'speech acts'" wherein he asserts that "every name is an oath" and "'I swear' [is] the perfect paradigm of a 'speech act'" (54). For Agamben, it is the oath, both as an invocation of the *logos* and an implicit curse, which ensures the efficacy of all speech (54-57). However, like Lyotard before him, Agamben's anatomy of invocation is exceptionally brief.

Of all modern attempts to theorize the *invocation* of the Other Lacan's is the most systematic, perhaps because he took so many of his cues from Augustine himself. Richard Glejzer has detailed Lacan's indebtedness to Augustine coextensive with his theorization of the symbolic, observing that Lacan's first seminar "did not begin with Saussure or Jakobson [but rather] Augustine's examinations of signs and teaching" (104). This first seminar, despite scarcely mentioning structural linguistics, devoted an entire class to reading Augustine's little known dialogue on signification, *De Magistro*, and brought a priest into the classroom to facilitate in translation. Even then Lacan was already referencing the symbolic order as the "symbolic invocation" when describing how the "emergence of the symbol *creates*, literally, a new order of being in the relations between men" (238-9). The persistent influence of Augustine is evident even in Lacan's last seminar, *Encore*, in the Borromean knot, a metaphor for the tie between the real, symbolic, and the imaginary, as a "trinity [...] one and three in a single stroke" (123).<sup>18</sup>

Perhaps Lacan's most direct engagement with invocation occurred in Seminar V when analyzing the role of the symbolic in the formation of witticisms. From the very start of Seminar V, Lacan positioned invocatory speech at a crossroads of the symbolic, imaginary, and real by telling his students that the subversion of the real is "drawn along by a vital invocation" which is

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<sup>18</sup> See Miller 2011, 35.

a “substation for the symbolic by the imaginary” (6.11.57, 5). Only moments later Lacan (un)wittingly echoed Augustine’s line “‘Here is how God answers you through my mouth.’ There is no subject other than in a reference to that Other. This is symbolic of what exists in every word worthy of the name” (6.11.57, 7, 10). However, in contrast to Lyotard and Agamben, Lacan also outlined some of the specific contours of the structuration of an invocation.

In Seminar V, Lacan engages invocation via an analysis of the witticism “famillionaire” (a merger of the term “familiar” with the term “millionaire”). For Lacan, the symbolic invocation involved in a witticism is evidence of a unicity of the Other since it allows the subject to remain “the only person who knows it” (10). The subject’s witticism does not require, for Lacan, an understanding public because even at the most privative level the symbolic order is always in on the joke. As Lacan’s discussion of witticism proceeds, he sketches out the structuration of this invocatory device. For Lacan, any invocation of the symbolic necessarily consists in what he calls two “moments” or “stages:” 1) the level of “the code” and 2) the level that “completes the loop, which properly speaking constitutes the meaning” (10). Lacan characterizes these two “stages” of an invocation as first beginning from the Other and then returning to the Other in a second “moment” (6.11.57, p. 15). In these cases where Lacan discussed “invocation” by name his emphasis was upon the *device* by which I make “my desire depend on your being” (8.1.58, p.8-9). An invocation’s “first moment” consists in the supplication of voice to this Other such that in the “second moment” the subject may refigure this supplication into an “appeal” – it is not simply a question of supplicating ‘my voice’ to the voice of the Other – the invocation becomes a trap for the satisfaction of the subject’s demand in this second moment:

This tu [you] that is in question is what we invoke, but in invoking it it is all the same this personal subjective impenetrability which of course will be involved, but it is not at this level that we try to reach it. We try to give it what is involved in every invocation. The word invocation *has a historical usage*, it is what made its appearance in a certain ceremony among the ancients [...] that they performed before battle. This ceremony consisted in doing what was necessary, [...] to get the gods of the others on their side. This is exactly what invocation means, and it is in this that there resides the essential relationship to which I now lead you, of this necessary second *stage*, of the appeal in order that desire and demand should be satisfied (8.1.58, 10, my emphasis).

Thus, in order for the demand to be satisfied, it depends upon transitioning (rhetorically) between these two “stages” of the invocation: from the supplicatory stage to the stage of appeal and back again. The invocation becomes a precursor to the demand the subject makes upon the Other, a rhetorical figure which operates as an intermediary device for the formation of that demand and its satisfaction. Between these two “stages” Lacan also transitions between the symbolic and imaginary registers. The invocation brokers in the slippage between the symbolic order, its figural condensation into the form of a big Other, and finally its imaginary designation as a God. And furthermore, the invocation becomes the device by which this trinity is rhetorically figured into a plausible recipient of address. In short, Lacan tells us *invocation* is the economy of *jouissance* which makes the addressivity of the Other possible – “staging” the Other as a player in the unconscious.

Despite the primacy accorded to invocation by Lacan, his standard bearers often allow it to drop out of the equation. Let us take a fortuitous example, where Slavoj Žižek happens to be

discussing the very same set of “moments” Lacan was just a moment ago, yet with *no mention* of the invocatory device itself:

First, the consistent big Other; then, the big Other rendered inconsistent by the object as the very object that guarantees the ‘consistency’ of the big Other (the multiple inconsistent symbolizations can only be ‘totalized’ as a texture of reactions to the intruding object); finally, we are back at the beginning, although at a different level – there is no object that, from outside, perturbs the consistency of the big Other, the object a as the ‘real’ is only a name for the purely formal twist, internal loop, of the symbolic order itself. (162)

In terms of the algebra, Žižek’s account is highly similar to Lacan’s. However, Žižek’s description symptomatizes a tendency to drop the invocatory device and reduce the rhetorical dimension of the Other’s addressivity to its algebraic representation. Lacan’s emphasis upon the invocatory mode of this address, these “moments/stages,” represents an opportunity to build upon the oft-rehearsed Lacanian postulate that my desire *is* the desire of the Other. Rather, perhaps Lacan’s shift suggests “my desire” is *not strictly* the desire of the Other but a byproduct of my figuration of the Other’s invocation.

Even as Lacan championed invocation as a general mode for (all) speech he cautioned that invocation remains a *device*, a rhetorical practice, which comes with certain historical strings attached. Yet in the very same thrust Lacan used invocation to evidence a *privative relation* between the subject and the invoked Other. Quite explicitly, Lacan emphasized the tie between the “invocation of the universal witness and of the *personal* relationship of the subject to this witness, namely God” (13.11.57, p. 19). But we must remember that Lacan is a psychoanalyst first and a rhetorician only tangentially. This is also why we cannot confine ourselves to the

modernist notion of invocation which centers upon solicitation, supplication, and appeal. If we consult the texts of classical rhetoric, particularly Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria*, we find invocation is also a species of apostrophe, the figure of address. This is not to say that invocation and apostrophe are identical, since unlike an apostrophe, which may be directed at any person, place or thing, the invocation more exclusively addresses a sublimated object. However, the relationship between invocation and apostrophe was neglected not only by Lacan, but by all of the theorists we have discussed thus far - dating to Augustine himself. In each case, the figural maneuver of the invocation has been reduced to the bare terminology of "a call". The figural proximity between invocation and apostrophe alters the bifurcated Lacanian language of (ask/demand) by offering a middle road.

A shift in emphasis from "demand" to "invocation" fashions a notion of publics in the middle voice.<sup>19</sup> Rhetorical scholars have persistently turned to the middle voice as an alternative to restrictive active and/or passive formulations of rhetorical and political agency. Hayden White, taking ritualistic sacrifice as an example, describes the middle voice as when "the subject is presumed to have acted both *on* the victim and also *upon himself*" or a form of "dual action on an object and on oneself." (181)<sup>20</sup> Following from White's work, Erik Doxstader contends that "the public's middle voice entails both the loss and potential for agency" and champions public speech that "appears *as* it is *not*, less a hypothetical (as if) or fate (if then) than the capacity to make things otherwise." (31) In a similar vein, Bradford Vivian argues for broadening our conception of rhetoric in the middle voice in order to emphasize "the self-enactment of

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<sup>19</sup> We may note that even in Miller's account the distinction between the two translations of "demand:" in the English and French both fall along the lines of active and passive voice.

<sup>20</sup> Bradford Vivian adopts a similar wording. Describing the middle voice as when "a subject is somehow implicated in the occurrence of an action, though neither as its active subject nor its passive object." (60)

discourse, rather than individual intentions or the objectivity of an extra-discursive reality.” (53) Invocatory speech represents an opportunity to dramatically expand our notion of the middle voice, not only to the extent that (an individual’s) speech-in-public may be cast in a middle voice, but by positing publics themselves, publics *qua* publics, as neither active nor irrelevant receptacles. In the invocation, in short, the public appears as a rhetorical device – a form and nothing more.

Framing publics in the middle voice carves out a road between the (active) notion of uptake and the (passive) notion of reception. The crucial element is the invocation’s realignment of its addressee, from judge to witness, which positions its public in a middle zone between active agent and/or passive bystander. If we consult Quintilian’s definition of apostrophe we find that he stresses, before all else, the manner in which apostrophe “consists in the diversion [*Aversus*] of our address from the judge” (IX.ii.38). Hence, to reduce the invocation purely to an “address” or a “call” not only oversimplifies its dynamic, it forgets its *tropos* entirely. For Quintilian an invocation is an about-face from the very outset – a turning away from this judge. Quintilian’s apostrophe prioritizes its *aversus* when his first example of apostrophe (in general) references a shift from the judge to an “attack” [*invadimus*] targeted at one’s “adversary” [*adversarios*]. Only after framing apostrophe *adversari*ally does Quintilian posit invocation [*invocationem*] as a second example: “For I appeal to you, hills and groves of Alba [*Vos enim iam ego, Albani tumuli atque luci*]” (IX.ii.38). Quintilian’s example is drawn from Cicero’s failed effort at exoneration in *Pro Milone*.<sup>21</sup> By calling the terrain of Alba to the stand, Cicero both crafts a favorable source of authority and repositions a hostile jury as witnesses to this

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<sup>21</sup> Quintilian’s selection is taken from Cicero’s doomed defense in *Pro Milone*, a speech which repeatedly repositions its public in a failed effort to secure an unlikely acquittal. The appeal to the hills and groves of Alba serves to fashion an artful polemic between the judges before Cicero and the only true witness in the case, the terrain of Alba which cannot speak.

invocation themselves. Based on placement and choice of example, Quintilian's invocation inherits some of apostrophe's adversarial tact. Of course, the "attack" of the invocation is more subtle than the typical apostrophe, since, its overt "I appeal to you" is paired with an aphonic remainder [*rather than*].<sup>22</sup> The *aversus* of the invocation consists in sweeping the addressee off the stage to make room for a more general invocation of the symbolic order which, in the case of *Pro Milone*, aims to divert the judgement of the jury. The public is demoted from active judge to middle witness which exerts force not through direct influence but by virtue of its silent attestation to the verity of Cicero's invoked authority. The invocation's public does not actively involved in uptake, nor a mere passive recipient, but rather exerts itself a-phonically. Although the public of an invocation is saturated with the pull of desire, it rarely is explicitly named in a text.

The symbolic invocation borrows the middle voice from the rhetorical form of its imaginary counterpart, instantiating not a polemic between polemicists but rather one between and within sublimated objects. Let us recall that the symbolic invocation takes oratorical invocation as its mold. And like the invocation of *Pro Milone*, the symbolic invocation stages a strange kind of polemic. The classical orator's troping of the positions of judge and witness is reversible since an invocation may be used either to call a divine witness into a public interaction, or conversely, to situate a public witness to a divine interaction. In this way the invocation sews the seeds of a mutual usurpation wherein even the supposedly direct address to the Other becomes staged before a little rabble of witnesses. In the invocatory gesture, the public may either work in the service of sublimating the Other (a foil to the greatness of its authority) or

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<sup>22</sup> The *aversus* of the invocation then establishes what I would call a public in the strong sense, an aphonic public. Aphonia, as Mladen Dolar's investigation of the object voice in psychoanalysis suggests, is an instance when the voice as an object-cause of desire is most evident. In other words, when a public gets a case of aphonia the structure of desire around a public becomes *stronger* not *weaker*.

a device of desublimation that overthrows the Other (from a position of silent judgment). The *aversus* of the invocation invariably stages a contest between the Other and its very own public, and this means that this *aversus* is a quality not only of imaginary but also symbolic identification. Hence the true stakes of the invocation deal with how our publics are staged as an *objet petit a* on their own terms, an object that functions at every intersection of the Borromean knot: No public is purely imaginary. One does not traverse their public so much as change its constitution, that is, by changing the *way* we desire our public(s). As a kind of apostrophe, the call of an invocation does not so much designate, or switch, its addressee as it *instantiates a division of authority between addressees*. At a psychoanalytic level, the invocation is a power-play with an astonishingly simple consequence: there is an interminable publicity to any symbolic identification. No invocation of the Other is undertaken in a privative isolation of the subject and the Other.<sup>23</sup> The middle voice of the invocatory device (the public it stages in a middle voice) institutes a polemical division between sublimated objects by establishing a kind of love triangle between the subject, their big Other, and an excessive public witness to the invocation. Rather than understanding the invocation of the Other as the sublimation of a single *objet petit a*, the *aversus* of the invocatory device stages a polemics between our objects of desire and the rhetorical devices which sustain them.

Within any symbolic invocation there is a *polemics within sublimation*, meaning a *complex and interminable competition between (on one level) our objects of desire and (on another level) the rhetorical devices that facilitate an object's ascension to the status of the sublime*. I view a polemics within sublimation as an expansion of Biesecker and Trapani's

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<sup>23</sup> This point represents a point of departure from Lacanian psychoanalysis, which insists upon the privative relation between the subject and the Other. My argument in Lacanian terms would be that this is impossible if Lacanians are to hold firm to the phrase "invocation of the Other."

recent advocacy of the polemicist's effort to "imagine there is no public(s)."<sup>24</sup> Strictly speaking, I doubt such a thing is possible if our publics are a *sinthomatic* object anchored in every register of the unconscious – i.e. an excessive remainder of the symbolic invocation itself. But perhaps we could have our polemics without our polemicist – a symbolic polemics between positions within the unconscious. Quintilian's invocation is surprisingly good at this. Even a weak invocation on the imaginary register may perform a strong polemics on the symbolic register by staging an adversarial game of (de)sublimation between the voices of the big Other and its publics. On the one hand, this allows us to tell the most imaginary of publics, the one standing right before us, to "take a hike" – but by way of an *indirect* address. Or by the same trick, it may deprive our gods of their little worshipers in ways that imaginatively restructure the symbolic order itself. In this sense, the big Other is denied the privilege of being the only game in town – and this is done, ironically, in the very act of putting it on "stage". The symbolic invocation opens a door onto a more ethical orientation towards the object(s) of our desire because it positions our public(s) as the operative player in a love triangle that holds our desire for particular objects in suspense.

### **Excursus: *Sinthomatic* Publicness**

Despite the efforts of rhetorical scholars dating back to Charles Sears Baldwin in 1928, it remains easy to forget just how thoroughly Augustine's *Confessions* is saturated by publicity. A number of Baldwin's progeny have insisted upon an intimacy between Augustine's *Confessions*

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<sup>24</sup> I read the Copjec-inspired phrase "imagine there is no public(s)" as an interpretive statement in the sense championed by Jacques-Alain Miller. This statement is not interpretive in the sense that it establishes a definitive truth (or cure), but in the sense that it is a provocation that dislodges a myopic commitment to an object. In this sense, the interpretive statement does not say "case closed" but quite the opposite. Indeed, from this point of view, the phrase "imagine there is no public(s)" may harbor greater potential if one cannot actually *do* what it suggests. In this way, even if our publics cannot be traversed in the same sense as a fantasy, perhaps we can still foster a more ethical orientation towards the modalities of their constitution.

and his pardon of rhetoric in *De Doctrina Christiana*.<sup>25</sup> One of these scholars, Calvin Troup, reminds us that the scene of the *Confessions* is less the privative confinement of the confessional booth than the open air of the theatrical stage:

The Confessions is a prayer. But it is not a private prayer, or even a literary device akin to a private prayer. In the Confessions, Aurelius Augustine, Bishop of Hippo, publically addresses God and expects listeners to join in the appeal. The bishop's voice resounds in an open, discursive cathedral to lead and instruct a community of fellow sinners (36).

But is it really necessary for Augustine to address a public? Augustine himself is ambivalent, viewing a public confession as a threat to its authenticity – a confession only in public and only for the public. (X.ii.1-2). Nonetheless, Augustine makes his confessions public even while writing as if his address to God were direct – he explains: “I too, O Lord, will confess to you in such manner that men may hear, although I cannot prove to them that I confess truly. But those men whose ears charity opens to believe me” (X.3.3). Only a few lines later Augustine again questions the *fruitfulness* of the public confession: “With what *fruit*, then, O my Lord, to whom my conscience each day makes confession—more secure its hope of your mercy than from any innocence of its own—with what *fruit*, I ask, do I confess, not only in your presence but to men also by these writings, what I now am, not what once I was?” (X.3.4) The relationship between Augustine's confession and publicity is perhaps best exemplified by a seemingly ‘empty’ theft of some little pears in the second book. However, readings of this episode have consistently missed how this theft is, from start to finish, a *public* act of thievery.

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<sup>25</sup> A number Augustinian rhetorical scholars discuss the (doubly backhanded) rhetoricity of the *Confessions*. See Tracy 1990, 286. Murphy (1960), Tell (2010) and Asay (2015).

Why then isn't a direct, privative, address to the Other enough to resolve Augustine's desire? The answer to this question is simple: Augustine's pears confession establishes a public voice object through its very own invocations of God. Since, as Quintilian wrote, the invocation is a rhetorical device of re-alignment (of its addressee) one cannot invoke God without leaving a (silent or aphonic) public in its wake. In a sense, Augustine's pears *are* his public, and he is stealing these pears not only in his childhood memories, but in his very own confession of their theft. Augustine's efforts teach an important lesson about how publics are theorized: insofar as the public is a voice object it cannot be reduced to the imaginary register and cannot be traversed as if it were a mere fantasy. Rather, Augustine's failure to fully confess his theft shows that our publics are operative as an excessive structure of the unconscious or *objet petit a*. Augustine's invocations of God, repeated throughout the pears episode, sow the seeds of fornication. Hence even a literary form as privative as the confession must leave a public voice in its wake.

Let us first consult Jacques Derrida's reading of this theft in "The Typewriter Ribbon" when rebutting Paul de Man's reading of Rousseau's *Confessions*. Derrida's argument largely turns on two crucial omissions in de Man's account of Rousseau: 1) Rousseau's *Confessions* bear a striking similarity to those of Augustine, particularly with respect to a pivotal theft that takes place in the second book of each work, a crime that in both cases takes place at the age of sixteen, and 2) that Rousseau's *Confessions* implores its reader to carefully preserve its *cahier*, or archive for posterity (80). Derrida's analysis, as the title of his lecture admits, centers primarily on Rousseau's ribbons. Neither Augustine nor Rousseau steals out of necessity, and neither is particularly concerned with the innocuous object they stole: pears in case of Augustine, and a ribbon in the case of Rousseau. Insistent, Derrida calls these objects "objectively trifling," in each case an "apparently insignificant theft," and even a "useless theft" (80-81). Derrida's

analysis of these pears then analogizes them to a fetish object when he writes that “No more than its immediate *use value*, Augustine and Rousseau likewise do not covet the *exchange value* of the stolen object, at least not in the banal sense of the term. The very act of stealing becomes the object of desire” (81). But Derrida (unlike de Man), with the qualifier “apparently,” stops short of calling these objects “free” or “empty” signifiers – instead casting them as objects of “substitution” or “inheritance” (115). From this Derrida turns towards the addressee of the confession, who, he argues, is the “very gesture of stealing” (81).

But is it the case that the privative “gesture” of stealing, in Augustine, is the object of desire? Derrida cites the following passage as an apostrophe of this theft: “What was it that I, a wretch, loved in you, my act of theft, my deed of crime done by night” (II.6.12, 30). But Derrida, suggesting this apostrophe persists throughout the pears episode, omits how the very next line overtly short-circuits the preceding apostrophe with another turn: “You were not beautiful, for you were but an act of thievery. In truth, *are you anything at all, that I may speak to you?*” (II.6.12, 30) It is as if Augustine has stopped mid-apostrophe to draw attention to its catachrestic nature – indeed Augustine’s apostrophe is only there to *discredit* ‘theft’ as an appropriate addressee. Only once theft is shuffled off the stage does Augustine reveal the true culprit. He asks again, what was this crime done out of love for? And in response we are given more than a single answer. Two (apparently) incommensurate statements are repeated throughout the pears episode:

- 1) as Derrida tells us, “I loved my fault, not that for which I did the fault, but I loved my fault itself” (II.4.9, 28)
- 2) “Yet *alone*, by myself, I would not have done it [...] alone I would never have done it” (II.8.16, 33).

Derrida's analysis never addresses the *public* element of this theft, even though Augustine increasingly repeats it as the pears confession progresses. We must remember, Derrida's primary concern is de Man, and Rousseau's ribbon. Even as Derrida goads his friend de Man for having failed to read for the similitudes between Rousseau's ribbon and Augustine's pears Derrida himself references only two (of ten) chapters Augustine devoted to this theft.<sup>26</sup>

But as we will soon discover, Derrida's readings of Augustine's *Confessions* are heavily influenced by its publicity even if he never explicitly wrote about it. Based on Augustine's statement (*I never would have done it alone*) it is quite possible to read these pears as a figure of publicity right from the start. If we account for all ten chapters of the pears episode, we find that the crime is not necessarily a theft at all, but a *fornication*. From the very first chapter the public figuration of these pears is at work. Augustine writes: "In the *bitterness* [*amaritudine*] of remembrance, I tread again in my most evil ways, so that you may grow *sweet* [*dulcescas*] to me, *O sweetness* [*dulcedo*] that never fails, *O sweetness* [*dulcedo*] happy and enduring, which gathers me together from that disordered state in which I lay in shattered pieces, wherein, *turned away* [*aversus*] from you" because, he continues, "I desired to be pleasing to the eyes of men" (II.i.1). In the second chapter, amidst Augustine's confession of his fleshly fornications, he is already setting the stage for these pears: "I wandered farther away from you, and you let me go. I was tossed about and spilt out in my fornications; I flowed out and boiled over in them, but you kept silent [...] farther and farther I went from you, into more and more *fruitless seedings* [*serilia semina*] of sorrow" (II.ii.2). Thus, once Augustine's little pears have reached the table, we have already been made ready for their arrival. And once the fourth chapter introduces these pears in earnest we are told that the crime at work is not theft but the enjoyment of "a glut of evil doing"

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<sup>26</sup> Based on Derrida's references, he is selecting exclusively from chapters four and six.

(II.4.9, p. 28). If we read further, we are even told the object of this “glut” is a fornication with his little rabble of friends:

Late one night – to which hour, according to our pestential custom, we had kept up our street games – a group of very bad youngsters set out to shake down and rob this tree.

We took great loads of fruit from it, not for our own eating, but rather to throw it to the pigs; even if we did eat a little of it, we did this to do what pleased us for the reason that it was forbidden (II.4.9).

Of course, what we have here is a re-enactment of the original sin, but with a difference – this theft is public rather than privative. Even well into the sixth chapter, Augustine continues to frame the pears theft as a “rebellion against you” because “the soul commits fornication when it is *turned away* [*avertitur*] from you” (II.vi.14). As Augustine continues it becomes increasingly clear that his love for this theft stems from this *avertitur*, his desire for his partners in crime:

For the theft itself was nothing, and by that very fact I was all the more miserable. Yet alone, by myself, I would not have done it—such, I remember, was my state of mind at that time—alone I would never have done it. Therefore, I *also loved in it my association with the others with whom I did the deed*. Then it was not only the theft that I loved? No, truly, nothing else, because *my association with others was itself nothing* (II.8.16, p. 33).

The increasingly winding and elliptical regression exemplified in this passage will persist until the close of the pears episode. Augustine’s pears theft is empty due to a disavowal of Augustine’s own publicness – even to the point to which he declares his “association with others” to be itself “nothing”. Augustine stresses, again and again, how this little group is the most dangerous affront to God. This is because his love of God has fallen from its perch, and

has taken up residence in the hands of his public. And as Augustine's confession enters its eighth chapter, his previous wording (that this was a theft *of* nothing) slips to the words "the theft itself *was* nothing" (II.8.16). Augustine's confession is slowly uncovering that theft never really had anything to do with it.

With the publicity of these pears in mind, Derrida's "Typewriter Ribbon" yields new threads with respect to the confession's *cahier*, which Derrida posits as critical to its event. For Derrida, the *cahier* acts as a body, or a notebook, for the confession that enables it to be archived and he notes how, in Rousseau's *Confessions*, the singularity and the vulnerability of the confession's *cahier* becomes central (142). The reader is solicited by "another performative oath or, rather, another performative appeal *conjuring, beseeching* others to swear an oath, but this time regarding a body, a *cahier*, this *here cahier* of this *here* body in a single copy, a single *exemplaire*, unique and authentic" (142). The *cahier* is a precious yet artificial document. On the one hand, the *cahier* must be singular in its exemplarity to be an authentic confession, and yet on the other hand, the pages of the confession may be tampered with and corrupted by any passers-by. However, Derrida suggests that as a figural device these pears may themselves be their very own form of *cahier*:

The genealogical tree of a more or less literary lineage that would begin with the theft, from some tree, in the literal or figural sense, of some forbidden fruit. A tree with leaves or a tree without leaves that produced so many leaves of paper, manuscript paper and typing paper (83).

Quite unlike Rousseau, Augustine has little or no concern for the text of his confession as a vulnerable body of paper. Derrida suggests that perhaps these pears are the true *cahier* when he champions them as an opening within Rousseau's confessional archive. Augustine's pears

supplement Rousseau's (and Augustine's) confessional archives as, Derrida writes, a "narrative knot, as if to knot a ribbon around a basket of pears" (82).

What then is the lesson offered by these little pieces of fruit? Augustine's apostrophe of his theft, his turn to address theft itself, is imbricated within a set of invocations of God. Indeed, it is on account of these invocations that these little publics (Augustine's childhood thieves) become an object of address at all. At the close of the second book, one such invocation even serves as the grounds from which these little public seedlings begin to speak:

This would have pleased me not at all if I had done it alone; nor by myself would I have done it at all. O friendship too unfriendly! Unfathomable seducer of the mind, greed to do harm for fun and sport, desire for another's injury, arising not from desire for my own gain or vengeance, but merely when someone says, "Let's go! Let's do it!" and it is shameful not to be shameless! (II.9.17, p. 34)

To paraphrase, the crucial part of Augustine's alibi is how it repeats the line: 'I would never have done this if not for my public!' In this way, Augustine brings his public into the confession booth right along with him. Augustine's invocation is formed as a split address to both God *and* (more indirectly) his public. At a certain point, Augustine points out at his audience, bestowing them with a voice, and makes them accomplices to his very own excuse-mechanism. In other words, the seeds of a public *proposon* are embedded within Augustine's pears. Note however that the invocatory gesture "O friendship too unfriendly!" may be distinguished from the *prosopeic* gesture "Let's go! Let's go do it!" The invocation not only is distinct in terms of its (earlier) placement in the passage, it also sets the stage for the *proposon* that follows through a realignment of the address.

But this may also be the precise point at which Augustine's confession becomes what Derrida designates as an "*impossible* event". Derrida's analysis of confession insists that the excuse-machine invariably becomes tied in "knots" (82). *Circumfession* describes the confessional archive as elliptical and open, a "process" which must be interminably "refined" because every confession reinstitutes another criminal act (44). This is the circumcision within the confession, in Derrida's words, a "mark [by which] he is inscribed in a community, whether he wants it or not" (21). But the circumscription of the subject into a "community" by the confession may be applied more broadly as a circumscription of publicity onto the invocation of the Other. Even into its last chapter, Augustine's pear confession remains tangled in a "knot" of publicity that, despite his best efforts, Augustine cannot confess or imagine his way out of. Immediately after Augustine laments the temptation of these partners in crime he writes: "Who can untie this most twisted and intricate mass of *knots*? It is a filthy thing: I do not wish to think about it; I do not wish to look upon it" (II.10.18, 34). Why are these little public pears causing Augustine's confession so much turmoil? On one hand, the moral of this pear episode has been to teach Augustine's immediate audience to beware the dangers of earthly fornications. And on the other hand, in doing this, Augustine discovers that he has re-committed his fornication in allowing his little friends spectate. A knot indeed. Augustine is left with only one recourse to extricate himself – a reaffirmation of his supposedly singular relation to the Other that takes the form of a *direct address* – "I desire you, O justice and innocence [...] I fell away from you, my God, and I went astray" (II.10.18, p. 34). Derrida picks up on something similar in Rousseau's opening book, writing that "the apostrophe or the invocation is *address directly* to God" (141, my emphasis). At this juncture, Derrida's notion of invocation is no different than Lacan's – but not for long.

No more than a page later, Derrida writes that Rousseau's plea to preserve his confessional archive "*convokes* and *conjures* every reader to come, sooner or later. It asks whoever might be in a situation to do so *not to destroy* this document, this archive, this subjectile, the support of this confession—literally a notebook, a *cahier*" (142). Likewise, Augustine's last ditch effort to patch things up with his big Other is itself written in a forked tongue. Lyotard's observation that the *Confessions* repeatedly "punctuates and suspends its procedure with invocation" suggests this is in no way confined to the pears episode (67). What Lyotard noticed was that Augustine's solution, the invocation of God, was indeed the culprit circumscribing these little knotted publics right from the start.

Our publics may not be reduced to empirical entities on the one hand, nor pure fantasies on the other. Let us return to Lacan's notion of a symbolic invocation of the Other with Augustine's pears in mind. As Derrida's wordplay suggests, Augustine's knot of publicity teaches us that in every invocation of the Other there is, already harbored within its realignment of address, a *convocation* of a public. Not unlike how Lacan began to articulate a radical fragmentation of the Father in his unfinished seminar on "The Names of the Father," the role of publicity in Augustine's *Confessions* is made possible by a splitting of what Lacan called the *agalma* of the voice. The rhetorical figure of invocation facilitates the fragmentation of the *object a* in the locus of the Other through the proliferation of alternative voices, of which publics are exemplary. In this way the invocation cannot simply invoke its God in a vacuum, rather, it carves out the space for a voiceless witness. Publics aren't just public – they are operative at the most private levels of the unconscious, and the force of publicity is at work even before they are properly formed by circulation and uptake. From this, we can ask new questions. Rather than just "How are publics fashioned by circulation and uptake?" we may also ask "What is my

public doing for me?” or “How does publicity restructure the equation between the subject and the Other?” But with new questions we can also review a few new answers. 1) Public voice is forged as a remainder of the invocatory device, 2) while invocation is a necessary condition for public speech must not be conflated with *prosopopeia*, and 3) every invocation is necessarily a convocation, a partitioning, and *aversion to* the voice of the Other as what Lacan called an “essential object”. Rhetorically, the invocation of the Other doesn’t invoke the big Other so much as a *polemics within sublimation* by pitting one sublimated object against another. But while Augustine’s pears confession exhibits a kind of polemics between objects (that tortured his pears confession perpetually) it also raises another aspect of the public object in our *fornication* with it. What does it mean, exactly, to *fornicate* or *love* one’s public and how does this implicate how we theorize public formation?

## CHAPTER 3

### THE TRAP OF PUBLICITY

*“This essay has a public. If you are reading (or hearing) this, you are part of its public.*

*So first let me say: welcome.”*

*- Michael Warner*

Michael Warner’s little trap for his reader, “This essay has a public,” are perhaps the most unassailable words in rhetorical studies today. The words anticipate our entrapment, and it seems as if we are already trapped in the instant we encounter them. Warner’s public has inducted us in-advance in a way that forms itself with or without our assent, and whether or not we can muster the rebuttal: “No, I am not part of your public!” Of course, the reader always has the option of putting down the book, but does this really excommunicate us from *his* public? And is arguing with this trap not just another mode of induction? If I were to close the text, would the memory of its words not linger? It would seem it is futile to argue against, or even to ignore, Warner’s little public. The lure of Warner’s theory of circulation holds such purchase that David Wittenberg, in an effort to “respond” to what he called “Michael Warner’s powerful analysis,” admitted he would not even attempt “to add something of my own to his already expansive argument, nor [suggest] that anything in the argument might be taken away[.]” (426) Wittenberg’s response to Warner’s notion of circulation is, I suspect, where the rest of us remain today.

But in stark contrast to the self-assured opening line “This essay has a public,” the book version of Warner’s *Publics and Counterpublics* opened with the more doubtful “Publics are

queer creatures. You cannot point to them, count them, or look them in the eye. You also cannot easily avoid them.” (7) Warner’s point, that we cannot “look our publics in the eye,” is never truer than when they are sitting right in front of us. This chapter will insist more forcefully on this point, not by arguing against Warner, but by arguing with him. My argument is this: our notion of circulation is not yet circular enough – at least insofar as it has been taken up. Indeed, Warner himself was the first to admit this when he wrote, “I missed a crucial element in the perception of publicness. In order for a text to be public, we must recognize it not simply as a diffusion to strangers but also as a temporality of circulation.” (94) Based on this oversight, Warner would add a sense of intermittence to the circulation of texts in public spaces. However, a “temporality of circulation” may be pressed much further. Indeed, I suspect that circulation’s “temporality,” taken in a strong sense, suggests a kind of pathway set in advance of the circulation of the text itself. Much like the words “This essay has a public,” it is as if we are hooked before we pick up anything Warner wrote at all. To theorize this strange dynamic, I draw upon Lacan’s notion of the transference to radicalize the rhetorical dimensions of uptake and circulation. I will proceed in two sections. Section one, entitled “Rhetorical Uptake” argues that the Lacanian notion of “transference” supplements Warner’s theory of publics with a notion of uptake (if we can still call it that) in the middle voice, and a kind of rhetorical circularity working alongside the circulation of the text itself. Section two turns to Plato’s *Symposium*, reading alongside Lacan and others, for lessons articulating the “transference love” of psychoanalysis to what publicity theorists call “uptake.” Specifically, section two addresses three episodes from the *Symposium*: the hiccups of Aristophanes, the invocation of Diotima, and finally the *agalmata* of Alcibiades. In sum, I argue that the theorization of public formation must attend not only to the circulation of texts in spaces but also a radical “temporality of circulation,”

a circulation involved in the sublimation of texts themselves. The import of a rhetorical notion of uptake is located in its potential to upend the position accorded to critical publics in rhetorical scholarship. In other words, until we are able to fully understand Warner's *trap* for his public, our theorization of publics – even with all the texts we have today – will have not yet begun.

### **From Uptake to Rhetorical Uptake**

The resilience of Warner's argument is in part due to its unabashed circularity. The very first condition of Warner's theory is the self-organization of publics, or that publics are an autotelic end in themselves. Warner's first rule of public formation is that publics exist "*by virtue of being addressed*" (italicized as if it were a necessary or even sufficient condition). (67) But before even exploring this condition, the one given utmost primacy, Warner's analysis abruptly segues to another issue in the very next line – the "chicken-and-egg circularity" of publics. (67) Publics, for him, are both imaginary and real, both phenomenal and epiphenomenal--and he repeats this point tirelessly. (12) Crucial to this autotelic publicity is Warner's notion of publics as "text-based" insofar as the "idea of texts" serves as an "addressable object" for imagining publics. (67-8) Hence, for Warner, the "idea of texts" distributed in space serves as the locus around which the circular imagination of publics is made possible. Yet even Warner's explicit effort to temporalize circulation is figured exclusively in spatial terms. Curiously, Warner's account casts the "idea of texts," not *the* text but its *idea*, as if it were circulating in the same (spatial) way as the text itself. Warner races through the entailments of this "chicken," the addressable object, in order to get back to the textual "egg." The proverbial "chicken," of course, is nothing other or less than the rhetorical staging of (public) address itself--the desire to address a public or to imagine a public at all. The entailment of which is that the rhetoricity to the operation of uptake is subordinated to an almost exclusive

emphasis upon the text. (14) In other words, the problem with Warner's "chicken-and-egg circularity" is that it never was a circularity. There are of course some easy ways out of chicken-and-egg controversies: for one, stop discussing poultry.

The notion of uptake has a history that can serve as a basis for identifying the precise limitations of today's notions of circulation and uptake.<sup>27</sup> J.L. Austin was perhaps the first to italicize *uptake* as a basic condition of the illocutionary act:

I cannot be said to have warned an audience unless it hears what I say and takes what I say in a certain sense. An effect must be achieved on the audience if the illocutionary act is to be carried out[....] So the performance of an illocutionary act involves the securing of *uptake*." (Austin, 117)

On this view, in order for speech to have any effect it must secure an audience. And of course, the illocutionary act is originated in the speaker or institution that speaks. In Anne Freadman's words, uptake is "what happens when you accept an invitation," which emphasizes the speaker's "intention" in soliciting a certain "class of uptakes." (39-40) The active voice of the speaker is paired with active voice of the auditor. Whatever points of divergence there may be between Warner's version of uptake and the one espoused by speech act theory, the active voice of uptake remains a point of correspondence. But even for speech act theorists, uptake isn't quite this simple. Freadman cautions that uptake requires "the step in which our uptake selects, defines, or represents its object." (48) Even before the *deed* of uptake is secured there is a problem of how

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<sup>27</sup> This is not meant to suggest that speech act theory is the only approach to uptake that may be found. In Foucaultian nomenclature "uptake" was clothed in different terminology, for instance the phrase "*systems of dispersion*." (Foucault, AK, 37) Toby Miller claimed the episteme as a space of dispersion in order to question what type of subject is called-up by a given institutional discourse concluding that the "permission to differ" is either condoned or excluded by the "dominant group." (Miller, 175, 18, 216) This view similarly begs the question: are discourses themselves not taken up? If the deck is stacked by the institution, what accounts for the difference between positive and negative uptakes? To posit discourse as immune to different uptakes would assume only a single discourse: that of the Master.

its object is being selected.<sup>28</sup> It is therefore possible to see how Warner's notion of circulation is deeply implicated in the active voice common to speech act theory. Notably, one entailment is circulation's indebtedness to a linear temporality: first there is speech and *only then* can we have uptake. As a consequence, the investigation of uptake is restricted to the one-dimensional question of whether a text has, from a quasi-empirical perspective, been taken up or not. We can be sure that Warner's notion of circulation is predicated on this linear concept of uptake because it is exhibited in at least two of Warner's most celebrated examples: Althusser's "hail" and the instance of private "gossip."

Oddly enough, in both the "hail" and "gossip," the linear notion of uptake is the basis for a theoretical exclusion: neither Althusser's "hail" nor private "gossip" qualify as instances of public discourse. First, of Althusser's "hail" Warner writes, "the case Althusser gives is not an example of public discourse. A policeman who says 'Hey, you!' will be understood to be addressing a particular person, not a public[...] all the others who might be standing on the street are bystanders, not addressees." (77) Warner's claim makes perfect sense if we confine ourselves to a purely linear notion of address. Recall that for Warner publics are both absolutely conditioned upon their being addressed to "indefinite strangers" but not particular persons or mere bystanders. (74) To be properly public, Althusser's "hail" must be taken as addressed to us and to strangers, but Warner confidently asserts that this "hail" *will* be understood only to be addressing a particular person. Erin Rand's study of the polemical form suggests that Warner's confidence in the predictability of uptake (from the speaker's perspective) may be misplaced.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> The problem here goes to the distinction between the process of securing one's object and the consequence of having already established one's audience. The difference, in part, is due to the a-rhetorical emphasis upon illocution in speech act theory. See Andrew Munro, "Reading Austin Rhetorically," *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 46 (2013): 22-43, 23.

<sup>29</sup> The argument that I forward here is indebted in significant respects to Rand's notion of rhetorical agency which purports (in principal) a radically unpredictable gap between the composition of a text and its future uptakes. My

Perhaps even if our policeman directs his hail to a particular person, bystanders will nonetheless take themselves as indefinite strangers. Anyone paying attention to the police brutality against African Americans in the United States in recent years knows this. I am thinking of the slaying of Trayvon Martin and the escalation of violence in Ferguson, Missouri following the shooting of Michael Brown. Of course, the state or the officer may view these as isolated incidents – as hails directed at particular persons – but was it not possible for supposed bystanders to this violence to read themselves into the controversy?

Warner excludes privative gossip on the same grounds, but the linear temporality of uptake convolutes his analysis again. Gossip, Warner admits, is a strange thing to exclude from publicity because “It circulates widely among a social network, beyond the control of private individuals.” (78) Warner concludes that mere circulation of a text is not enough because “gossip is never a relation among strangers.” (78) Yet only a page later, Warner performs an about-face because: “An apparent exception is gossip about public figures.” (79) Why the exception? Gossip shows that the mere circulation of texts in space is an insufficient condition for forming a public. Well... *unless* it is being taken up *as if* it were public anyway. Just as with Althusser’s “hail,” neither Warner nor his “text” are in a position to make the determination of whether we are dealing with proper strangers or mere bystanders. This distinction is integral to Warner’s discussion of uptake, which I will quote extensively:

The cognitive quality of that attention is less important than the mere fact of *active* uptake. Attention is the principal sorting category by which members and nonmembers

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efforts here are an attempt to supplement the theoretical moves Rand introduced. I would generally consider Rand’s theorizations as setting essential, perhaps even sufficient, foundations for theorizing uptake rhetorically. Where I part ways with Rand may be in the extent to which the unpredictability of uptake appears radical in practice. I remain unconvinced that a polemicist receiving rebuttals from academics is all that surprising, much less radically unpredictable. As I will soon mention, this is where I believe transference becomes useful insofar as it differentiates between the relative predictability of some uptakes in comparison to others.

are discriminated. If you are reading this, or hearing it or seeing it or present for it, you are part of this public. You might be multitasking at the computer; the television might be on while you are vacuuming the carpet; *or you might have wandered into hearing range of the speaker's podium in a convention hall only because it was on your way to the bathroom.* No matter: by coming into range you fulfill the only entry condition demanded by a public. It is even possible for us to understand someone sleeping through a ballet performance as a member of that ballet's public because most contemporary ballet performances are organized as *voluntary* events, open to anyone willing to attend or, in most cases, to pay to attend. The *act* of attention involved in showing up is enough to create an addressable public. But some kind of *active* uptake—however somnolent—is indispensable. (87-88, my emphasis)

Warner's examples are both comic and tragic. After all, does anyone really "wander" to the bathroom and stop to listen to a speech? I guess they didn't have to go *that bad*. But beneath the comic exterior lies a serious and pressing question: can uptake be thought as anything other than a simple, empirical, matter-of-fact?<sup>30</sup> Ironically, a similar thing happened to me before writing these words. Walking by a "free speech zone" on campus I was greeted with the words: "Hello! How are you doing today?" I heard the words, I understood them and, on Warner's terms, I technically 'took them up'. But I ignored them nonetheless. Why? *I thought she was on her*

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<sup>30</sup> Christian Lundberg has phrased the question in a slightly different way: "what is at work in the text or mode of affinity in question doing for the subjects that perform it?" (Lundberg, 127) Lundberg's insistence upon the symbolic register has begun to articulate Lacanian psychoanalysis to Warner's notion of circulation. Lundberg argues that "Attention to a text does not only refer inward, by nature such practices also gesture or turn (tropos) outward toward the whole economy of trope and enjoyment that makes a text a site for the production of enjoyment." (Lundberg, 127) For Lundberg, a necessary prerequisite to the constitution of a public is a split in the subject between "their status as unique individuals" and "their status as public subjects interpolated by the circulation of mediated texts[.]" (Lundberg, 135) The latter part of this is odd, because Warner explicitly excludes Althusser's hail from his category of publics. In this case, Lundberg performs the rhetoricity of uptake even more than he describes it. Once again, Warner's "bystanders" have become Lundberg's "strangers" once they have been taken up.

*cellphone*. I had inadvertently taken myself as a mere bystander to an address to me-as-stranger. *I'm so sorry lady! I swear I didn't mean it!* Misfires like this are comical, but the serious point is this: The only true bystander to the formation of publics is the circulating text itself. In shifting emphasis from circulation to uptake, the central question shifts from whether the text circulates to me to *why I circulated to it*. There is more to the question than the simple empirical issue of whether “I did” or “did not” stop to listen on my way to the bathroom. If we have three people headed to the bathroom, why does one stop to listen, another to heckle, while a third trots right on by as if nothing happened? What makes *this* speaker someone worth listening to? After all, I *do* have more pressing business! Of course, you can ask me why I stopped, but incurs problems of self-reporting and self-analysis. Can we be sure that I am reporting my desire faithfully?

The theorization of uptake requires a temporality of circulation in a stronger, more rhetorical, sense. That is to say that the “addressable object” of publicity is rhetorically set in-advance of its own constitution. An explanation of how Warner’s “welcome” operates as a trap for *his* public, and how we may be captured by it even before having a chance to imagine it, entails addressing uptake (and ultimately publics themselves) at the level of the unconscious. If the pathway of the circulating text has been (rhetorically) set in-advance of its own circulation, it entails reconsidering of the centrality of circulation itself. In one sense, simply suggesting a role for rhetoric within uptake displaces the central question of analysis from “was this text taken up?” to “why this text and not another?” But beyond adjusting the line of questioning, what would a theory of rhetorical uptake entail? Fortunately, to theorize rhetorical uptake we don’t need to start from scratch. From the very start psychoanalytic theory offered a model for a more rhetorical notion of “uptake” in its explorations and analytical struggles with the “transference.”

To speak of “uptake” in psychoanalytic terms like the “transference” (or cathexis) replaces the active voice of the speech act for a middle voice. On the one hand, psychoanalysis’ conception of transference is deeply rhetorical, since even classical Roman rhetorical treatises selected the term “transference” in their effort to translate the Greek term “metaphor” into Latin texts.<sup>31</sup> This is to say that transference, even when uttered by psychoanalysts, has always had a rhetorical tilt, at the very least it has never been confined to the couch. On the other hand, psychoanalytic transference endows uptake with a stronger temporal circularity. The relationship between the analyst and analysand appears (as if) it is established before ever walking in the door, the metaphor which connects the analyst to an authority figure (the father) appears to be set in advance of the session itself. Freud described the temporal dimension of the transference as a “series” of experiences “revived” in the present moment of the analysis. (138)

Indeed, the psychoanalytic notion of transference has at no point been confined within the walls of the analyst’s office. It was Freud himself who defined transference as the emergence of an *external* dynamic within the analytic situation. At the conclusion of his case study with Dora, Freud introduced the transference as a “reprint” of the analysand’s desire that had been substituted (aka. metaphor) onto the analyst:

What are transferences? They are new editions or fascimiles of the impulses and phantasies which are aroused and made conscious during the progress of the analysis; but they have this peculiarity, which is characteristic for their species, that they replace some earlier person by the person of the physician. To put it another way: a whole

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<sup>31</sup> I am referencing here how transference was a preferred translation of metaphor into Roman rhetorical treatises, particularly in *Rhetorica ad Herennium*. Another useful quality of the transference (for rhetoricians) is in how it offers a way to fluidly transition between rhetoric-as-tropology and rhetoric-as-persuasion by placing rhetoric at both the level of the ‘text’ and the instance of its uptake. This is exhibited in Mikkel Borch-Jacobsen’s claim that the transference effect is intimately bound to persuasion (or suggestion).

series of psychological experiences are revived, not as belonging to the past, but as applying to the person of the physician at the present moment. Some of the transferences have a content which differs from that of their model in no respect whatever except for the substitution. These then—to keep the same metaphor—are merely new impressions or reprints. (Freud, 138)

Freud was explicit: the transference is *not* found exclusively in the analytic situation.<sup>32</sup> No more than a page following this definition, Freud reminds his reader that “Psycho-analytic treatment does not *create* transferences, it merely brings them to light,” and he even casts the transference in terms of uptake by describing it as pivoting on what the patient had or had not “called up.” (Freud, 139)

Following Freud, Lacan’s notion of *objet petit a* as an object-cause of desire recasts the transference of experiences (from outside the analyst’s door) as a metalepsis that takes the object of desire not only as the effect of desire, but also as its cause. (*Seminar X*, 108) Lacan defines the basic condition of transference as the “subject supposed to know” (*sujet supposé savoir*) and observes that “this function may be, for the subject, embodied in some individual, whether or not an analyst” with the resulting consequence being “love.” (Lacan, FFC, 232-233, 253) As with any lover (give me what you know I want – I shouldn’t have to tell you), the psychoanalyst is positioned as “knowing” the elusive contents of the analysand’s desire. And as with any instance of love, James Penney tells us, the *supposition* involved in the transference can have either a “positive” or “negative” impact on the dynamic between the analyst and analysand:

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<sup>32</sup> This point of view, while in Freud, is made more explicit by Penney, who contends that the ethical, political, and aesthetic ramifications of transference extend beyond the narrow confines of clinical analysis.

I gamely *suppose* that the analyst knows the elusive contents of my desire (Freud's "positive" transference), and when I complain hysterically that the analyst *is supposed* to know but does not, that both her technique and the knowledge on which it rests are fraudulent or even insidious ("negative"). (23-4)

Like Warner's "welcome," the transference sets a clever trap for the analyst. The question of knowledge here is purely secondary to the question of supposition. In either case, regardless of whether the analyst knows or not, the analyst has been *positioned as if* they were supposed to know (desire) in-advance. Like "uptake," the transference deals with how this analyst has been taken up, but this analysand's act is less active than (pre)supposed. To analogize, the transference serves the same function as the "door" of the psychoanalyst's office. The transference is a rhetorical operation which arrives at the analyst's "door" unsolicited, a (fallacious) metaphorical articulation that the analysand performs between the figure of the analyst and their own symbolic authority (lover, father, master, or any other instantiation of the big Other). The analyst's supposed knowledge is not only what brings the patient to this "door;" it is also the condition upon which a frustrated patient might turn around and walk out once again. In this way, the transference names the liminal space necessary to conduct, revise, and even abolish analysis.

But whereas much of psychoanalysis took the transference as a threat to the psychoanalytic cure, Lacan framed it as absolutely necessary to analytical progress. While psychoanalysts dating back to Freud himself acknowledged the necessity of the transference as a baseline for analysis (keeping the analysand in the room), Lacan's position was unique insofar as it stressed the dialectical tensions introduced by the transference. Lacan's intervention insisted upon the potential reversibility of the clinical positions of the analyst and analysand. Reading

the Dora episode, Lacan explained that “*psychoanalysis is a dialectical experience*” and charted how the analysis became productive only by way of a repetitious series of dialectical reversals between Freud and Dora. (Lacan, *Ecits*, 177) In other words, a crucial difference between Freudian and Lacanian modes of analysis is that for the latter the *positions* of the analyst and analysand are interminably unstable. Indeed Bruce Fink’s translation of Lacan’s “Presentation on Transference” saw fit to characterize the efficacy of these dialectical reversals as a (re)enactment of Dora’s capture in the “circulation” of “precious gifts.” (179) Fink’s word choice should strike a chord that suggests that this mis-take of the transference becomes an analytical maneuver that elucidates the pathway of the analysand’s object of desire. In other words, the dynamic that productively agitates Freud’s analysis, one that Lacan tells us suffers from a blindness to homosexual desire, is the prospect that Dora might *circulate* right out the door. (182) Lacan observes that “Dora leaves with a *Mona Lisa* smile and even when she reappears, Freud is not so naïve as to believe she intends to resume her analysis.” (183) This “moment of stagnation” facilitated by the transference and the “lure” of interpretation caused Lacan to conclude that the true analytical value of the transference was in “indicating the moments where the analyst goes astray and takes anew his bearings.” (184)<sup>33</sup> The very moment he faced Dora’s “fortnight’s warning,” Freud’s own analysis found renewed vigor. (Freud, 127) Furthermore, even as Freud would fail to present Dora with an acceptable cure in the last session, he would nonetheless continue his analysis after she had left the room. In Freud’s “Postscript,” Dora’s exit would serve as the impetus behind Freud’s introduction of the transference. And, as if Freud had turned to address this “door” even after Dora’s exit, Freud would write (in his own

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<sup>33</sup> There is a potential homology between Lacan’s point about psychoanalysis as a dialectical experience and Derrida’s playful discussion the *tranche* of transference, the cutting, splitting, or intermittence of the psychoanalytic session. Each approach, in their own way, places an emphasis upon the position of the “door” or more appropriately the prospect of public alternatives to the analyst’s authority.

defense), “No one who disdains the key will ever be able to unlock the door.” (136) In this way, the analyst’s “interpretation” served not as a “cure” as much as a “lure” to re-establish the dialectical torque of analysis, and it was a lure not only for Dora but for Freud himself insofar as the interminability of analysis had forced a revision of his own position.<sup>34</sup> More recently, Jacques Alain Miller has contended that “The age of interpretation is behind us” in a similar spirit.<sup>35</sup> Miller’s critique targets the inclination to view the analytical situation as imbued with a set of static empirically verifiable positions:

It is a lure, and even an impasse, to unilateralize interpretation on the side of the analyst, as his intervention, his action, his act, his statement [*son dit*], his saying [*son dire*]. People have probably been too fixated on the *speech act* of the analyst [...] Analytic theories of interpretation merely attest to the narcissism of analysts [...] it is the unconscious that interprets. (Miller, 4)

The rhetoric of the psychoanalyst’s “interpretation” then is not so much imbricated within the illocutionary speech of the analyst’s declaration but in its perlocutionary force. That is, even as the “interpretation” enacts a presumptuous narcissism, what it can do *in its uptake* is to jump-start a stalled series of analytical reversals. This notion of analysis turns upon a series of rhetorical articulations embedded within uptake itself rather than in the avowed ‘position’ of the analyst. In short, the rhetoric of the transference pits the “subject supposed to know” against the

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<sup>34</sup> Derrida’s *Resistances of Psychoanalysis* discusses what I call the interminability of analysis in terms of a resistance to the solution or interpretation of the analyst. Derrida writes of a “*politics* of a *polemos* and an *eros*, in the seduction—let us risk the word—of an irreducible *poleros*.” (9) Derrida’s polemics that occurs within the psychoanalytic transference is kin to what I have called a polemics within sublimation. More generally however, Derrida argues that “deconstruction is also the interminable drama of analysis.” (29)

<sup>35</sup> Miller, “Interpretation in Reverse,” in *The Later Lacan*, 4. For Miller, the strongest aspect of Lacanian psychoanalysis is that “He tried some things that he went back on; he contradicted himself from one week to the next. And so nothing [...] can be read as a manual[.]” (“Everyone is Mad,” 18)

“public” lingering outside the office door in ways that are productive of a dialectically fluid *public-analyst*. Such is the prospective lure offered by a rhetorical notion of uptake: that our efforts might not just be aimed at the fabrication of (imaginary) *critical* publics, but that the publics we ‘already have’ might be finessed into (real) *analytical* devices.

But we must also be cautious of analogies between clinical and rhetorical situations in exploring transference as a modality of rhetorical uptake. Early efforts to integrate psychoanalytic transference into rhetorical criticism attempted to link players in a rhetorical situation, all too hastily, to clinical positions. More than three decades ago Loyd S. Pettegrew, working from a Burkean perspective, attributed the transference dynamic to static analytical positions.<sup>36</sup> But to graft the label of “analyst” upon the “audience” or the “patient” upon the “speaker” (or vice versa) is both beside the point and outright counterproductive. Barbara Biesecker’s rethinking of the rhetorical situation through the thematic of *différance* reminds us that both options remain embedded within a “logic of influence.” (110) Fixing the analyst and analysand onto the rhetorical situation as “constituent elements” is no different than taking the positions of speaker and audience as given in advance. (Biesecker, 110-112) Quite unlike the (idealized and carefully controlled) clinical situation, the rhetorician does not always walk into a room where the “subject supposed to know” is identifiable from the outset. The position of this ‘analyst’ may be fluid, indeed, the inability to pin down our ‘analyst’ may even be exactly what we want. In short, the (static) clinical situation is no substitute for the rhetorical one. When I happen upon a speech there is no guarantee that this speaker is seating themselves on my couch

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<sup>36</sup> Incidentally, Pettegrew’s effort to incorporate the transference into a Burkean analysis of motives also made reference to Lacan. (52) We should take a cautionary note from Pettegrew’s early efforts. Pursuing a methodology for the speaker’s “motives,” Pettegrew hastily grafted the terminology of the clinical situation onto the nomenclature associated with the rhetorical situation. (53) For Pettegrew, the speaker is drafted into the role of an analysand as if by empirical default. Likewise, the concrete audience is accorded the position of the analyst. I must also warn that it would be equally fallacious to reverse Pettegrew’s attributions and articulate the analyst-to-speaker and analysand-to-audience.

any more than the other way around. These transference dynamics are subject to a logic of articulation rather than a logic of influence and must be read with something more in mind. The “structural positions” of psychoanalysis are themselves *products* rather than *essences*.

### **Rhetorical Uptake in Plato’s *Symposium***

A theory of rhetorical uptake requires an ability to tap into psychoanalytic experience without abdicating the logics of articulation that particularize rhetorical situations. To this end, Lacan’s reading of Plato’s *Symposium* in Seminar VIII is one of a few, if not the only, opportunity to accomplish such task. Not incidentally, Lacan’s effort to analogize the clinical situation to the *Symposium*<sup>37</sup> inadvertently tailored its exploration of the transference to a *rhetorical* situation. The brilliance of Lacan’s engagement with the transference in *Seminar VIII* is that by starting with the *Symposium*, a rhetorical situation, he effectively placed the structural givens of the clinical situation under erasure. Hence the *Symposium* offers a unique opportunity to chart a play of transference reversals on a more ‘public’ scene since it is not only an exceptional example of a widely circulated text (in time and space), and not only a text taken up in a host of different ways, but it is also a text that dramatizes the intricacies of rhetorical uptake in its very characters and storyline. The *Symposium* dramatizes key facets of rhetorical uptake in three separate episodes: the hiccup of Aristophanes (exhibiting the voice as the object of transfer), the invocation of Diotima by Socrates (exhibiting the sublimation of voice), and finally in the *agalmata* of Alcibiades (the material trace of the mythical object).

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<sup>37</sup> Lacan’s language was slightly more forceful, characterizing Plato’s dialogue as the “first analytic transference.” (I.11)

*Part I: The Voice of a Hiccup*

The backdrop of Plato's *Symposium* is a drinking party at the house of Agathon in honor of his victory at a theatrical competition.<sup>38</sup> The dialogue consists of a series of laudatory speeches (or *encomia*) on the topics of love, *eros*, and desire taking place over the course of the night. The *Symposium* proceeds with Eryximachus' invitation for speeches in "encomium to the god of Love" which in turn serves as a procedural rule for the speeches that follow, although this procedure will be increasingly displaced over the course of the dialogue. (177a-d) The first three speeches of the *Symposium* issued by Phaedrus, Pausinias, and Eryximachus each espouse an idealistically pure notion of love.<sup>39</sup> However, it is between the second and third minor speeches that we encounter a strange moment in the dialogue. Pausanias' speech concludes with Plato ventriloquizing, in balanced measure, the phrase *Pausaniou pausamenou* – "Pausanias came to a pause." (185c) Our reason for "pausing at this pause" between the discourses of Pausanias and Eryximachus has everything to do with how voice serves as the object of rhetorical uptake, or the transference. The gap between Pausanias and the third speaker, Eryximachus, is two-fold: first

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<sup>38</sup> The *Symposium* begins by indicating that the account of the party is told from the perspective of Apollodorus whom had been present at the event years before. What this means is that Plato is at least twice removed from the events of the dialogue, both removed on account of this witness and on account of time, although we cannot assume the events at the dinner party ever occurred at all. My account of the dialogue and the state of our historical knowledge regarding its events is in consultation with an introduction to the dialogue written by M.C. Howatson and Frisbee C.C. Sheffield. See M.C. Howatson and Frisbee C. C. Sheffield. "Introduction," in *Plato: The Symposium*. Trans. M.C. Howatson, (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, c.2008): vii-xxix.

<sup>39</sup> I am less interested in the content of these early speeches than in Arisophanes' hiccups, so I recount them only briefly. Penney characterizes them as "instances of resistance in the Freudian framework" because each of them offers a "lofty idealization of love in its punitive function as a catalyst for aesthetic, political, and moral virtue." (Penney, 56) The first speaker, Phaedrus, presents what Lacan calls a "discourse of a mythologist" (iv.5) in a speech that contends "Love is the oldest of the gods." (178c) Phaedrus maintains that "Only those in love are prepared to die for one another" (178c) and that "Love is the oldest of the gods and the most worthy of honour, and most powerful in helping men achieve excellence and happiness both during life and after death." (180b) The second speaker, Pausanias, pursues a political and moral evaluation of love because "Love is not single" and, hence, the principal question should be "which sort of Love should be praised." (180c) Lacan takes Pausinias' emphasis upon political and moral law to identify his discourse as that "of a sociologist." (Lacan, iv.5) Pausanias suggests a notion of love arrayed along a set of ethical injunctions that prioritize the "Heavenly Love" of wisdom and the soul above the "Common Love" of women, the body, and the "act itself." (180e-181b) Pausanias' central contribution is the demarcation of the appropriate law and custom of love.

with this play on words “Pausanias came to a pause,” and second with Aristophanes’ case of the *hiccups*. Together these two eviscerations of the voice operate to interrupt the symbolic order instituted by Eryximachus at the start of the dialogue:

Pausanias came to a pause (those experts in rhetoric teach me to speak in this balanced way). Aristodemus said that it was Aristophanes’ turn to speak, but either through over-eating or for some other reason he had an attack of hiccups and could not do so. The doctor Eryximachus was reclining next to the couch, so Aristophanes turned to him. ‘You are just the person, Eryximachus, either to put a stop to my hiccups or to speak instead of me until I stop myself. (185c-d)

The cause for this case of the hiccups is left open to supposition, but the effect is clear: the order of the speeches must be changed since the next speaker on the docket, Aristophanes, has come down with a case of the hiccups. No big deal right? Oddly, almost everyone who reads the dialogue assigns significance to these hiccups.

Aristophanes hiccups illustrate how the voice serves as the principal object of rhetorical uptake, and becomes the object ‘transferred’ within the transference. Indeed, almost every (or perhaps even every) scholarly account of Aristophanes’ hiccups ultimately may be charted in accord with the transference of a ‘voice’ into the void introduced by Aristophanes. Let us start with Lacan’s account, which recollects a conversation with Alexandre Kojève on the significance of Aristophanes’ hiccups. Lacan first gripes about his Hegelian teacher’s demeanor as “a very superior sort of person” and a bit of a “snob,” but nonetheless takes careful note of Kojève’s injunction: “you will never interpret the Symposium if you do not know why Aristophanes had a hiccup!” (Lacan, iv.11) Begrudgingly it seems, Lacan then ‘interprets’ this

hiccup and concludes, in alignment with the mainstream<sup>40</sup> interpretation, that “if Aristophanes has a hiccup, it is because during the whole of the discourse of Pausanias he is convulsed with laughter – and so is Plato!” (Lacan, iv.12) Aristophanes is of course our comic relief. Lacan’s account, apparently to satisfy the demand of his Hegelian mentor, more or less treats this ‘interpretation’ as the last word on the issue.

However, there may be even further reason for *pause* here. There is something uncharacteristic about Lacan’s account: namely that he quickly attributes a positive content to this hiccup (its *meaning*) rather than engaging it as another purloined letter. Why isn’t Lacan treating Aristophanes’ hiccup as an empty envelope around which our desire is cathected? Jacques-Alain Miller’s account of the voice helps to explain Lacan’s (failed) interpretation on this matter. For Miller, Lacan gives place to the voice within psychoanalysis by articulating it from a “structural viewpoint.” (Miller, 137) Even more, Miller informs us, “it is a fact of the history of psychoanalysis that the object voice remained unnoticed as long as the prevailing perspective remained the diachronic, chronological point of view of the object relation.” (Miller, 137) Hence, Miller’s account teaches us that voice in Lacan is a constant work in progress.<sup>41</sup> Throughout *Seminar VIII* Lacan makes no direct reference to the voice as an instantiation of the *objet a* even as he references the anal and oral objects of the drive. An introjection is required at this point. What would we get out of an *analysis* of this hiccup if we resist his teacher’s demand to fall into line with the mainstream interpretation?

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<sup>40</sup> See also Penney (p.59) for a secondary account of Lacan’s reading of Aristophanes’ hiccups.

<sup>41</sup> Lacan may not be analyzing Aristophanes’ bout of the hiccups fully because he does not yet view the voice as an object of the drive at this stage of his work. Alice Lagaay’s history of the voice in psychoanalysis claims that the “voice as drive object (or *objet a*) and the associated appeal drive (*pulsion invoquante*) were first introduced in Seminar X[.]” (58)

Indeed even if we were to interpret Aristophanes' hiccups as a derisory move on the part of Plato, we still must reconcile the element of disorder which has been introduced into the structural protocol of the dialogue. It is into this gap that the third speech of Eryximachus must be introduced. Plato's little jab produces an ironic result. Eryximachus, the character that instituted the *law* that governs the *ordering* of the speeches, is the first in line to break from his *own protocol* by substituting himself in for Aristophanes.<sup>42</sup> Eryximachus brings order back to the dialogue, like any good medicine man should, by prescribing Aristophanes a cure for his case of the hiccups. As we might suspect, the content of Eryximachus' discourse coincides with what he's "supposed to know:" arguing for the necessity of the "skillful practitioner" and exhorting the "advantage of orderly love" (balancing common love and heavenly love). (187d-188a)<sup>43</sup> Eryximachus has commonly been cast as a figure for ordering. For instance, Paul O'Mahoney places its emphasis upon Eryximachus's speech as "the evacuation of the disorderly to restore order requires the application of further disorder." (147)

But if Aristophanes' case of the hiccups is nothing more than a Platonic device aimed at the *previous* speakers, then why is the entire performance of Eryximachus aimed at the reinstitution of order? When Eryximachus steps into the anamorphic gap between Pausanias' pause and Aristophanes' hiccups, he *takes up* this fragmented object to bolster the foundation of his very own authority as a practitioner of medicine and a lover of harmony. In other words, within the confines of the first three speeches of the *Symposium*, Eryximachus is an exemplar of rhetorical uptake. Not because he takes up anyone's 'text', not because he 'attends' to a previous

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<sup>42</sup> The basic function of Eryximachus should appear familiar to those familiar with Agamben's work, since the moves of Plato's character are predicated upon a logic of exception. See Dolar, (106) and Agamben, (10-13).

<sup>43</sup> The theme of ordering persists as Eryximachus continues. For example, when he borrows from musical rhythms which are "created when elements which were originally in disagreement, namely the fast and the slow, are subsequently brought into agreement." (187b-c)

speech, but precisely because he cathects his desire to this hiccup. And furthermore, when it comes to the evisceration of Aristophanes' voice, the rest of us have been a bit like Eryximachus in our own efforts to reinstitute a measure of balance to these hiccups. This is evidenced by Kojève's proclamation that we can "never interpret" the *Symposium* if we do not know "why Aristophanes had a hiccup!" But perhaps we should not buy what Lacan's Hegelian master is peddling so quickly and instead recall Miller's quick riposte: *the age of interpretation is behind us*. The hiccups of Aristophanes are all the more significant for the differential ways they have been taken up by scholars attempting to 'interpret' them. It is as if these hiccups were themselves signifying. But the meaning of the hiccup is less significant than the hiccup *function*, that is, the hiccups of Aristophanes form a juncture where desire starts to run rampant.

A short account of the zeal with which scholars have attempted to 'interpret' these hiccups should illustrate just how forceful the voice is as an "addressable object." The first and most common interpretation is that these hiccups are written into the *Symposium* in order to make a mockery of the previous speaker, Pausanias, whose word play has caused the clown Aristophanes to break out into uncontrollable laughter. Kojève, Lacan (albeit a bit stubbornly), and Penney all ultimately accede to this common view.<sup>44</sup> A second commonplace interpretation is that these hiccups bring the discourse of the tragic poet together with the comic. Diskin Clay's reading of the *Symposium*, for instance, espouses this view when he claims that "On the most serious plane of the dialogue, what is effected by the accident of Aristophanes' hiccough is that unexpectedly a comic and tragic poet are brought together." (189)<sup>45</sup> Nathan Crick and John

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<sup>44</sup> See R.G. Bury (1973): xxii-xxiii. See also R. Eisner (1979, 417-418).

<sup>45</sup> See S. Avlonitis, (1999, 15-23).

Poulakos agree, insisting that “the finest rhetoric is a child of comedy and tragedy.” (4)<sup>46</sup> A third interpretation of Aristophanes’ hiccups has been forwarded by Paul O’Mahoney who concludes that “Plato contrived the hiccupping scene and the ensuing disorder to provide for the omission of Aristodemus, rather than for comedic diversion” (149)<sup>47</sup> On this reading, the hiccups divert the reader’s attention from the fact that Aristodemus, who accompanies Socrates to the symposium, is never accorded an opportunity to speak (in other words, these hiccups have stricken him from the docket of speakers). Whether any one of these interpretations is definitively better than the others is beside the point since the end result is the same: Aristophanes’ case of the hiccups serve as a locus for a series of rhetorical uptakes both within the dialogue (through the discourse of Eryximachus) and external to the dialogue (by becoming the object of scholarly desire).

We might even say that after Aristophanes finally speaks, his hiccups remain. That is, perhaps Eryximachus’ cure never takes hold. After all, Aristophanes’ speech is arguably the most imaginative, comical, and ridiculous of the bunch. The underlying theme of his discourse idealizes love insofar as its aim is to make us whole again.<sup>48</sup> However, Aristophanes’ path to this conclusion is a strange mythic story of humanity’s origin as spherical beings. Aristophanes’ love takes on the figure of the circle wherein “the form of every person was completely round,

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<sup>46</sup> Crick and Poulakos also make the claim that the *Symposium* is “a work of art aiming to leave readers “pregnant with desire.”” (4)

<sup>47</sup> More evidence that the hiccups are a device for silencing Aristodemus. See K. Corrigan and E. Glazov-Corrigan (2004, 16-17, 26-27).

<sup>48</sup> Interestingly, Aristophanes’ origin-story can also be viewed as an archetype for an assumption often ridiculed by Lacanian psychoanalysis, namely, that there is a sexual relation. Aristophanes posits that “In the first place there were not merely two sexes as there are now, male and female, but three, and the third was a combination of the other two. This sex itself has disappeared but its name, androgynous, survives.” (189d-e) Eric Laurent’s description of a feminine *jouissance* which opposes the “fiction that there is a happy and systemic relation between the sexes, which are split into two halves.” (96) Laurent argues that a feminine *jouissance* is situated beyond this “symmetry” by writing that instead there are “two halves plus the superego” which is situated “beyond the phallus.” (97)

with back and sides making a circle, and with four arms, the same number of legs, and two faces exactly alike set on a round neck.” (189e) Hence the aim of love is the recovery of this self-sufficient, enclosed, and circular origin. Once again, Lacan posits Aristophanes’ comedy as yet another vehicle for the voice of Plato, who (Lacan supposes) “seems to be amusing himself in the discourse of Aristophanes by engaging in a clowning, a comic exercise about his own conception of the world and of the soul of the world.” (vi.15) The ridiculous Aristophanes is the only character absurd enough to address the genital organ. The other players in the *Symposium* are simply too sophisticated for this.

However, there seems to be division even within Lacanian ranks on Aristophanes’ hiccup. Penney, for instance, calls Aristophanes’ speech a “mythical anticipation of the Freudian castration complex.” (59) Hence, his account actually transfers a very different ‘voice’ onto these hiccups than Lacan. While Lacan’s Aristophanes becomes a vehicle for the voice of Plato, for Penney the comedy of this speech heralds the voice of Freud: “This wound’s kinship with the psychological wound of castration forming the bedrock of Freudian theory is made quite evident in the gloss on the myth that Aristophanes himself provides.” (Penney, 57)

But there is at least one last reading of the dialogue that, frankly, I am a little surprised we never get from Lacan: that no serious explanation of the meaning behind this case of the hiccup is necessary. A.E. Taylor’s reading of the *Symposium* suggests that perhaps all the ink spilled over Aristophanes’ hiccup may amount to a lot of academic hype over nothing:

The tone of this part of the dialogue is wholly playful, and I think it would be a mistake to regard it as anything more than a delightful specimen of “Pantagruelism.” The numerous persons who are unhappy without anything of the Pantagruelist in their composition will continue, no doubt, to look for hidden meanings in this section of the

*Symposium*, as they look for them in Rabelais, and with much the same kind of success. Fortunately, we need not imitate them[.] (Taylor, 216)

Taylor's approach to these hiccups is arguably more Lacanian than what the master provides. Only Taylor suspends interpretation long enough to (potentially) analyze the function of desire in the hiccup's uptake. In the final analysis, the hiccups are a locus of desire that occasions a radical proliferation of (potential) rhetorical uptakes. Kojève's injunction must be displaced. The significant question is not *why* Aristophanes has the hiccups. It is *what* these hiccups have caused us to *do*.

The perlocutionary effect of Aristophanes' hiccups is that they become a Trojan horse for the object voice. What is important is not so much these hiccups themselves as the 'screen' they offer for the projection of desire. Even in this truncated account of scholarly uptake we can identify at least six orientations of desire made legible by Aristophanes' hiccups. Presumably Warner would call these publics. Each of these six factions have oriented their desire differently based on whose *voice is supposed* to be at work in the text. Faction one takes the primary voice of this debacle to be Plato's. They ask: is Plato himself not the master of the dialogue? If Aristophanes has the hiccups, it is to open room for Plato's silent voice to exact its revenge. Faction two transfers this voice onto Socrates in order to finish the enigmatic discussion on the relation of tragedy and comedy at the ending of the dialogue. Socrates hasn't said enough for them. We might call faction two the "I paid good money to see Socrates!" group. They use the hiccups to give Socrates more airtime. Faction three uses the hiccups as cover for what they see as the lacking voice of Aristodemus. They blame Plato for this, to be sure, but claim that, if it had not been for this bout of the hiccups, Aristodemus' voice would have had its day. Faction four reads the hiccups as an accentuation of the voice of Eryximachus. It is he, after all, whose

*ethos* will be directly augmented by this bout of the hiccups. Aristophanes' troubles become Eryximachus' fortunes as he successfully prescribes his cure and corrects the disorder it produces in the dialogue to boot. Faction five consists of the psychoanalytical tendency to look for opportunities to plant Freud at the origin. Penney does this by taking the discourse of Aristophanes as a verification of the voice of Freud – one marked by the castration complex. And finally faction six, who think all these other people are just spinning their wheels. Perhaps because of some sort of *jouissance* or excess, but maybe just because they think the whole thing isn't worth their time.

What we have, in effect, is an analogue to Michael Warner's "restroom" travelers who have happened upon a speaker. The conference room erupts into laughter as Pausanias concludes his presentation with a parade of stupid puns based on his own name. The next one to speak is poor Aristophanes who was laughing so hard that his presentation is now poisoned by an uncontrollable case of the hiccups. Pandemonium breaks out in the conference hall and people outside start to wonder what all the ruckus is about. Some of Warner's 'restroom' travelers duck into the conference room. By now the chair of the panel, Eryximachus, has subbed in to restore a semblance of order. Our travelers have missed the crux of the action but start trying to piece things back together. Bickering ensues over the cause for the hiccups, factions form, and in the end Warner calls them publics. And despite it all there's still another who, seriously needing to take a shit, walks right on by, totally unconcerned with the entire debacle. The tragicomic dynamic of the *Symposium* grafts all-too-easily onto Warner's account of uptake, but adding to it a new dimension. The hiccups episode exemplifies how the voice, as an object of desire, becomes a locus around which uptake is arrayed, distributed, and disseminated. The true lesson

of the hiccups episode is that *uptake takes the voice as its object*. But this is only the *Symposium*'s first lesson.

### *Part II: The Sublimation of the Voice*

The next two speeches of the *Symposium*, presented by Agathon and Socrates respectively, illuminate another key dimension of rhetorical uptake: sublimation. In Freud's *Civilization and Its Discontents* sublimation is presented as a "technique for fending of suffering [through] the employment of the displacements of the libido" in ways that shift "the instinctual aims in such a way that they cannot come up against frustration from the external world." (26) For Freud, sublimation is a means of deferring and disseminating the death drive by substituting the drive towards death with other worldly arts and occupations. From this, Lacan would formulate sublimation as lifting the object "to the dignity of The Thing." (Lacan, Sem. VII, 112) Hence, for Lacan the sublimation of the death drive is productive of the various partial drives (oral, anal, and the later scopic, and invocatory additions) and their corresponding part-objects (breast, faeces, gaze, and voice).<sup>49</sup> Sublimation metonymically substitutes these part-objects for the death object. To posit the voice as the object of rhetorical uptake thus necessarily associates uptake with sublimation in the Lacanian sense. Its consequence for how we think of publicity is that uptake has less to do with the speaker's or text's illocutionary address to strangers or bystanders than with the sublimation of the voice as an *objet petit a*, or "addressable object." Uptake not only takes up an object, it rhetorically refigures the constitution of the thing being taken up itself.

The speeches of the *Symposium*'s next two figures, Agathon and Socrates, illustrate the role of sublimation in the rhetorical uptake of the voice as an object. Let us start with Agathon,

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<sup>49</sup> For Lacan, sublimation is a manner of satisfying the drive without resorting to repression. For him, sublimation does not introduce "a new object; it is a change of the object in itself." (293)

the tragic poet, the host of the party, protégé of the orator Gorgias, and the one in whose honor this *Symposium* is being held. To attend this *Symposium* is to already declare one's love for Agathon. But above all, Agathon is an enigmatic man of surfaces without definitive depth. Agathon is a pretty-boy and a man as closely identified with the theatrical stage as Aristophanes is identified with comedy. Agathon is a figure that merges publicity, *eros*, and *prosopopeia*.<sup>50</sup> Succinctly, this was the man who could deliver you a *public*, and publicity is the thing Agathon is *supposed to know*. As a man of surfaces and masks, the rendition of Agathon's speech provided by Plato is predictably naïve and starry-eyed in its insistence upon eulogizing the god of Love. (194c-195a)<sup>51</sup> Once again, Lacan adopts this Platonic caricature when calling Agathon a "royal idiot" and "the biggest idiot of them all, he is even the only complete idiot!" continuing that Agathon "does not know what he is saying" and that "he plays the fool." (Lacan, xxvii.12) But immediately following his harshest comments Lacan does an about-face, reminding us that

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<sup>50</sup> A direct correlation between Agathon and publicity is in some sense impossible given that the Latin term "public" itself appears to lack an unmitigated corresponding term in ancient Greek. However, some classical scholars provide us reasons why a stronger connection between Agathon and publics might be warranted. Eoghan Moloney, for instance, argues that successful Athenian playwrights (eventually including Agathon after the events of the dialogue) were "enticed" to the court of Macedonian kings. (233-234) Moloney goes on to emphasize the political significance of these arrangements because the "theatre remained a hugely important medium, prized and valued by an ever-growing audience" in ways that "could facilitate their rule." (248) Brigitte Le Guen similarly notes a "link between victory, theatre and monarchial power" and that the role of theatrical competitions "was every bit as political as it was cultural and religious." (274) And Eric Csapo's *Actors and Icons of the Ancient Theater* provides some even stronger connections, arguing that "In the public theater of Hellenistic Athens [...] it was the city itself that got top credit for the production." (170) While in Athens, this was known as the *demokratia* or power of the people, it is worth noting the Roman equivalent *res publica* or the *public thing*. Hence, to award Agathon with a gift of victory in theatrical contest (incidentally a crown, like what Alcibiades presents to Agathon later in the *Symposium*) was often less of a gift to the man than to the 'public' itself. Csapo also notes that the common association between the Athenian theater and publicity is very strong. (169) None of this is to say that Agathon *is* a public so much as he is transferred into this position through sublimation. The link between Agathon and publics may also be substantiated from the Habermasian end of the coin as well given that their "public sphere" is consistently cast in terms of the theater and the stage. Nancy Fraser, for example, characterized the public sphere as "a theater in modern societies in which political participation is enacted through the medium of talk." (110) Fraser's account of publicity is similar to Warner's in its usage of the term "circulation." (110-111)

<sup>51</sup> Agathon's speech also turns on an unusual comparison between Eros and the goddess of Delusion, concluding that "Love is not only supreme in beauty and goodness but is also the source of beauty and goodness in all other things." (197c) Penney takes Agathon's speech as an "ironic critique of the very ideology that it appears to support" in its naïve presentation of its own content. (61)

“that has no importance” and that Agathon “is no less the beloved object” of Socrates. (12) Even if Agathon is an ignorant and naïve, Socrates does not hold him to be a blubbering dope and even sublimates his oratorical talents:

I reflected that I would not be able to give a speech myself anywhere near as fine, I almost turned tail with shame – or would have done so if I could have escaped. The speech reminded me of Gorgias, so much so that I had the Gorgon experience as in Homer: I was afraid Agathon would conclude his speech by challenging mine with the eloquence of Gorgias, that brilliant orator, and – like the Gorgon – would turn me into stone, unable to utter a word. (198b-198c)

Clearly this passage is a backhanded compliment insofar as it is ventriloquized by Plato, but Socrates’ confession suggests that even the master of the dialogue, Socrates, is not immune to Agathon’s lure.

Socrates’ sublimation of Agathon’s oratorical talents is a dramatic illustration of how sublimation metonymically reconstitutes the voice as an object. Everything begins in the typical Socratic way, confronting Agathon with a few ‘trivial questions’ that culminate in a few concessions on Agathon’s part.<sup>52</sup> However, quite unlike his systematic interrogation of Gorgias, Socrates’ dismantling of Agathon will be cut off prematurely because Socrates is simply too taken with Agathon to publically humiliate him. Rather, Socrates performs his ‘paralysis’ by reducing his speech to a mere account of a lesson from the priestess Diotima.<sup>53</sup> Diotima’s invocation destabilizes the respective positions of Agathon and Socrates, allowing Socrates to

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<sup>52</sup> Agathon’s concession is in response to the question “Isn’t Love, first, *of* something, and, secondly, of something that he lacks?” (200e) Agathon, at a loss, must concede and answer “Yes” to the question on both counts. This aspect of the dialogue is, of course, something quite important for Lacan.

<sup>53</sup> Given the terms provided by the dialogue there is little or no reason to believe that Diotima is present at the *Symposium*. Diotima never directly addresses the *Symposium*, if she ever existed at all.

substitute himself into Agathon's shoes as someone who had once believed as Agathon now does, at least until encountering Diotima's knowledge of love. Socrates gives two crucial precepts: 1) Socrates claims to know *nothing* about anything but love, and 2) Diotima teaches him *everything* he knows regarding love. Socrates' two premises require us to conclude that the locus of his wisdom (his wisdom on *every* subject) rests entirely on the side of Diotima. We have even been told that the preceding interrogation of Agathon was nothing more than a recitation of Diotima's own inquiry. This becomes pivotal for Lacan, who reminds us time and again that love is the *only* subject that Socrates claims to know. Lacan writes "Socrates claims to know nothing about anything else," and he emphasizes the Socratic appropriation of Diotima when he states that "Socrates says almost nothing in his own name" in order to show that "it is around this 'almost nothing' that the stage really turns." (Lacan, ii.10) Socrates has promised that Agathon, like Gorgias, will "turn me into stone, unable to utter a word," and now he has followed through on it. Socrates has nearly completely evacuated his own voice from the *Symposium* by substituting Diotima in its place, not only as the 'author' of Socrates' content, but also as a substitute adversary for Agathon. Indeed, the only thing Socrates has signaled in his own name is his desire to get into this pretty-boy's pants.

Socrates' sublimation of Agathon, this effort to turn himself to stone, leaves Diotima's voice as a remainder. Diotima's discourse separates into two sections regarding *daimons* and procreation. The first section of Diotima's speech establishes a distinction between the *erastes* and the *eromenos* – what Lacan defines as "the loving one, who is the subject of lack" and the one who is "the beloved object." (Lacan, iii.5) Diotima will use this distinction to extract two middle terms from Socrates: 1) "correct belief"<sup>54</sup> as an intermediary between wisdom and

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<sup>54</sup> "Correct belief" may be understood as the ability to believe something correctly without being able to qualify it by reason. (202a) In Cormac Gallagher's translation of *Seminar VIII* "correct belief" will be translated as "true opinion."

ignorance, and 2) that Love is neither god nor mortal, but a *diamon* or intermediary spirit.<sup>55</sup> The second section of Diotima's speech contends that the object of love is "procreating and giving birth in the beautiful." (206c-206e)<sup>56</sup> When the speech concludes, Socrates reminds us once again that "these are the things that Diotima said to me, and I believe her. And since I believe, I am trying to persuade everyone else[.]" (212b) Socrates' invocation places Diotima in the *diamonic* position of an intermediary between Socrates and Agathon.

As a remainder of the operation of Agathon's sublimation, the *daimonic* voice of Diotima takes on utility as an analytic device. What we have here is another case of the hiccups without a single 'hic', and just as in the hiccups episode, Diotima's speech once again spurred scholarly uptake. However this time, the hermeneuts had to put their desire on the table more forcefully. The basic battle lines are best exhibited in a spirited exchange between Luce Irigaray and Andrea Nye. On one side of this debate, Irigaray's reading would celebrate Diotima's first section (love as *daimon*) in unwavering fashion but view the second section (on procreation) as in unbridled contradiction with the first.<sup>57</sup> In order to exonerate Diotima, Irigaray manipulates Socrates into the position of a potential culprit, arguing that Diotima "*is not there*" and that "*Socrates reports her views*. Perhaps he distorts them unwittingly and unknowingly" (Irigaray, 38) The force of Diotima's *diamonic* positioning requires that Irigaray produce the Diotima of her own desire, in this case, by giving the first half of the speech to Diotima and the latter over to Socrates'

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I am not certain whether this is on account of Lacan's translation of the *Symposium* or Gallagher's translation of Lacan.

<sup>55</sup> Diotima explains that "Diety and humanity are completely separate, but through the mediation of spirits all converse and communication from gods to humans, waking and sleeping, is made possible." (203a) Diotima also provides reason to believe there is a linkage between this point and correct belief. (204a)

<sup>56</sup> From this Diotima maintains that "it must follow that the object of love is also immortality." (207a)

<sup>57</sup> A similar emphasis may be found in Penney, who critiques 'Diotima' for a "downhill slide" into a "domestication of the death drive" in the second part of the speech. (70-71)

corrupting intervention.<sup>58</sup> But remember, Irigaray could have substantiated the inverse claim using precisely the same reasoning (hypothetically, Socrates could be to blame for the first part and Diotima could be credited with the second). On the other side of this debate, Nye rebuts Irigaray's view by taking up the purity of Diotima's voice over the parasitic influence of Socrates, so much so that Nye declares Diotima "and not Agathon, Socrates, or Plato" as "the real host of the *Symposium*." (45)<sup>59</sup> Nye's rebuttal bases Diotima's authority upon a historical "tradition of female power and female thought still alive in Greek culture" at the time of the *Symposium*. And from this, Nye issues a provocation of Irigaray's desire as influenced by "Christianized late twentieth century Paris, where the connection between divinity and masculinity is axiomatic, and the "absence" of the feminine a necessary truth." (54) But in a way, Nye's rebuttal insists upon precisely the same thing, Diotima's voice, by elevating it to historical status even though Diotima herself may have been nothing more than an ahistorical Platonic device. Hence, both Irigaray's and Nye's accounts share in the sublimation of Diotima's voice as a common alternative to either Agathon or Socrates. In this way, both accounts may be celebrated as what Lacan called "a recognition of the fact that desire is nothing more than the metonymy of the discourse of demand." (293) And we arrive at this point because

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<sup>58</sup> More recently Sarah Tyson has defended Irigaray's position in this debate. Observe how Tyson's defense becomes caught in a play of aporetic reversals and ultimately comes to terms with what we might say is the "real" of Irigaray's desire in this debate: "Irigaray's reading reclaims Diotima's voice from its double remove as a report of what she said by a character in a dialogue, but it cannot do so by putting the words back into Diotima's mouth; Irigaray speaks "Diotima's Speech." Further, in her lecture, Irigaray does not decide the issue of who should take the blame for problems of argumentation[...] Irigaray will suggest that missteps in arguments are perhaps Socrates' fault, but she also speaks of these missteps as errors in Diotima's method. Irigaray's voice, as reader of the speech, tells us what is true to Diotima's argument and what is a departure from it." (Tyson, 491)

<sup>59</sup> Nye is not alone on this point. Another similar reading which preserves the 'pure' Diotiman voice can be found in the following. See C. Jan Swearingen, "A Lover's Discourse: Diotima, Logos, and Desire," in *Reclaiming Rhetorica: Women in the Rhetorical Tradition*, ed. Andrea A. Lunsford (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1995), 49.

Socrates' uptake of Agathon has left us with the byproduct of Diotima's voice, a changed object which both Irigaray and Nye sublimate in ways which are foreclosed within the dialogue itself.

What then is the lesson added by the interplay between Agathon, Socrates, and Diotima? In *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, Lacan points out something unusual about Socrates, writing that "Intervening, at every moment, there is the demonic voice. Could one maintain that the voice that guides Socrates is not Socrates himself? The relation between Socrates and his voice is no doubt an enigma[.]" (Lacan, FFC, 258) This marks a significant departure from Lacan's (rescinded) effort in *Seminar VIII* to nominate Socrates as an exemplar for the analyst's proper place. What is different about voice here is that it can no longer be assigned a *position* at all. The promise of a sublimation of the voice is in its potential to trap analysis in an interminable and intractable series of dialectical reversals, which the *Symposium* enacts through its (competing) sublimations of the voices of Agathon, Socrates, and Diotima. To say anything definitive about the sublimations taking place between these players, we, like Irigaray and Nye, must put our uninhibited desire on the table. Rhetorical uptake therefore is not about choosing among the voices the *Symposium* provides; it is not about taking up these voices; it is about changing the rhetorical constitution of one's own object of desire. This is because, strictly speaking, *the only voice in the dialogue is one's own*.

### *Part III: The Agalmata of the Voice*

The *Symposium* offers one final lesson regarding rhetorical uptake in its concluding series of events: that the material traces, or *agalmata*, of the voice-object are publicity's most elementary artifacts. At the most basic psychic level, in other words, publics themselves take the form of a voice-object. Unconscious voices are easy to miss precisely because they do not necessarily appear in scopic form. Tracking this sort of object is more complicated, as an object

of desire, voice rarely appears on the surface of the text. How then may a cartography of rhetorical uptake deduce its structures of sublimation if the ‘object’ of analysis is so elusive? Lacan’s notion of the *agalma*, which he takes from the rancorous entry of Alcibiades into the *Symposium*, offers a way of tracking the voice even when it does not leave a visible trace. Lacan defines the *agalma* on two levels, but throughout his definition he seems dissatisfied and attempts to suppress the aspects of his definition that make it a ‘bad’ metaphor for the *objet petit a*. The first is the most simplistic translation of *agalma* is as an “ornament,” “adornment,” or “statue.” (Lacan, x.1-5) But since the emphasis in this translation remains upon the fetish object, Lacan supplements this first level of the *agalma* with a second level of definition that strictly separates the *agalma* from its material embodiment or *silenus*. On this second level Lacan insists “What is important, is what is inside[...] it is here above all ‘a precious object, a jewel, something which is inside.’” (Lacan, x.3)

We are given two examples in *Seminar VIII* of this metaphor for the object that are especially helpful. The first example turns upon the *agalma* as a statue or offering to the gods. Lacan points to ceremonies to the goddess Athena where the “agalma appears indeed as a kind of trap for the gods; the gods, these real beings, there are contraptions which catch their eye.” (x.7) The second example may be more accessible to modern audiences due to their familiarity with the *Illiad* and the *Odessey*. Here Lacan references the Trojan horse:

[T]he famous history of the big horse which contained in its belly the enemies and all the misfortunes. [The horse] who was pregnant with the ruin of Troy, the Trojans who had dragged it inside the walls question themselves and ask themselves what they are going to do with it. They hesitate and we have to think that this hesitation was what was fatal for them, because there were two things to do – either, to open the belly of the

hollow wood and to see what is inside – or, having dragged it to the summit of the citadel, to leave it there to be what? Mega *agalma*. It is the same idea, it is the charm.

(x.8)

The comparison makes more sense if you think of it from the Trojan point of view. Despite being warned of the possibility that the horse could be some sort of trap they were blinded by the *agalma* within the horse. Not its aesthetic charm but the *charm* within the horse – the prospect of their desire that their war might finally be coming to an end.

But no matter how many times Lacan repeats himself or how many examples he provides, this *agalma* remains a bad metaphor. In each of Lacan's examples of the *agalma*, the supposedly flawed first portion of Lacan's definition creeps back in and despite his best efforts his references to ornaments, adornments, and statues are never abdicated. In *White Mythology*, Derrida suggests that such catachrestic features may signal the irruption of a new concept.<sup>60</sup> On the one hand, an *agalma* is a metaphor for Lacan's object and Lacan will use the two terms interchangeably. But on the other hand, the catachrestic dimension of Lacan's metaphor opens this concept up to new uses. In sum, Lacan's *agalma* is a trace object irreducible to either his *objet petit a* or the fetish object. An *agalma* has both surface and depth – a material trace of the mythical object.

Furthermore, Lacan's *agalma* is not a trinket but a *trap* designed to capture the other's desire by luring it towards the designated object. Recall again Warner's welcome: "This essay has a public. If you are reading (or hearing) this, you are part of its public." This is an *agalma*, or to put it differently, a trap designed to capture an object of desire in advance. To be an

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<sup>60</sup> Specifically, Derrida writes that "[Catachresis] concerns first the violent, forced, abusive inscription of a sign, the imposition of a sign upon a meaning which did not yet have its own proper sign in language. So much so that there is no substitution here, no transport of proper signs, but rather the irruptive extension of a sign proper to an idea, a meaning, deprived of their signifier." (*White Mythology*, 255)

effective trap, it cannot remain locked up in the subject's unconscious but must, as Warner notes, be circulated. Like the siren's song, which must be audible to the passing seafarer, the *agalma* must take the form of a *material* trace. But while the *agalma* circulates like one of Warner's texts it is not reducible to the text itself, because (for instance) Warner's opening 'welcome' signals a structure of sublimation in a way that the text which follows does not. In other words, the artifact that circulates is less a text than a device. From this, the structure of sublimation may become legible but only insofar as this trap is analyzed *as a trap*. As with Warner's 'welcome', it becomes all too easy to conflate this trap with the truth: I have read this, therefore I must be a (part of its) public. This is wrong. Whether Warner has actually caught anyone in this trap is a purely secondary operation. The trap itself signals the function of publicity in the unconscious, whether the trap has been set or not, or sprung or not, or even whether it has caught its prey or not; in each case the trap-function already means a public is at work. The mere appearance of an *agalma* does not mean we are a public. But it *does* mean that we have been *in love* with our publics all along.

This is, in strikingly similar terms, what Socrates will say to Alcibiades at the conclusion of the *Symposium*. Once Socrates finishes his speech the order of the party is again interrupted. There is a clamor outside, there is a "loud banging outside the door" and a "party of revelers" has arrived. (212d) The *Symposium* continues, "Not long after, the voice of Alcibiades was heard in the courtyard, he was very drunk and shouting loudly, asking where Agathon was and demanding to be taken to Agathon." (212d) Alcibiades, as Lacan calls him, is "a sort of pre-Alexander," a young and brash sort of person. (II.3) And upon entry, Alcibiades announces, "here I am now with ribbons on my head, to put this crown from my own head on the head of the wisest and handsomest man, and proclaim him to be so." (212e-213a) This crown is an *agalma*

(at least, in the ‘bad’ sense). The drunken Alcibiades is allowed into the party, he unties his crown and prepares to place it upon the head of Agathon. Alcibiades sits beside Agathon, but has not yet noticed Socrates. The *Symposium* takes note of this seating arrangement for some reason: “Alcibiades sat down beside Agathon, between him and Socrates, and as he did so he embraced Agathon and crowned him.” (213b) Like Diotima, Alcibiades has come between Agathon and Socrates. And, not having noticed Socrates, Alcibiades has given his crown (intact) to Agathon. But noticing Socrates seems to stir something of a lover’s quarrel:

‘Thank you’, said Alcibiades, ‘but who is this on my other side?’ As he spoke, he turned round and saw Socrates. At once he leaped up. ‘Heracles!’ he exclaimed, ‘What is this!’ *You*, Socrates? You were lying there to ambush me again, just as you used to do, making a sudden appearance in a place where I least expected you. Now what are you up to? (213c)

Socrates appeals to Agathon to keep the peace between them, begging him to “keep him off, please.” (213c-d) He fears Alcibiades’ jealousy and what he calls Alcibiades’ “mad obsession with being loved.” (213d) In the very next passage this object, the crown in Agathon’s possession, will come up again:

‘No peace is possible’, said Alcibiades, ‘between the two of us, and I will take my revenge for these allegations later on. But as for now, Agathon, please give me back some of the ribbons to crown this man’s head too, this wonderful head of his, so that he cannot blame me for crowning you and not him. When it is a contest of words he beats every one else, not just once, like you the day before yesterday, but every time’. So saying he took some of the ribbons and crowned Socrates, and then took his place on the couch. (213d-213e)

Lacan actually misses this little detail, and it is one which returns in the dialogue's final moments: *This crown is not transferred from Agathon to Socrates without remainder*. This crown, this *agalma*, becomes split and only some of its ribbons are given to Socrates. The version of the *agalma* that Lacan does see, the one he wants to isolate, becomes apparent once Alcibiades begins his speech.<sup>61</sup>

Lacan will take far less interest in Alcibiades' crown than in the jewels he sees in Socrates' belly and how these jewels attempt to capture the object of his desire. Alcibiades is surprisingly explicit in pointing out the *agalma* at this level. He exclaims: "On the surface you see the moulded form of the Silenus. But on the inside, once he has been opened up, you can't imagine, my fellow-drinkers, how much self-control is found within." (216d) And he continues: "But when he is in a serious mood and opened up I don't know if anyone else has seen the statues he has inside, but I saw them once, and they seemed to me so divine and golden, so utterly beautiful and wonderful, that in brief I felt I had to do whatever Socrates told me to do." (216e-217a) Lacan, emphasizing these selections heavily, will compare Alcibiades' *agalma* to "little Russian dolls" which are "fitted into one another." (Lacan, Sem. VIII, III.2) Socrates is 'nothing' but an envelope here (Alcibiades uses the word *silenus* or jewel box). (xii.9) What matters for Alcibiades is the thing (he believes) is inside – the thing that he has transferred upon Socrates. But at the same time Alcibiades' transference, his attribution of these 'jewels' to Socrates, is itself an attempt to lure them out of hiding.

The section of the Symposium that describes this *agalma* is also saturated with voice metaphors in its repeated references to satyrs, orators, and sirens. In other words, this *agalma* is

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<sup>61</sup> Like the others, Alcibiades will be invited to give a speech but this one comes with a stipulation for Socrates: "If I say anything that is not true, please interrupt me." (214e) Socrates accepts but will never interrupt. Socrates' voice is once again split and the implication of this little exchange is that everything Alcibiades will say has Socrates' implicit seal of approval.

a voice-trap. Alcibiades' speech is laced with repeated comparisons between Socrates and the satyr Marsyas. Even though Socrates possesses no musical instruments or talents, Alcibiades has become spellbound as if charmed by a piper. Alcibiades proclaims, "It is my contention that [Socrates] is very like those sileni that you find in statuaries' workshops which the craftsmen make holding pipes or *auloi*, and when you open them up you see that they contain small statues of the gods inside." (215b) He continues: "But you are not an *aulos*-player, you say? Yes you are, and a much more amazing player than Marsyas. Marsyas used to charm everyone with his pipes through the power that came from his mouth, and we are still charmed today whenever we hear his music played[...] Now you, Socrates, differ from Marsyas only in this: you achieve the same effect with simple prose rather than with pipes." (215b-215c) Alcibiades' speech then shifts from the satyr to the orator, suggesting that "when we hear someone holding forth on some topic or another, even if he is a very good speaker, he has virtually no effect on us. But whenever we hear you speaking or hear your words repeated by someone else, however mediocre the speaker may be, we are all—woman, man or child alike—spellbound and entranced." (215d) Socrates exerts a force which speech cannot replicate, and having just accused Socrates of being an orator, Alcibiades makes sure to remind us that Socrates' silence is an implicit confession of this fact.<sup>62</sup> Then, Alcibiades figures this *agalma* as a voice again in a comparison between Socrates and the siren. Three lines exhibit this: 1) "So I stop my ears to his Siren song and force myself to run away so as not to spend the rest of my life sitting here at his side," (216a); 2) "it is only in front of him that I feel it, because I am well aware that I cannot argue against him or deny that I ought to do as he says" (216b); and, finally, he concludes that 3)

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<sup>62</sup> It may even be argued here that this concession on Socrates' part is quite explicit, given the earlier events of the dialogue. Alcibiades has already received a commitment from Socrates that he will introject if at any point he disagrees.

“That, then, is the effect that the music of this particular satyr has had on me and on many others as well.” (216c) Even in the secondary hands of a terrible speaker the siren’s lure remains in effect. Even here Socrates remains silent.

But is this trap everything that it purports to be? Is Alcibiades’ little device really designed to do nothing more than entice Socrates into disclosing this *agalma*? The answers to these questions must be no. The reason is signaled in how Alcibiades’ speech concludes with a warning to Agathon, who appears up to this point to have been nothing more than a mere bystander. But Agathon too remains in possession of a kind of *agalma*, the remaining ribbons of Alcibiades’ crown. On its surface, the entirety of Alcibiades’ speech appears to have been directly addressed, in the form of a rebuttal, to Socrates. At the same time, however, Alcibiades’ warning has betrayed its *indirect* address to Agathon, who ought beware how Socrates has deceived so many others “into thinking that he was their lover, but then have found that they were in love with him instead,” and in a final warning Agathon is told to “Learn from us and beware.” (222b) Alcibiades’ little ploy fails because everyone has noticed the trap itself: “there was laughter at his frankness, because he seemed to still be in love with Socrates.” (222c)

Socrates will conclude the *Symposium* with what Lacan calls an “interpretation,” which is best understood not as a “cure” but a provocation that jump-starts a stalled dialectic. Socrates’ “interpretation” takes this form: “Though you were pretending otherwise, the reason for your entire speech was to make Agathon and me quarrel, because you think I ought to love you and only you, and Agathon ought to be loved by you and no one else.” (222d) Alcibiades’ trap, his insistence upon this *agalma*, has established a very specific ‘pecking’ order. It goes something like this: Agathon is the sole property of mine, and I am the sole property of Socrates. And incidentally, Alcibiades’ entry, which has positioned him between Agathon and Socrates on the

couch has exhibited this from the start. As the dialogue concludes, the seating of these players once again serves to dramatize this love triangle as Socrates' statement has triggered a quarrel over this positioning, with Socrates insisting upon sitting in the middle position between Alcibiades and Agathon, and Alcibiades insisting that Agathon should take the middle seat. The quibbling persists as our account of the *Symposium* fades into drunken opacity.

What then does this strange close to the *Symposium* teach about rhetorical uptake? I have argued that to think uptake *rhetorically* means to recast its empirical dimension (I did/didn't take up the text) as rather a manner of *substitution* (a transference of the object) and *sublimation* (a reconstitution of the object itself). In condensed form, a theory of publicity predicated upon *rhetorical uptake* would take transference as its trope, the voice as its mythical object, and *agalmata* as its artifacts. Up to this point I have proposed two lessons from the *Symposium* that may be used to further our understanding of rhetorical uptake: 1) *Uptake takes the voice as its object*; and strictly speaking 2) *The only voice in the dialogue is one's own*. What then is the third? Socrates' "interpretation" may not have "fixed" the drunken Alcibiades but it has, quite vividly, rearranged the positions of our players on the couch in a way not unlike the tug-of-war between Freud and Dora described in Lacan's "Intervention on Transference." As we have seen, the *Symposium* has produced this tug-of-war in at least three different ways: Aristophanes' "hiccups," the split sublimation of Agathon, Socrates, and Diotima, and now this jostling between Socrates, Alcibiades, and Agathon. In the end, Lacanians claim that Socrates' "interpretation" is faulty, in large part because Socrates exhibits his own love for Agathon as well.<sup>63</sup> Lacan himself remained strangely silent with respect to what Socrates should have said,

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<sup>63</sup> Lacan's purpose for reading the *Symposium* is to identify the position of his analyst: to "define in terms of longitude and latitude the coordinates that the analyst should be capable of attaining simply to occupy the place which is his own." (Lacan, vii.10) But while Lacan nominates Socrates as an analogue for his analyst at the start of *Seminar VIII* he will remain inconclusive on where this 'proper' position of the analyst resides. Lacan writes: "I am

but Penney has at least made an attempt to put words to it: “The correct interpretation in the Lacanian view would rather have been this: ‘what you love in truth is *objet petit a*, and it is always elsewhere, always beyond, and always causes the ruin, the putrefaction, of what you aspire to be.’” (88) But who would actually expect Socrates to speak like this? Furthermore, Lacan has taken Socrates’ words *as if* they were an “interpretation.” But Socrates himself was never an analyst, even if Lacan was hoping to make him one. So, if we exonerate Socrates for a brief moment, perhaps we will find that Socrates’ words are more sophisticated than it appears. Again, Socrates claims that everything Alcibiades has said (to Socrates) is *also* true for Agathon. It should not be surprising that Lacanian accounts are deaf to Agathon, who Lacan himself shrugs off as an ‘idiot’, and as we have seen in the hiccups episode Lacan only has ears for Plato’s voice. But simply insulting Agathon from afar ignores the Agathon-function. Who is Agathon again? A playwright, a poet, an acolyte of Gorgias, and a figure of the *stage*. By most accounts Agathon has been our *host* from the start – all of this has been in honor of his theatrical triumph. With respect to the exchange between Socrates and Alcibiades, Agathon appears as a mere bystander even as he retains a portion of their prized crown, the ribbons that trace the structure of their desire. Agathon is to *publicity* what Socrates is to *wisdom*: he is the man “supposed to know” how to deliver a public. With all of this in mind, perhaps Socrates’

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not telling you either that the analyst must be a Socrates, or a die-hard, or a saint.” (Lacan, vii.10) What Lacan has done here, as he did in his “Intervention on Transference,” is to establish an irreducible interval between the analyst (as a common noun) and the analyst’s position (the location from which the *experience* of analysis is possible). The evolution of Lacan’s thought on Socrates (and on the analyst in general) moves in a Derridean direction. In his own reading of *The Purloined Letter*, Derrida contends “if there is something like a purloined letter, perhaps it has a supplementary trap: it may have no fixed location, not even that of a definable hole or assignable lack.” (Derrida, 442) Derrida’s critique, predictably, turns towards charging Lacan with a phonocentric bias. Lacan’s position had already at this point incorporated voice as one of his part-objects, but the entailments of its induction have more philosophical implications on Lacanian thought than perhaps Lacan himself realized. (477-8) Lacan’s Socrates is symptomatic of this shift towards the object voice because he winds up not quite an analyst, nor analysand. My argument on this is that Socrates arrives in this (*a*)position as a result of the public voice as a supplementary analytical player.

‘interpretation’ quite correctly reinvigorates the analytical process in its provocation: ‘Hey Alcibiades – you don’t love me – you love your public!’ After all, Alcibiades has been putting on a show ever since he stumbled into this gathering with his rabble of cronies. And thus, perhaps it was the public – a creature even more enigmatic than Socrates himself – that has been a fundamental analytical player all along. Socrates’ words might just as well be applied to Michael Warner’s ‘welcome’. Warner’s trap is so effective not because of its circulation (in space), but because so many of us (like Alcibiades) are already suckers for our publics.

Hence, if we listen to Socrates just a little longer than did Lacan, we arrive at a third, more troubling, lesson. In its waning moments of drunkenness the *Symposium* teaches that publics are themselves structured as an object of desire, that publics are an object of love, and to analytically surmount publics requires tracing *the public voice*. As a voice, a public is an enigmatic object participating in an economy not unlike the one wherein Alcibiades’ little trick attempts to seduce and entrap Agathon. Socrates’ words therefore require asking some hard questions about our publics. If a public, today, is a *prosopopeia* akin to one of Agathon’s masks, can *it* be said to generate reasoned debate? And if publics are understood as an object of the transference (where both love and hate are really just love), can we remain confident that a public will be *critical* on our behalf? Or conversely, if the most basic condition of a public’s ‘existence’ is as a beloved object then is it even possible to be *critical of* publics? Can we really expect, even under perfect circumstances, that public objects of love, objects in our heads, and most importantly objects we have trapped in advance, will turn around and *be genuinely critical* of us? But the most frightening prospect signaled by Socrates is that perhaps there is no such thing as a *critical* publicity, and that a truly ‘critical public’ is an oxymoron, and that today, every last one of us is an *Alcibiades*.

## CHAPTER 4

### TOWARDS A COMPLEX PUBLIC OBJECT

*“Today, what is public opinion?”*

- Jacques Derrida

The opening of Jacques Derrida’s “Call it a Day for Democracy” asked an old question in a slightly different way: not only “what is public opinion?” but what is it “today?” (Derrida, OH, 84) Derrida would contend that the “*history* of public opinion,” italicizing *history*, “has to do with the question of the *day* [*jour*]” and that public opinion is “Literally *ephemeral*,” footnoting how this term comes “From the Greek *ephemeros*, ‘lasting only one day.’” (85) Promoting his public as a specter, but more specifically a *daily* kind of specter, Derrida went after the emplacement of our publics, asking, “How does one here identify public opinion? Does it take *place*? Where is it given to be seen, and *as such*? The wandering of its proper body is also the ubiquity of a specter. It is not *present as such in any of these spaces*. Exceeding electoral representation, public opinion is *de jure* neither the *general will* nor the *nation*, neither *ideology* nor the sum total of *private* opinions analyzed through sociological techniques or modern poll-taking institutions.” (87) And, having challenged the public spheres (of space and place) of yesterday, Derrida would suggest a new sphere for our publics in speech. “Public opinion,” and Derrida seems to turn more resolute on this point, “does not speak in the first person, it is neither subject nor object (“we,” “one”); one *cites* it, one makes it speak, ventriloquizes it.” (87) But following Derrida, I must insist on the following point:

One *cites* public opinion, one makes it speak, ventriloquizes it...

*But only for today.*

Even with all the “todays” in “Call it a Day for Democracy,” Derrida nevertheless ceased to repeat this *today* when directly referencing the *prosopopeia* of the public’s *speech*. Ironically, a key answer to Derrida’s question “*Today, what is public opinion?*” came baked in the cake – the public must opine in order to be a public. Hence the question, in my view anyway, is not about “public opinion” so much as the public’s oration. And while I second Derrida’s suggestion that today the principal public object is speech (via a ventriloquism), I want to insist that not even *prosopopeia* is set in stone. The public, *today*, is an orator. But why must our public(s) opine? And what are the entailments of modernity’s continuing commitment to public *speech*?

The purpose of this chapter is twofold: First, to ask what oratory can teach us about our publics, specifically by exploring the commitments instituted by such an articulation, and second, to begin the task of disarticulating our public(s) from speech by attempting a public without recourse to the *prosopopeia* that gives it life. My thesis is that *any object, living or dead, can be a public*, and that *prosopopeic* public speech is only one possible public object among many. Hence, I aim to extend upon a key component of Ernesto Laclau’s *On Populist Reason*, specifically the claim that “Lacan’s *objet petit a* is the key element in a social ontology.” (115) However, I contend that our publics, in addition to being a name for social totalities, are also radical particularities embedded within (part) objects. And I want to suggest that even on the level of their material particularity our publics are fully functional. In other words, our publics may be understood as their very own class of (voice) object – a set of particularities which do not require *prosopopeic* speech. This chapter proceeds in three sections: 1) a reading of the Habermasian critical publics as rhetorically figured as though it were an orator, 2) a return

to Cicero's *De Oratore* to argue that even that dialogue's exemplary orator (Crassus) is formed as a public object, and finally 3) a series of analogues designed to disarticulate our publics from their unilateral dependence upon the speech object; a series that begins with the *fistula* of Gaius Gracchus, proceeds to the shofar of Reik and Lacan, and concludes with the bullhorn of George W. Bush on September 14 of 2001.

### **The Face of Critical Publicity**

In *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, Jürgen Habermas touted the criticism of art and literature as integral to the historical formation of the public sphere, but this history may also be read for its insights into the rhetorical figuration of criticism.<sup>64</sup> Habermas' narrative account of the formation of critical publics illustrates how, today, the critical public is figured as an orator. It is an account, not of the true history of the development of the bourgeois public sphere, but of the way critical publics are imagined. Indeed, regardless of whether one accedes to his account on historical grounds, Habermas' narrative nonetheless provides a window into the figuration of desire involved in the formation of (today's) critical publics. Central to the historical constitution of "critical publicity," the most fundamental principle of the public sphere for Habermas, was the development of the scholastic periodical. (140) And it was in these periodicals that the modern critic would be born. Habermas claimed, for instance, that "As early as in the last third of the seventeenth century journals were complemented by periodicals containing not primarily information but pedagogical instructions and even criticism and reviews." (24) Into the eighteenth century, Habermas contended, the "genre" of scholarly

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<sup>64</sup> According to the history provided by Habermas, modern criticism grew out of a particular formation of publicity prevalent in Britain and France between 1680 and 1730. Habermas write that these "were centers of criticism—literary at first, then also political—in which began to emerge, between aristocratic society and bourgeois intellectuals, a certain parity of the educated." (32) The criticism of art and literature then "extended to include economic and political disputes." (33)

critique addressed to “educated laymen” had worked its way into the mainstream press. (25) But as Habermas provided an account of the historical formation of critical publics his analysis simultaneously exhibited the principles of their rhetorical construction. Habermas had performed the *oratorical* formation of critical publics amidst his very own descriptions of their historical emergence. This rhetoric may be subdivided into two cumulative figurations: 1) The oratorical judge, which serves as a staging ground for 2) The public-*as*-orator.

### *The Oratorical Judge*

In Habermas’ description of the critical periodical he would rely heavily upon their figuration as an oratorical judge and like the classical orator the critical public would be cast as simultaneously “*to, of, and in*” public.<sup>65</sup> First, Habermas’ account exhibited how modern criticism was figured in the form of a *direct address to* its public. In this innocuous move, posited as a characteristic trait of the periodical form, Habermas observed how the scholar’s direct address to the community of “educated laymen” persisted into the eighteenth century. But it was also upon this unassuming foundation, that one may *directly* address their public, that a series of other figures established themselves. Second, Habermas’ modern critic was also *born of* a public. Habermas would exhibit this when writing of seventeenth century France, for which

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<sup>65</sup> In rhetorical studies, the tie between “criticism” and “judgment” is perhaps best exemplified in Edwin Black’s *Rhetorical Criticism: A Study in Method*. In a chapter entitled “The Meaning of Criticism,” Black declared that “Criticism is that which critics do” in comparing and contrasting the critic and the scientist. (4) However, a key distinction setting the critic apart from the scientist, for Black, would be the judgmental public. Black added that, unlike the scientist, the critic “seeks to judge the thing justly” – a unique calling – because “the scientist, as a scientist, does not address himself to any public.” (4-5) Black continued that the “critic’s circumstance is otherwise” because the charge of this critic was to hold “the office of mediator, receiving from one source and conveying to another.” (5-6) Yet no more than a page later Black cautioned his reader that “There are statements sometimes *taken* for criticism” and contended (using an exemplar) that “The person who hears a speech and says, ‘*I like it*,’ is not making a critical statement.” (7, my emphasis) The specific danger posed by this category of statements would be to collapse the analogy (the set of similarities and differences) between the rhetorician and the scientist by depriving the critic of any modicum of critical distance from the object. Not only had Black’s ‘*I like it*’ methodologically excluded an analysis of desire (‘*I love it*’), it had simultaneously repressed the possibility that critical publics were themselves a staged publicity, that his ‘rhetorical critic’ was a constitutive *effect* of publicity rather than its cause.

“*le public* meant the *lecteurs, spectateurs, and auditeurs* as the addressees and consumers, and the critics of art and literature.” (51) In other words, the direct address to the public had come from the critic as a member within its very own ranks. Hence third, critical practices were necessarily *in public*, the infamous Habermasian “public sphere.” However, Habermas would consistently make use of a set of auditory tropes which suggest that the figurative precursor to the “public sphere” was the formation of the “public ear,” since, as Habermas wrote, even the art critic “had to be able to find a hearing before the entire public.” (41) In these three ways Habermas’ account shows how the grammar of publicity, the structuration of being “*to, of, and in*” public, relies upon a rhetoric: the analogy between the public and the classical audience, more specifically the figuration of the *judge*. Whether the public was taken as the “crowd” (around a speaker) or what Habermas called the “*Lesewelt* (world of readers)” both “were instances of a ‘critical (*richtend*) public.’” (26) Habermas explained it was on account of this judgmental public that something gained *Publizität* (publicity). (26) Hence, despite the oft-supposed ‘demise’ of oratory, the Habermasian account of the “genesis” of the public sphere nonetheless took the *oratorical figuration* (orator/judge) of critical publics as a given. This is true even today since, even when a ‘speaker’ is nowhere to be found, one cannot conceptualize critical publicity without this *richtend*, without the prospect of public judgment, which is to say without the *orator’s judge*.<sup>66</sup>

### *The Public-as-Orator*

However, casting critical publics in the mold of the classical auditor or judge, a humble enough move on its own terms, would become a staging-ground for treating the public as if it

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<sup>66</sup> Habermas did make a distinction between the form of judgment he described and that of the institutionalized judge. This distinction, however, makes his figuration more oratorical not less, since Habermas distinguishes critical “judgement” from the modern judge which approximates his descriptions all the more closely to the classical one. (41)

were an orator. Indeed, the *prosopopeia* of publics became integral to Habermas' account of the historical formation of the bourgeois public sphere.<sup>67</sup> Habermas would write, for instance, that the eighteenth century (art) critic, assuming they had been given a public *hearing*, “viewed himself” as the “public’s mandatary,” and with this authorization “could see themselves as spokesmen for the public.” (41) Licensed as the public’s “spokesmen,” critics could turn “against the public itself” by becoming “experts combatting ‘dogma’ and ‘fashion’.” (41) In this way the critic’s need for the public ear in the Habermasian account became an entitlement to its tongue. And it is here that the *prosopopeia* of publics, by establishing a series of parts, ultimately fabricated the personification of critical publics. The seemingly benign figuration of the “public ear” beget the formation of the “public face” and ultimately even “public speech.” And for Habermas, it was by virtue of the critical polemicist that a public finally entered its ‘mirror stage’. Specifically, Habermas would contend it was through “art and art criticism” and “literature and literary criticism” that the “public held up a mirror to itself,” enacting a “polemics” against itself, such that it was reflected back upon itself in inverted form. (43) Upon the surface of this critic, Habermas wrote, in mirrored and chiasmic form, that “The public that read and debated this sort of thing read and debated about itself.” (43) The public had not only become a “sphere” but a “debater” imagined in the mold of the oratorical “polemicist.”<sup>68</sup> The

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<sup>67</sup> My understanding of *prosopopeia* is thoroughly intertwined with the trope of *catathresis*. In this regard, I align myself with Paul de Man’s notion of *prosopopeia*. However, I do distinguish myself from de Man insofar as he takes a radically expansive or broad view of this figure, so much so that all figures become, in a sense, endlessly *prosopopeic*. I would, for instance, separate *prosopopeia* (giving a mask or face) from *apostrophe* (which I view as a repositioning of address or taking aim at a different addressee). Hence, I view *prosopopeia* as a figure that overlaps and intersects others, but I do not see this as a reason to reduce the entirety of rhetoric to its terms. See de Man *Allegories of Reading* (1979), “Autobiography as De-facement” (1979), “Hypogram and Inscription...” (1981), “Shelley Disfigured” (1979), and *The Rhetoric of Romanticism* (1984). See also Riffaterre (1985).

<sup>68</sup> Habermas’ affinity for the polemicist and a critical polemic more generally is a recurrent theme throughout *The Structural Transformation*. In most cases, Habermas takes this polemic as one between the public and the state, hence, Habermas figures the public itself in the mold of the polemicist. (133, 184) The disappearance of this polemic also coincides with the disappearance of the idealized public sphere, producing a “tranquilizing” or “staged” critique, ultimately arguing that “Critical publicity is supplanted by manipulative publicity.” (164, 178)

Habermasian account of the “eighteenth century critic” performed, even as it historicized, the formation of the public-*as*-orator through critical practices that returned the *prosopopeia* of publics in the form of *public prosopopeia*, reflecting the critic’s position, no longer the mere spokesman for publics, but the instrument of publics, a mere tool through which the public speaks its truth back to itself. The Habermasian history of art and literary criticism, not to be divorced from its history of critical publicity generally, became an autobiography of publics and a trap for the public voice—the attempt to make publics look themselves in the eye. To the extent that we, even today, continue to accede to the Habermasian narrative, the modern critic fancies themselves the makers of publics rather than the constitutive effect of a structure of love by virtue of having held a mirror up to the public’s face. But note how this critic is no different from their “mirror.” This is to say that the Habermasian account positions its *critic* as an *inanimate* and *instrumental* object no different from *the salon* – an object upon which our desire for publicness can be cathected.

### **The Domain of the Orator**

Let us posit the following: today, the public occupies the position of the Ciceronian *true-orator*, the measure by which every other speaker, text, and practice is judged. Given the strength of this articulation between “the public” and “the orator,” what then can oratory teach us about today’s publics? In the section that follows, I argue that the orator is itself only one particular kind of object, and furthermore, that the orator’s authority is in large part derived from the transference. To demonstrate how the orator is itself an object of the transference we may return to Cicero’s *De Oratore* as a site of invention. Specifically, *De Oratore*’s principal character, Lucius Licinius Crassus, need not be a “true-orator” in order to be taken as one. This

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Indeed, the entirety of Habermas’ concluding chapter may be read as setting a dichotomy between critical/polemical publics on the one hand, and staged/manipulated publics on the other. (232)

transference, or the conflation between Crassus and the idealized orator, is made possible by the orator's function as an object (*agalma*) within a larger public domain.

Etymologically, the term orator itself positions the speaker as a public object or site of cathexis. Indeed oratory wrote the book on the *prosopopeia* of publics, and etymologically, the term "orator" itself takes the form of a condensed *prosopon*. The common conflation between "oratory" and "speech," "orator" and "speaker," neglects a crucial thread.<sup>69</sup> Michiel de Vaan's etymology discusses how both *oratio* (speech, utterance) and *orator* (envoy, public speaker) are derivatives of *oro, orare* (to pray to or beseech), yet, when Vaan's account presses further it encounters the Proto-Italic *os, oris* (mouth). (Vaan, 435-6) To speak of an "orator" is to rhetorically embed a *prosopopeia* within our 'speaker'. The "orator" references the speaker and speech, of course, but by way of a combination of "prayer," the supplication of the subject to the big Other, and the orifice of the "mouth," a part-object of the face. The dual relationship between *oro* and the *os* renders a speaker whose mouth, in a way, is given over to a higher power. In this way, the term *orator* is not quite interchangeable with the modern usage of "rhetor," or even the Greek term *rhêtôr* from which the Latin *orator* is adapted. Jeffrey Walker describes how the term *orator* may be distinguished from the Greek *rhêtôr* in this regard:

"In Latin the borrowed Greek term *rhetor* signifies a "rhetorician," a teacher of rhetoric, whereas the native term *orator* signifies an "orator," a "speaker." (In later Greek this Latin usage is absorbed, so that the Greek term *rhêtôr* eventually comes to mean both an "orator" and a "rhetorician.")" (Walker, 2011, 302)

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<sup>69</sup> In Latin, of course, there were a number of terms available to denote speech, for instance, linguistic variations of *locutio* or *dico*. The emphasis upon the term *orator* in Ciceronian thought places it in a middle zone between the mere speaker, on the one hand, and the true orator, on the other.

The term *orator* is a product of a rhetoric that articulates the “speaker,” to the “magister,” by way of the “prayer” from the “mouth.” Before even uttering a word, the orator is already a rhetoric, a prayerful supplicant, but also a mouth, a figure of lack conveyed through the orifice, and indeed (by definition) a part severed off from speech itself. This orator is, quite literally, a sort of *pipe*. Put plainly, in oratory there is a subtle etymological shift of emphasis from a ‘speaker’ (an intending humanistic subject) to a *speaker* (the kind your radio has in your car). To speak of an orator is to cast the speaker as a part-object, or literally a mouth-piece, that inscribes a mouth upon the public such that it may “opine.”

Cicero’s *De Oratore*, which presents an orator as fractured as its etymology suggests, may be read as an exemplar of how our desire for our publics becomes transferred upon the figure of the orator. Much like Lacan’s reading of the *Symposium*, Cicero’s *De Oratore* may be taken as a lesson on the transference, or the sublimation of the orator as the “subject supposed to know” our public’s desire. Indeed, even at its most basic level, *De Oratore* posits that the true orator is one whose gravitas is transferrable to any topic. Cicero contends, through Crassus, that “the complete and finished orator is he who on any matter whatever can speak with fullness and variety.” (I.xiii.59)<sup>70</sup> In this way, *De Oratore* sharply distinguishes between the ‘true’ (here *plenum* or *perfectum*) orator and the run of the mill speaker by asserting that, for instance, “oratory is a greater thing, and has its sources in more arts and branches of study, than people suppose.” (I.iv.16)<sup>71</sup> Cicero, throughout the course of *De Oratore*, provides no settled instance of a “true orator” but rather a series of near misses and errant exemplars.<sup>72</sup> Even as the finished

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<sup>70</sup> [Sed oratorem plenum atque perfectum esse eum dicam, qui de omnibus rebus possit varie copioseque dicere.]

<sup>71</sup> [Sed nimirum maius est hoc quiddam, quam homines opinantur, et pluribus ex artibus studiisque collectum.]

<sup>72</sup> There are repeated references to the exceeding rarity of great orators throughout the dialogue. Two specific examples include (I.ii.5-8) and (I.iii.11-12). Dugan claims that quite unlike the Greek “rhetor” Cicero presents the

orator appears, repeatedly, throughout *De Oratore* it appears only as a figurative approximation, never completely in a single person.<sup>73</sup>

My reading of *De Oratore* will center on the dialogue's particular, and quite exclusive, transference of authority onto Crassus. This may prompt the question: what about Antonius? Of course, *De Oratore* is centered upon a series of speeches between two *magistri*, Crassus and Antonius, who engage in a rigorous debate over the nature of the orator, and who are both lauded as absolute masters in their own class.<sup>74</sup> My interest, however, is less in declaring who wins these debates than in tracing the matrix of desire that situates them. Even though Antonius' approach to oratory is accorded equal standing with that of Crassus, he is not sublimated as an object of desire in the same way, if at all. Indeed, Antonius' position, when viewed from the standpoint of desire, is actually quite parasitic upon his (supposed) adversary. Let us think of Antonius in the way Cicero introduces him to us: as an accomplice to Crassus himself, a "partner

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orator a "figure of profound cultural and political importance." (Dugan, 26) The Ciceronian tradition therefore owns its conflation between rhetoric and politics without apology.

<sup>73</sup> Classicists, in their own ways, generally corroborate this point. Dugan reminds us that this figure appears precisely at a time when the power of political oratory in the Roman republic is at its most vulnerable and characterizes its emergence in *De Oratore* as a "nostalgic idealization." (Dugan, 31) Similarly, Mankin argues that *De Oratore* presents its coveted orator as not yet realized in either Rome's past or its present. (Mankin, 2011, 4) Along slightly different lines Habinek characterizes Cicero's orator as a cross between a political and ritualistic figure. (Habinek, 2005, 29) Habinek describes Cicero as a "Roman priest of secular argument, one who seeks to establish a deep identification with traditions of prayer, incantation, and authorization from afar." (Habinek, 2005, 25)

<sup>74</sup> The general consensus is that Crassus represents the viewpoint most in line with Cicero's own whereas Antonius plays the role of a 'foil'. Whether Antonius is essentially taking a 'dive' so that Crassus looks good is of course debatable and we would not want to discount the substance he brings to the debate. Jeffrey Walker, for instance, reminds us that "Antonius *also* speaks for Cicero" and insists upon his supplemental role to Crassus as a more practical counterpart. (Walker, 5, 12) I have no particular grudge against Antonius, but to treat the two characters as if they occupied equivalent positions in the dialogue would be naïve. For instance, Mankin contends that Antonius' speech on the second day is a palinode that retracts all of the positions he had adopted on the first day. (Mankin, 2011, 6-8) In effect, the bulk of Antonius' speech in the first book is conceded at the outset of the second. For an account of the standard reading of Antonius as a 'foil' see Dugan, 31. Leeman, A. and Pinster, H., *M.T.C. De oratore libri III Kommentar I-V*. 1982-2008. Heidelberg. (p. I.13) Hall, J. "Persuasive Design in Cicero's *De Oratore*," *Phoenix* 48 (1994): 210-25, 211, 219. Fantham, E. 2004. *The Roman world of Cicero's De Oratore*, (Oxford), 187, 260, 265. May and Wisse. 2001. *Cicero on the Ideal Orator*. (p. 16)

in the political designs [*republica socius*] of Crassus, and a man united with him in the closest intimacy.” (I.vi.24)<sup>75</sup> When Antonius speaks, no matter what he says, he always does so from the position of a substitute. As a partner in the public designs of Crassus, Antonius’ words amplify the dialogue’s transference upon its true master.<sup>76</sup> Hence, at the level of desire, *De Oratore* frames its debates on uneven footing: when Antonius speaks his words not only prescribe his own approach to oratory, they also circumscribe the silence of Crassus as a lost object in the dialogue. The mere fact that Antonius speaks does not, in the least, work in his favor. In fact, the more Antonius speaks the more we hear *De Oratore*’s participants (including Antonius himself) clamoring: *Yes, but what does Crassus have to say? Give us more Crassus!*

The sublimation of Crassus as *De Oratore*’s exemplar of a true orator illustrates how, for our purposes, the orator is positioned as a public object. The singularity of Crassus is at work even before the dialogue begins in earnest, amidst Cicero’s prefatory letter to his brother Quintus. In his own voice, Cicero reminisces upon an occasion from his youth when the mere

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<sup>75</sup> [et M. Antonius, homo et consiliorum in republica socius, et summa cum Crasso familiaritate coniunetus.]

<sup>76</sup> Antonius only takes the reins of the dialogue at the direction of Crassus himself, and arguably, “Antonius” becomes a proper name for Crassus’ own device of deflection and deferral. In every instance, Antonius speaks upon a topic that had first been intended for Crassus to address. This is exemplified when Crassus refuses Sulpicius with the line “Nay, Sulpicius, but let us rather ask Antonius.” [Immo vero, inquit, Sulpici, rogemus Antonium] (I.xxii.99, see also I.xlvii.205-206) Indeed we are told of this appropriation explicitly when Sulpicius accepts the deal that Crassus offers: “For from the lips of Antonius we shall be learning of your own views also.” [Nam Antonio dicente, etiam quid tu intellegas, sentiemus.] (I.xlvii.206) This seemingly innocuous transition marks a recurrent thematic of the dialogue: Crassus appears (at least to the other members of the dialogue) to be playing hard to get. And rather than deny Sulpicius’ request, it is Crassus himself that orchestrates the turn to Antonius. In this way, Crassus, playing coy, performs the *agalma* in his own elusiveness. This very same condition flows from the mouth of Antonius when he tells us that his discourse is predicated upon an acknowledgement of his own lack. (I.xlviii.208) And we see this again as a precept to Antonius’ speech in book II when he stipulates that “I will teach you, my disciples, something that I have not learned myself.” [docebo vos, discipuli, quod ipse non didici] (II.vii.29, see also II.lxxiv.298) Even amidst the greatest disagreements between Antonius and Crassus this prefatory clause remains in effect: Antonius speaks in Crassus’ place and in his name. Antonius is not an adversary, he is a fragment of Crassus himself. The number of examples of deferrals from Crassus to Antonius are too great to account for in full here. This dynamic of deferral continues throughout book II. (II.iv.15, 2.124-7, 2.350, 2.364-6, cf. 2.233) Crassus’ sandbagging strategy even manages to delay until the third day (book III) by adjourning the day’s activities (2.367). On Crassus’ deferrals see also Mankin (8).

arrival of Crassus dispelled the tumultuous mood of the Senate.<sup>77</sup> Cicero writes that “such was the man’s pleasantness and so great the charm of his humour that it seemed as though a day in the Senate-house [*Curiae*] was closing with supper at Tusculum.” (I.vii.27)<sup>78</sup> Make careful note of the latter part of this statement. Crassus masters the Senate-house in the same way as he would his very own Tusculan villa, he is as comfortable in the public house as in his own *oikos*. This figuration of the *agalma*, the charm, of Crassus will repeat itself throughout the dialogue. Furthermore, *De Oratore* expands upon its Platonic predecessor by taking this very same Tusculan villa as the imagined scene of the dialogue itself. We might rightly liken this villa to the *agalma* inside Socrates in the *Symposium* in the sense that *De Oratore* fashions its orator Crassus as an *agalma* within a public frame (the *Curiae*).<sup>79</sup> Taking its cue from a direct

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<sup>77</sup> The transference between Crassus and the *true orator* in *De Oratore* may be partially attributed to Cicero’s own castrated publicity during the period the treatise was written. *De Oratore* was written a little more than a decade after the Catalinian conspiracy was famously foiled by a series of speeches Cicero delivered himself. Cicero’s advocacy for the execution of these would-be usurpers won him a number of enemies in the Roman senate. In the wake of Cataline’s attempted coup there was an effort to form a new alliance between Caesar, Pompey, and Crassus (not to be confused with *De Oratore*’s Crassus). Cicero’s opposition to this triumvirate would result in his enemies forcing him into exile. Two classical scholars, James May and Jakob Wisse, write that even though Cicero’s exile lasted only a year, “he soon found that power was still basically in the hands of the three men, and he despaired for the Republic.” (May and Wisse, 9) *De Oratore*, they observe, would take on this very same mood of despair when written a few years later. A similar account of the confluence of events that led up to the writing of *De Oratore* may be found in the scholarship of Elaine Fantham who also reminds us that only a few short years prior to its composition Cicero had been a “virtual outlaw.” (7) Fantham tells us that for Cicero the memories of how his wife and children had been forced to flee the city, how his brother had endured threats upon his life, and how his own villa in Tusculum had been raised to the ground would all remain fresh wounds. (8) Fantham’s account contextualizes *De Oratore* in relation to Cicero’s own public status, his return from exile and the deprivation of his own speech. Fantham opens her book with a characterization of *De Oratore* as a “taking stock” (1) of both the Roman *res publica* and Cicero’s own troubled position as an orator within it. In effect, Fantham chronicles a very different Cicero upon his return, in her words one who “could no longer voice his own political principles without urgent risk.” (Fantham, 9)

<sup>78</sup> [eaque esset in homine iucunditas, et tantus in iocando lepos, ut dies inter eos Curiae fuisse videretur, convivium Tuscalani.]

<sup>79</sup> The Platonic structuration of the *agalma* upon Crassus is especially evident from Scaevola’s passage later in *De Oratore*: “Why not do then...as you would do, if you had come to some mansion or country-house that was full of objects of art? If these were laid aside, as you describe, and you had a strong desire to behold them, you would not hesitate to ask the master of the house to order them to be brought out, especially if you were his familiar friend. So too now will you beg Crassus to bring out into the daylight that abundance of his treasures, of which, piled together in one place, we in passing have caught just a glimpse, as through a lattice, and also set up every piece in its proper position?” [Quin to igitur facis idem... quot faceres, si in aliquam domum, plenam ornamentorum, villamve vinisses? Se ea seposita, ut dicis, essent, tu valde spectandi cupidus esses; non dubitares rogare dominum, ut

comparison between Crassus and Socrates, however, Crassus distances himself from his Platonic counterpart with a backhanded compliment: “when making fun of orators... [Plato] himself seemed to me to be the consummate orator.” (I.xi.47)<sup>80</sup> Hence, *De Oratore*'s formation of desire is no mere rehash of Socrates, indeed the orator is recast as an object of desire in itself. Cicero not only lodges an *agalma* within Crassus, but also situates Crassus *as* an *agalma*, the singular object nestled within this Tusculan villa, his own domain, which is in turn analogized to an eminently public space, the Senate-house [*Curiae*]. As told through Scaevola, the entirety of *De Oratore* takes place on the grounds of Crassus' leisurely villa and in the shade of his *charm*:

Crassus, why do we not imitate Socrates as he appears in the *Phaedrus* of Plato? For your plane-tree has suggested this comparison to my mind, casting as it does, with its spreading branches, as deep a shade over this spot, as that one cast whose shelter Socrates sought—which to me seems to owe its eminence less to ‘the little rivulet’ described by Plato than to the language of his dialogue—and what Socrates did, whose feet were thoroughly hardened, when he threw himself down on the grass and so began the talk which philosophers say was divine,—such ease surely may more reasonably be conceded to my own feet.” “Nay,” answered Crassus, “but we will make things more comfortable still,” whereupon, according

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proferri iuberet, praesertim si esses familiaris. Similiter nunc petes a Crasso, ut eam copiam ornamentorum suorum, quam constructam uno in loco, quasi per transennam praetereuntes strictim aspeximus, in lucem proferat, et suo quidque in loco collocet?] (I.xxxv.162).

<sup>80</sup> [*quo in libro in hoc maxime admirabar Platonem, quod mihi in oratoribus irredendis ipse esse orator summus videbatur.*] This comparison between Plato's Socrates and Crassus stems even to the manner in which *De Oratore* references the works of Aristotle, Theophrastus and Carneades. (I.xi.49) On the appropriation of these earlier authorities in *De Oratore* see Fortenbaugh, William W., “Cicero as a Reporter of Aristotelian and Theophrastian Rhetorical Doctrine,” *Rhetorica: A Journal of the History of Rhetoric*, 23.1 (Winter, 2005): 37-64. And for the similarities on the discussion of style between Aristotle and Cicero see Fantham (2004).

to Cotta, he called for cushions, and they all sat down together on the benches that were under the plane-tree. (I.vii.28-29)<sup>81</sup>

The contours of *De Oratore's* rhetorical situation are structured entirely by this instance of transference between Scaelova and Crassus.<sup>82</sup> Recall how Lacan likened the *agalma*, the trace of Alcibiades' desire for Socrates, to "little Russian dolls" which are "fitted into one another." (Lacan, Sem. VIII, III.2) Crassus may fit this particular nesting metaphor even better than Socrates. On one hand, the other characters are constantly pointing to the *agalma* within Crassus, and their own tongues dripping with Cicero's desire at every turn. The dialogue's participants constantly try to pry the secrets of oratory out of Crassus. But on the other hand, Crassus is *also* posited as an object of desire *within* a larger public frame, which is evident from the dialogue's repeated references to its very own scene. The characters of *De Oratore* are flanked on all sides by the tokens of Cicero's desire for Crassus: encompassed within his villa at Tusculum, cast under the shade of his plane-tree, and even owing the comfort of their seating to the cushions he orders for them. The Tusculan villa is a staging ground for publicity; *De Oratore* directly compares its scene to the Greek *gymnasium*, a place of training and mastery.<sup>83</sup> Crassus has been given 'home field advantage' on a scale that the wandering Socrates never could have dreamt, and as the reader has already been told, this is an advantage that Crassus

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<sup>81</sup> [Cur non imitamur, Crasse, Socratem illum, qui est in Phaedro Platonis? Nam me haec tua platanus admonuit, quae non minus ad opacandum hunc locum patulis est diffusa ramis, quam illa, cuius umbram secutus est Socrates, quae mihi videtur non tam 'ipsa acula,' quae describitur, quam Platonis oratione crevisse: et, quod ille durissimis pedibus fecit, ut se abiceret in herbam, atque ita illa, quae philosophi divinitus ferunt esse dicta, loqueretur, id meis pedibus certe concedere est aequius. Tum Crassum: Immo vero commidius etiam; pulvinosque poposcisse, et omnes in eis sedibus, quae errant sub platano, consedisce dicebat.] For more regarding *De Oratore's* imitation and departure from Plato's model see Dugan (31).

<sup>82</sup> Scaelova might also be seen as a stand-in for Cicero here, every other character in the dialogue will follow Scaelova's lead in this regard.

<sup>83</sup> Sulpicius later likens Crassus' villa to the Greek gymnasium. (I.xxi.98) A similar comparison between Crassus' villa and the Greek gymnasium serves as the setting for book II. (II.v.19-22)

carries with him *in public*, specifically the *Curiae* or Senate-House.<sup>84</sup> It is fitting that the debate that ensues between Crassus and Scaelova is one of domains. But arrayed in this way, under the yoke of Cicero's pen, do any of our dialogue's other participants really stand a chance against Crassus?

The debate between Crassus and Scaelova turns on a series of questions regarding the domain of the orator, but the most important domain once again turns out to be this Tusculan villa. The question of oratory's domain is both the central thematic of the dialogue and its most recurrent topic of discussion. On the surface the questions are benign enough: What is the proper domain of the orator? Is a knowledge of speech sufficient or must this orator become accomplished in every domain? But something peculiar happens at the conclusion of this early debate between Crassus and Scaevola. Even though the debate turns on whether the orator must be a master of all domains, *only one domain* in particular really seems to matter, this figurative villa:

For with regard to your remark, Scaevola, that, had you not been in my domain  
[*meo regno esses*], you would not have endured my assertion that the orator must  
be accomplished in every kind of discourse and in every department of culture, I

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<sup>84</sup> Let us compare for a moment the relation between the position occupied by Crassus and the one Lacan accords to the analyst in psychoanalysis. The Crassus presented to us in *De Oratore* is two steps removed from Lacan's analyst. First in Crassus' (mis)relation to Socrates and second by the gap between Socrates himself and the position that Lacan accorded to the analyst. There are three similarities that make this (non)relation mentionable. First, like Socrates, Crassus is characterized by the transference. Crassus comes to occupy a position of the subject "supposed to know" the truth of his interlocutors' desire. And like Socrates, *De Oratore* places an *agalamic* jewel in Crassus' care – and the disclosure of this jewel is repeatedly demanded of him. Second, like Socrates, Crassus occupies the position of the Other with respect to the other members of the dialogue (as well as its writer). One of the characteristics of Socrates which draws Lacanian comparisons to the analyst is he remains an impenetrable enigma. And third, like Socrates, Crassus attempts to issue something of an 'interpretation'. Crassus separates himself off from the object his interlocutors 'see' within him. But *De Oratore's* Crassus is also set apart from the Socrates of Plato's *Symposium* in the way he is structured as an orator and figure of publicity. Crassus, in this regard, exhibits a uniquely oratorical transference more akin to the role of Agathon than Socrates.

should certainly never have made that assertion, did I consider myself to be the man I am endeavouring to portray. (I.xvi.71)<sup>85</sup>

As a matter of fact, Scaevola will even concede the debate on this point. (I.xvi.74) But what has just happened here? Crassus tells us, quite explicitly, that had Scaevola not been in Crassus' *domain* (his *regno* - the realm of his control or his kingdom) this would have never been such a lopsided debate. The rhetorical situation imagined within *De Oratore* is not simply a locale or setting; it is situated at the doorstep of the *agalma* itself, purporting to give its reader a glimpse inside the public's man, Crassus. What I am suggesting here is that we adjust the way we think about the little words *in public*. These words are not simply a reference to something placed in public space, but they are also a pointer towards the *agalma within the public*, a material trace of the public's voice.<sup>86</sup>

But how do we know for sure that Crassus (the orator) is just a convenient site of cathexis for our love of publics as an object? We can find our answer in how Crassus is repeatedly transferred into the position of what *De Oratore* terms the "true orator" and how no one in the dialogue, precisely because they're so in love with him, can take his words seriously. Despite repeated efforts to rebuff the mistaken transferences of his interlocutors, Crassus himself cannot seem to shake the transference between himself and the "true orator." Crassus displays all of the

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<sup>85</sup> [Namque quod illud, Scaevola, negasti te fuisse laturum, nisi in meo regno esses, quod in omni genere sermonis, in omni parte humanitatis dixerim oratorem perfectum esse debere, numquam mehercule hoc dicerem, si eum, quem fingo, me ipsum esse arbitrarer.]

<sup>86</sup> The enigmatic reclusiveness of Crassus as an oratorical object is exemplified at the opening of the third book, where we are met with a sagacious and reclusive Crassus preparing in an "alcove" and "reclining on a couch placed there for him." ["*tum dedita opera quiescentibus aliis in eam exhedram venisse in qua Crassus lectulo posito recubisset*"] (III.iv.17) Crassus is given time undisturbed by the others in order to "prepare as if for an important court case." (Mankin, 8) Cotta, having spied Crassus in his moment of meditation and silence, retreats and waits until the evening to return. But given that book III only resumes this dialogue after Cicero's prefatory 'eulogy' we must wonder whether the man has receded so that the 'spirit' may become more evident. When Crassus finally does come out from his silent alcove it is only to speak in the "shade" of the plantation's woods. (III.v.18)

typical call signs of an oratorical object. Everyone clamors around to hear Crassus speak, and when he finally does, no one seems to listen. And, like any time we find a seemingly great orator, it seems as if this schmuck could say *anything* and get away with it.<sup>87</sup> Let us return to the conclusion of the debate with Scaelova, where Crassus points out that Scaelova has only confessed defeat in reverence to Crassus' authority within his *oikos*, Crassus says, to paraphrase, *even though oratory is not my domain, you have nonetheless restrained yourself as if it were*. But despite this disclaimer, it is as if no one is on the other end of the line. Indeed only moments later Scaevola is right back at it, confusing Crassus with the “true orator,” and the force of this transference has even been amplified:

And for my own part, if ever any one man should have mastered all of them, and that same man should have united with them this added power of perfectly graceful expression, I cannot deny that he would be a remarkable kind of man and worthy of admiration; but if such a one there should be, or indeed ever has been, or really ever could be, assuredly you would be that one man, who both in my opinion and in that of everyone else, have left all other orators—if they will pardon me saying so—almost without glory. (I.xvi.76)<sup>88</sup>

No, Crassus patiently responds, “Remember that I have not been speaking of my own skill, but of that of an orator.” (I.xvii.78)<sup>89</sup> Changing tact, Crassus catalogues his own inadequacies as a

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<sup>87</sup> Mikkel Borch-Jacobsen characterizes this dynamic as the mark of the “leader (or *Führer*)” (136), but as Laclau argues, the unilateral emphasis upon the leader is “excessive” because it neglects the differential arrangements of desire in the social. (56-7) I am inclined to characterize this dynamic as the mark of the orator rather than the leader. In terms of *De Oratore*, even if we accept Crassus as the principal master, at least the inclusion of Antonius reminds us that he’s not the only game in town.

<sup>88</sup> [Quas ego, si quis sit unus complexus omnes, idemque si ad eas facultatem istam ornatissimae orationis adiunxerit; not possum dicere, eum non egregium quemdam hominem atque admirandum fore, sed is, si quis esset, aut si etiam unquam fuisset, aut vero si esse posset, tu esses unus profecto; qui et meo iudicio, et omnium, vix ullam ceteris oratoribus (pace horum dixerim) laudem reliquisti.]

<sup>89</sup> [Memento, inquit, me non de mea, sed de oratoris facultate dixisse.]

speaker, becoming for a moment a ‘critic’ of his own oratory. Although he has the ability, Crassus assures that he most certainly is lacking [*defuit*] in the learning [*doctrina*], leisure [*otium*] and zeal [*studium*] requisite for a full mastery of oratory. (I.xvii.79) Perhaps, Crassus suggests, we should try to imagine him without these faults and account for the resulting discrepancy. This attempt won’t work either, since this is a group of interlocutors that believes one of Crassus’ greatest traits is his modesty. (I.xxvi.122) Hence, even the faults of Crassus become another little trinket, another jewel, hanging around his neck. The result is this: despite all of Crassus’ caveats and disclaimers, none of his contemporaries can resist the lure of Crassus as an *object*. In every case, in every interaction, Crassus is adopted as the model orator, substituted into the position of the true orator, and this is especially the case when they admit he’s not.

Indeed this transference, the conflation between Crassus and the “true orator,” will extend even to Crassus’ greatest adversary in the dialogue, Antonius. Antonius, however, is a little craftier than Scaelova. While at first appearing to accept the disclaimers of Crassus, Antonius will subtly accept the limitations of Crassus only to once again insist on his desire for the materiality of the oratorical object:

I do not despair of its coming to pass that some day some one, keener in study than we are or ever have been, endowed with ampler leisure and earlier opportunity for learning, and exhibiting closer application and more intensive industry, who shall have given himself up to listening, reading and writing, will stand forth as an orator such as we are seeking, who may rightly be called not merely accomplished but actually eloquent; and after all, to my mind either Crassus is such a man already, or, should some one of equal natural ability have

heard, read and written more than Crassus, he will only be able to improve to some slight extent upon him. (I.xxi.95)<sup>90</sup>

At the very least Antonius appears to attribute some *minor* discrepancy between his image of Crassus and the idealized orator in his mind's eye. But it doesn't take long for Antonius to reverse course. Even Antonius' last stanza, which attempts to articulate an ideal orator, can do nothing other than circle back to Crassus himself. Antonius goes so far as to say he will take Crassus over and above the "true orator," contending that the ideal orator is itself lacking insofar as it is only a *slight* [*paulum*] improvement upon Crassus. Antonius, despite being keenly aware of the discrepancy between Crassus and the "true orator," has nonetheless placed the king right back on his throne. After all, even if there were such an ideal orator, Antonius surmises, the *measure of improvement* upon Crassus would be a mere *trifle* [*paulum*]. Hence much of the content of Antonius' stance in the first book, which is a *slighting* of the ideal orator, is a thinly veiled form of praise. In this way, Antonius' arguments in his debate with Crassus are indistinguishable from an assertion of love. Once again, Antonius has proclaimed his love for *his orator*, the one sitting right in front of him.

But there is a key difference between the kind of transference found in Scaelova and the one in Antonius: for Antonius, Crassus *is* the *real thing*. Like Scaevola had done before, Antonius only mounts a quasi-debate with Crassus, but not only due to Antonius' overt concession, the 'dive', famously taken in book II. Antonius is playing the foil the second he opens his mouth (another mouth-piece for Crassus), and this is because Antonius' argument has

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<sup>90</sup> [non despero fore aliquem aliquando, qui et studio acriore, quam nos sumus atque fuimus, et otio ac facultate discendi maiore ac maturiore, et labore atque industria superior, cum se ad audiendum, legendum, scibendumque dediderit, existat talis orator, qualem quaerimus; qui iure non solum disertus, sed etiam eloquens dici possit: qui tamen, mea sentential, aut hic est iam Crassus, aut, si quis pari fuerit ingenio pluraque quam hic et audierit et lectitarit et scripserit, paulum huic aliquid poterit addere.]

an amorous side-effect: the *closer* Antonius comes to winning this sparring match with Crassus the more magnanimous Crassus appears and the closer Crassus approximates to the ideal itself, indeed, since Crassus is an actual model, perhaps even the ideal is inferior to his example. Antonius, in other words, doesn't merely conflate Crassus with the "true orator," he takes Crassus as a substitutable object for the idyllic model. In book II, Antonius contends that this jewel is the voice [*voce*] of Lucius Crassus, and this voice is a domain which Crassus himself cannot escape, a *voci serviet*, a slave to the voice. (II.xxxiii.144)<sup>91</sup> Once again, Crassus is no Socrates; he's doing Socrates one better. It is not merely that the participants of *De Oratore* are after some mythical jewel *inside* Crassus (which they are), but they also see Crassus himself as a kind of jewel *within* a larger *domain* - Crassus is this precious jewel.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> [neque enim ipse auxilium suum saepe a viris bonis frustra imporari patietur neque id aequo animo feret civitas, quae si voce L. Crassi carebit, ornamento quodam sese spoliata putabit.] Variations of the phrase *voci serviet* appear in two places. From Antonius, there is the expressed concern and warning that the orator should not become a slave to his voice. (I.lviii.251) From Crassus, a similar phrase [*voci serviatur*] appears when he argues that one ought to take great care of the voice. (III.lx.224) Examples of the articulation between this voice and publicus may be found in the way book III discusses the 'care' of the voice as a way of anticipating and accommodating the public ear. The modulation [*moderationem*] of the voice is concerned with "overcoming satiety in the hearer and delighting the ear with the rhythm of the words and the mode of the notes." ["Namque haec duo musici, qui erant quondam eidem poetae, machinati ad voluptatem sunt, versum modo delectationem vincere aurium satietatem. Haec igitur duo, vocis dico moderationem et verborum conclusionem, quoad orationis severitas pati possit, a poetica ad eloquentiam traducenda duxerunt."] (III.xliv.174) The articulation between the voice and music follows from an anxiety regarding the ear of the hearer. The voice must be managed in the service of this ear and this nomenclature of management relies upon two terms having to do with anxiety: *moderationem* (moderation and self-control) and *cura* (care and anxiety). When Crassus recommends the refined *urbanitas* in the intonations of the city dweller over the *rustica vox* (III.x.40-42) of countrified speech it is in the service to this public ear. (Ramage, 1961, 481-489) Therefore when the voice is likened to the musical instrument it is for the purposes of its moderation under the supposed judgment of publicus.

<sup>92</sup> Crassus only speaks on the following condition: "provided that I may disclaim powers which I do not possess, and admit ignorance of what I do not know,--put what questions to me you please." [ista conditione, dum mihi liceat negare posse, quod non potero, et fateri nescire quod nesciam, licet, inquit Crassus, vestro arbitratu percunctemini.] (I.xxii.101) Just moments later Mucius, one of our small fries, is right back to telling Crassus "I have always accounted you the ideal orator" [Equidem te cum discendo semper putavi deum] (I.xxii.106) In this case the translation substitutes the term ideal orator for the Latin *deum*, or god. Crassus tries again: "it is 'The Orator' we are seeking, we have to picture to ourselves in our discourse an orator from whom every blemish has been taken away, and one who moreover is rich in every merit." [Sed quia de oratore quaerimus, fingendus est nobis orationem nostra, detractis omnibus vitiis, orator, atque omni laude cumulatus.] (I.xxvi.118) Crassus, attempting to separate himself from his own domain, disclaims his ownership of it, explaining to his pupils that they will soon only find that "there was no ground for your longing." [cum audieris, non tam te haec admiraturum, quae dixero, quam existimaturum, tum, cum ea audire cupiebas, causam cur cuperes, non fuisse.] (I.xxxi.137)

But at no point is Crassus more overtly taken as a (public) object of desire than at the opening of the third book of *De Oratore*, because Crassus will remain a prisoner to a public voice, an *objet petit a*, even after his demise. In his preface to the third book, Cicero writes of the doomed fates of each of the dialogue’s participants, and Crassus is, of course, both the first and most embellished death. Cicero eulogizes Crassus as a “genius so deserving of immortality”<sup>93</sup> who would meet his sudden death little more than a week after the events of the dialogue. (III.i.1) By contrast, Cicero’s other participants (including Antonius) perish without much fanfare. (III.ii.9-11) We are only given a few of the supposed lines from Crassus’ “swan-song” but all of them pivot upon the severance of the voice from the orator’s body:

If your wish is to coerce Lucius Crassus, it is not those pledges that you have to destroy: you must cut out this tongue of mine—although even when this has been torn from my throat, my breath of itself will serve my liberty for the refutation of your license. (III.i.4)<sup>94</sup>

Cicero is unable to recount more of this fateful speech than this small section. But the portion offered almost perfectly matches both Cicero’s own embellishment and the circumstances surrounding Crassus’ demise. What Crassus predicts (the severance of his tongue) is re-enacted by Cicero himself in the very next stanza:

That oration was the swan-song of this inspired genius, the sound of whose voice we almost expected to hear when we used to come into the Senate-house after his

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<sup>93</sup> [immortale dignum ingenium]

<sup>94</sup> [Non tibi illa sunt caedenda si Crassum vis corcere: haec tibi est exidenda lingua; qua vel evulsa spiritu ipso libidinem tuam libertas mea refutabit.]

death in order to gaze upon the spot on which he had stood for the last time.<sup>95</sup>

(III.ii.6)

We are told that amidst this speech Crassus is struck by a pain in the side and begins to shudder and perspire, passing nearly a week later upon returning home to his villa. We have now come full circle: from *De Oratore's* introduction of Crassus as a man at home in the *Curiae* as in his own Tusculan villa, to a dialogue staged in this very same villa (the domain of Crassus' authority), and finally back to the *Curiae* as a final resting place. The public voice of Crassus, now cut off from its material embodiment, remains as an *agalma* within the Senate-house.

Crassus remains positioned as a lost object even once he (finally) speaks his truths of oratory in book three. Given the narrative ordering of *De Oratore*, when Crassus speaks on the dialogue's third day, he has already been pronounced dead by our narrator.<sup>96</sup> In this way, *De Oratore* positions Crassus as an enigma and a lost object until the bitter end, and importantly, he is a necessarily public object because his authority resides within the *Curiae*. To know the genius of Crassus is to master one's public. The lesson *De Oratore* teaches regarding our publics today is this: any given particular object (in this case, Crassus) may bear with it, even at the level of its utmost particularity, all of the tenets of a fully formed public.

### **Analogues of the Orator**

Today, as Derrida suggests, the public is an orator. But as we have learned from Cicero's text, the operative player in oratory is not speech so much as a public object, and at a certain

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<sup>95</sup> [Illa tanquam cycnea fuit divini hominis vox et oratio, quam quasi expectantes post eius interitum veniebamus in curiam ut vestigium illud ipsum in quo ille postremum institisset contueremur]

<sup>96</sup> The difficulty appropriating Cicero today may in part be due to a lack of coherence within his philosophical system. See (Fox, 319). But *De Oratore* may also be difficult to appropriate as a subtle work of fiction. Not only are the events of *De Oratore* removed from the events it describes by many years, Cicero himself, as writer and narrator, occupies a dual position both within and outside the dialogue. (Mankin, 2011, 2) In taking on the task of narrating, Cicero stylistically positions himself as something of a quasi-novelist. (Powell, 2013).

level any old object will do. Hence, the lesson we have learned from *De Oratore* corroborates an important component of Laclau's *On Populist Reason*, which I will quote extensively:

The aspiration to that fullness or wholeness [of the social demand] does not, however, simply disappear; it is transferred to partial objects which are the objects of the drives. In political terms, that is exactly what I have called a hegemonic relation: a certain particularity which assumes the role of an impossible universality. Because the partial character of these objects does not result from a particular story but is inherent in the very structure of signification, Lacan's *objet petit a* is the key element in a social ontology. The whole is always going to be embodied by a part. In terms of our analysis: there is no universality which is not a hegemonic one. There is, however, something more: as in the examples of the close-ups and the 'breast value' of the milk discussed by Copjec, there is nothing in the materiality of the particular parts which predetermines one or the other to function as a whole. Nevertheless, once a certain part has assumed such a function, it is its very materiality as a part which becomes a source of enjoyment.

(115)

Let us first discuss where my thesis, that *any object can be a public*, intersects with Laclau's point before we expand upon it. Similarly to Laclau's account, the public object we have been discussing (Crassus) works according to a hegemonic logic even in its material particularity. The object, in other words, does not need to complete the formation of *the public* as a social totality. Indeed, for Laclau, the impossibility of constituting a social totality is a necessary precondition of what he calls "populism." Hence, the key player becomes a set of social partial objects that, in Laclau's words, "are so cathected that they become the name of [the people's]

absence.” (116) The import of Laclau’s point is that if we want to understand our social totalities (aka publics), we must keep more careful track of the *objet petit a* I am calling the public voice object.

However, Laclau’s description leaves out the possibility of an *aphonic* demand, or a public voice in lieu of speech. As we discussed in chapter 2 and 3, the public voice object has an unusually nasty habit of being taken in-advance of its own constitution as an excessive remainder to the invocation of the Other. Any account of the *objet petit a* requires assessing its temporal function as an object-taken-as-cause of desire. Laclau, like Derrida did at the start of this chapter, takes a kind of public object in-advance: the *social demand*, that is to say, the *prosopopeia* of publics and the desire for our public(s) to *speak* is posited as his fundamental unit of analysis. (72-77) Hence, even though it appears as if Laclau’s description of populism may take any given *objet petit a* as its object, only the *demand* as a *speech object* really carries any water. Laclau’s public is, once again, imagined as an orator. To supplement Laclau’s account we must remember that voice and speech are not necessarily the same thing. Indeed, as Mladen Dolar’s *A Voice and Nothing More* theorizes, the voice is an “extra-linguistic element” that is dichotomous with the signifier. (Dolar, 15-17) What this means is that we must contemplate Laclau’s “social demand,” in all its particularity, as potentially an *aphonic* demand through and through. Simply put, if Lacan’s *objet petit a* is truly “the key element in a social ontology” maybe these objects don’t need to speak at all. Instead, if our public(s) are an orator today, perhaps it is time to stop thinking of our publics as a speaker and return to thinking of them as an *os/oris*, a mouth-piece, or an instrument. What we require are a set of analogues to the orator, which are still thinkable in terms of oratory, but open a door onto thinking our publics as *aphonic* objects.

*First Analogue:*

At the close of the third book of *De Oratore*, and once again through the lips of Crassus, Cicero writes of a most unusual gimmick at work in the speeches of Gaius Gracchus, an orator who “made a practice of having a skilled attendant to stand behind him out of sight with a little ivory flageolet when he was making a speech, in order promptly to blow a note to rouse him when he was getting slack to check him from overstraining his voice.” (III.lx.225) Thomas Habinek writes that the purpose of this “*fistulator* [the piper] was to keep Gracchus from going too high or too low within the possible register of his own voice.” (99)<sup>97</sup> The aim of this gimmick was to supplement the orator’s practical and public sensibilities, to keep him from blowing out his voice, and to keep his voice in line with public expectations. At first Crassus leaves it at that, but is begged to return again to this little pipe:

In every voice, said Crassus, “there is a mean pitch, but each voice has its own; and for the voice to rise gradually from the mean is not only agreeable (because it is a boorish trick to shout loudly at the beginning) but also beneficial for giving it strength; then there is an extreme point of elevation, which nevertheless falls short of the shrillest possible screech, and from this point the pipe will not allow one to go further, and will begin to call one back from the actual top note; and on the other side there is similarly an extreme point in the lowering of the pitch, the point reached in a sort of descending scale of sounds. This variation and this passage of the voice through all the notes will both safeguard itself and add charm to the

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<sup>97</sup> M.L. West’s *Ancient Greek Music* gives some additional insight into the use of this pitch pipe in Gracchus’ speeches. According to West, this was likely a “reedless pipe” to provide tonal consistency even though it would have probably still been able to play different notes. West concludes that it “was presumably a kind of flute.” (114)

delivery. But you will leave the piper at home, and only take with you down to the house the perception that his training gives you. (III.lxi.227)<sup>98</sup>

At least three players are at work by Crassus' account: the speaker (Gracchus), the *fistulator* (the piper – this would have likely been one of Gracchus' slaves) and the *fistula* (the pipe itself). In attenuating the voice to the sounding of the *fistula*, the orator simulates public desire by proxy, a safeguard for the orator Gracchus to be sure, but also a way of adding *charm* to the delivery itself. However, in the end, Crassus recommends against this particular gimmick, suggesting to his apprentices that we “leave the piper at home” and retain only his lessons.<sup>99</sup> So, why shouldn't every orator haul around a little pipe? The answer that Crassus provides is that this gimmick is simply unnecessary, since any orator ought to already know how to care for their voice, and he recommends leaving this piper at home.

But perhaps this sense of redundancy can be reversed such this *fistula* gimmick, rather than Gracchus' speech, is the principal object. Let us assume that we do as Crassus suggests and use the *fistula* and *fistulator* as ways of training the voice in at home. Could we not say that we have, in this little pipe, brought our public back home with us? On the one hand, this little *fistula* already does the duties of a public, calling Gracchus back from the extremities of his voice and back to a more suitable tone. On the other hand, this little *fistula* gimmick is the best thing Gracchus has going for him, at least as *De Oratore* frames it. Could we not, conversely, keep the

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<sup>98</sup> [In omni voce, inquit Crassus, est quoddam medium, sed suum cuique voci: hinc gradatim ascendere vocem et suave est (nam a principio clamare agreste quiddam est) et idem illud ad firmandam est vocem salutare; deinde est quoddam contentionis extremum, quod tamen interius est quam acutissimus clamor, quo te fistula progredi non sinet et iam ab ipsa contentione revocabit; est item contra quoddam in remissione gravissimum quoque tanquam sonorum gradibus descenditur. Haec varietas et his per omnes sonos vocis cursus et se tuebitur et actioni afferent suaviatem. Sed fistulatorem domi relinquetis, sensum huius consuetudinis vobiscum ad forum deferetis.]

<sup>99</sup> Some have characterized this recommendation to “leave the piper at home” as a repression of oratory's dependence upon and rootedness in music. Habinek characterizes this suppression of music as a kind of “open secret” of oratory. See Habinek (99-100) However, music need not be supposed as a point of origin preceding oratory here, rather aesthetic preference is positioned as a substitute for the public voice.

piper and leave Gracchus at home? In the end, Crassus doesn't bother discussing the speeches of Gracchus at all, even he only cares about this little *fistula* gimmick. Or perhaps Crassus is suggesting an even more negative approach to the *fistula*, that we should 'leave it at home' in the sense that we shouldn't be using it even for practice. But then again, could we not exclude every word Crassus says on the very same grounds of redundancy? After all, Cicero has been playing him like a pipe from the start. Recall how when Crassus speaks on the third day he has already been pronounced dead. Given Cicero's eulogy for Crassus in his prefatory letter to his brother Quintus, every word Crassus utters on this third day is spoken with our knowing in advance that his fate is sealed. Every *prosopopeia* that makes the dead speak must take this *fistula* in-advance; it assumes that there must be something uniquely public about *this* (dead) object; it assumes that *this* object is uniquely suited for, and just as good as, a public.

*Second Analogue:*

When Lacan introduced the object voice as a psychoanalytic concept in *Seminar X* he did so through extensive references to Theodore Reik's investigation into the Hebrew shofar as a concept metaphor, a 'rhetorical trinket', and what Lacan called a lure for the gods. The shofar takes the form a quasi-musical instrument. Quasi-musical because while the shofar undoubtedly makes a sound, it would not normally be set alongside more conventional musical instruments. After all, the groaning tones of the shofar's horn are more akin to the cries of a dying bull than the sharp and controlled tones of a trumpet. The shofar, as described by Reik and Lacan, illustrates how any object, even a dead one, can stand in as a public voice.<sup>100</sup> There is no need

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<sup>100</sup> Lacan's treatment of the shofar might be likened to Cixous' reading of Freud on the *unheimliche*. The shofar is sounded as neither fully alive nor dead. My proposal, therefore, might be understood as positing publics in the same way.

for *prosopopeia* here, at least in the sense that no one is making the shofar ‘speak’. What then is the shofar and what does it tell us about publics?

According to Reik’s account, the shofar functions as an unusual kind of public object. At base, the shofar is a horn (usually of a ram) used for ritualistic purposes in the Judaic tradition. Reik described the shofar in the following way:

In shape it is always curved, the horn of all animals except the bull may be used for it. The [...] reason for this exception, namely, to avoid awakening the memory of the fatal episode of the golden calf. The shofar may be engraved but not painted.[....] The shofar used in the synagogues at the present time has no ornamentation; [...] A shofar that has been broken and stuck together must not be used[...]. Originally women and children were forbidden to hear the sound of the shofar; this prohibition, however, has been forgotten, and now they usually wait to hear it blown. (Reik, 227)

The sounding of the shofar makes its appearance at a number of pivotal biblical moments including the law-giving on Mount Sinai, the destruction of the walls of Jericho, the transfer of the Ark of the Covenant to the young city of Zion, on the Day of Judgment, and the Day of Resurrection. (230-231) Reik ventured further into the occasions for the shofar throughout history and mentions its use at the coronations of kings (231), as an alarm in battle to terrify an enemy or to warn of coming dangers (229-230), and even to punctuate ceremonies of excommunication. For example, after the Jews had fallen under Roman rule, Reik noted that “the Romans held the blowing to be a sign of revolt.” (236) And in modern Judaism, Reik observed how the shofar’s sounding was taken up through rituals that preceded its use, in what Reik described as acts of anticipation (fasting/breathlessness) on the part of the congregation.

Reik's investigation illustrates how the shofar is not only a ritualistic device, but also a way of entrapping a public in advance. But the kind of public that the shofar is substituted for is (often) a silent one. The shofar is an object in lieu of public speech, although in many ways it accomplishes the same ends.

But furthermore, the sounding of the shofar need not invoke a 'living' public at all, indeed it works just as well for dead or even impossible publics. In other words, the shofar's call invokes a kind of lost or aphonic public. Following Freud, Reik's analysis closely followed the "standard" Oedipal interpretation that represents the shofar as a repressed desire on the part of the Jewish people to (once again) slay and usurp the Father. Reik's analysis traced the shofar as a series of metonymic deferrals from the trumpet, to the shofar proper, to God, to the bull, but ultimately even to the horns of the devil himself. In this way, right or not, Reik's shofar bore witness to the legitimacy of the Freudian case for the Oedipal insurrection against the Father. In this way Reik's shofar works like a *cue*, linking and indeed substituting the 'living' publics of today out for what Reik saw as the primal scene at Mt. Sinai. Lacan would take Reik's analysis of the shofar as a springboard for displacing the Father within psychoanalysis itself. For Lacan, the shofar is a concept metaphor for how the morphology of an object may serve as a fulcrum for social change. In Lacan's iteration, the shofar was neither a simple castration of the voice of the Father nor of Moses, but an excessive element that stands in the place of both, an imitation standing in the place of God. Hence, in contrast to Reik's (more Freudian) emphasis upon the castration of the Father, Lacan's shofar points to a metonymic dimension of the object in the realm of the social.

For Lacan, the shofar exemplified how lack's reassuring bulwark against anxiety is limited by metonymic displacements of voice. The repetition of the shofar's sounding at

moments of social change marks the point at which the covenant between the subject and the Other has been thrown into confusion. In this way, Lacan's shofar posited a different way of "assuaging God," not by imaging a persuadable Other, but by exposing a lack in the Other that renders it a metonymic, hence movable, object. (Lacan, 240) In this sense the shofar is a reminder that the Other is a rhetoric. Lacan's shofar traps the Other in our economies of desire, circumcising a gap in the authority of the Other. Based on the Lacanian read, whenever the shofar is sounded we are effectively telling our big Other: *this horn does not only belong to you*. But what assurance is there that the horn of a dead animal can have staying power in the modern day?

*Third Analogue:*

On September 14 of 2001, amidst the smoldering remains that were being called 'Ground Zero', President George W. Bush famously honored the dead from September 11 and rallied the nation from atop a perch amid the rubble. But just before addressing the nation, in apparently impromptu fashion, President Bush would make the innocuous move of reaching for a 'bullhorn' to address the crowd. This simple bullhorn became, to borrow Derrida's term, an "advanced point" of exemplarity in the immediate aftermath of September 11. Just a few days later on September 17, Bush's speech would be characterized by *United Press International* as having "*capped* a week that saw a dramatic transformation." (Roff) And with the phrase "bullhorn moment" this simple prop would become a standard by which other presidents became judged. In contrast to a host of other post-September 11 addresses, the "bullhorn speech" was forged in the fires of raw and unmitigated desire. But amidst the sea of scholarly ink that attempted to grapple with the 'War on Terror', scarcely a drop would be devoted to the central player for

whom Bush's speech had been named.<sup>101</sup> This simple gimmick so similar to the *fistula* of Gaius Gracchus was no longer visible, and no longer an object of 'critique', to the modern eye. Just as no account of the Bible may omit the events of Sinai and Jericho, no account of Bush's speech or the 'War on Terror' is complete absent this little horn.

In popular media coverage of Bush's the address at 'Ground Zero' the 'bullhorn' was foregrounded right from the start. On September 14<sup>th</sup>, national media outlets pummeled their audiences with repeated viewings of Bush's speech, but note how Aaron Brown of CNN *introduced* the video clip in one iteration:

And there was a moment not very long ago where the president grabbed the bull horn in one hand and began to talk to the rescue workers who were down on the ground. It is a little hard to hear in parts, but it is absolutely worth taking a look at and listen to. (Brown et al., "America's New War: President Bush in New York")

When CNN cut to the clip the very first words were not Bush's salutary "Thank you all" featured in most transcripts but the strange phrase "*It can't go any louder.*" The "bullhorn address" had a reputation before anyone had even watched it. Before a single word was uttered, before any image, and before any outburst or chant of "USA!" Americans had already been given everything they needed to know. In this instance, we might rightly (re)characterize the public not as the recipients of Bush's address, nor any national persona explicitly solicited by Bush's address, but as the little object we were given right from the start. We could rest assured that the

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<sup>101</sup> Denise Bostdorff has argued that the influence of the Puritan rhetoric of covenant renewal was central to the appeal of President Bush's post-September 11 discourse in a way that "inaugurated him into the presidency." (2003, 294) Bush's "bullhorn speech" may be something of an exception to this observation, the speech has almost no moving rhetorical parts and is simply too short to establish a well-developed Puritan jeremiad, nor does it suggest any planned rhetorical strategy for the months that follow.

American public was in good hands. Americans were told, and reminded again before each re-airing of the address, that our president had effectively taken the bull by the horns.

On September 15<sup>th</sup> David Von Drehle of *The Washington Post* drew attention to not one but two presidential speeches on the preceding day, the “bullhorn” speech, but also another delivered at the Washington National Cathedral just a few hours before. Indeed Von Drehle’s article would characterize *both* addresses as rallying the nation “to go to battle as one.” (A01) And yet, despite the almost identical content of the two speeches performed by President Bush on September 14<sup>th</sup> only the address at ‘Ground Zero’ would stick in the supposed public’s ‘memory’. In the days that followed, responses to President Bush’s “bullhorn address” foregrounded optics that included the bullhorn itself, the firefighter who accompanied him, the firetruck beneath him, and the surrounding backdrop of rubble. For Von Drehle’s account however, the bullhorn became more than just another prop adorning the scene of this address. As Von Drehle’s account of the day’s events turned to the supposed fulcrum of Bush’s speech, the phrase “I can hear you,” it nonetheless subtly reminded its reader of the speech’s true turning point: the fact these words were “shouted into the raspy amplifier.” (A01)

Von Drehle, like so many others, had translated Bush’s little toy bullhorn into a *raspy voice*, an amorous object. But the reading foreclosed to modernity was the one championed by Crassus, that this “bullhorn” was a redundant, stupid, prop that risked a catastrophic misfire. Contrary to the common misconception that President Bush had been given a “blank check” on account of the catastrophe of September 11<sup>th</sup>, news outlets at the time were already commenting on quiet rumblings criticizing President Bush for slinking away from the public ‘eye’ in the immediate aftermath of the attacks. From a certain point of view, all of the pieces that would make for such a critique are present in the address. If the first several lines of the speech are

viewed in isolation, it would be easy to conclude that Bush's failure to reach his audience was total:

President Bush: Thank you all. I want you all to know -- *it [bullhorn] can't go any louder* -- I want you all to know that American today, American today is on bended knee, in prayer for the people whose lives were lost here, for the workers who work here, for the families who mourn. The nation stands with the good people of New York City and New Jersey and Connecticut as we mourn the loss of thousands of our citizens

Rescue Worker: *I can't hear you!*

This speech is remembered for a number of things, particularly the emotionally charged state of its audience. But while these rescue workers were clearly affectively engaged, their affective orientations were not necessarily *aligned* up to this point in the speech. Even as one interlocutor shouted the social demand "Go get them, George!" many others appeared to have their attention elsewhere. The video record of the speech shows a surprising number of its listeners strangely disengaged. And indeed throughout this initial section of the speech there was a persistent and growing smattering of different variations of this "*I can't hear you!*" Perhaps if this group appears disengaged it is because they *are*. On the one hand, for them, the speech was flatly inaudible, and on the other hand, their attention pivoted upon the bull horn itself. If the affective energy of this audience is so important for this speech we must recall that some of it appears in the form of frustration *at* the president. This frustration boils over in the final outburst, "*I can't hear you!*" – which is to say – *Hey idiot! Your little horn doesn't work!*

Yet it is precisely on account of this flawed little horn that this speech finally managed to get its legs. Bush's "bullhorn moment" strikingly resembles the catalogue of instances provided

by Reik and Lacan in which the Hebrew use of the shofar punctuated the junctures and pivot-points of public desire, albeit perhaps with more foreboding undertones.<sup>102</sup> In response to the anxious outburst “*I can’t hear you*” President Bush inverted the statement he received and returned it in the rhetorical form of a *chiasmus*:

President Bush: *I can hear you! I can hear you! The rest of the world hears you!*

And the people -- and the people who knocked these buildings down will hear all of us soon!

The italicized *chiasmus* in the above selection is perhaps the only section where President Bush was not stuttering and repeating broken segments of phrases like “The nation – The nation.” Between these two fundamental stanzas that make up the central *chiastic* device of this address [I can’t hear you  $\chi$  I can hear you!] is a rhetorical position occupied by none other than the bullhorn itself. This is not to say that the material object, this particular horn, ever mattered all that much. Rather, Bush’s innocuous prop had become a modern shofar, a device that served as a cue (a trap) for a public long ‘dead’. But here is the key point: the bullhorn is neither made to speak by President Bush, nor does this bullhorn necessarily speak on behalf of the public of Sinai or the Jewish people either. The bullhorn invokes an aphonic public, to use Dolar’s phrase, a public with a voice and nothing more. Perhaps it was the horn of the ram, rather than George W. Bush himself, that was the *true orator* of September 14<sup>th</sup>.

This chapter has argued that public *speech*, either in the form of “public opinion” or even ventriloquism or *prosopopeia* of publics, is an object of the day. Indeed, one lesson that we may learn from classical oratory, specifically from the Crassus of *De Oratore*, is that even the orator

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<sup>102</sup> Stephen Farnsworth and S. Robert Lichter have noted that President Bush’s public image almost immediately transitioned from the presidential “best buddy” to a “warrior president” (4)

functions as a kind of object of the transference. Oratory, in other words, may be understood as a contingent, rather than necessary, object of publicity. The important ethical question was made salient in Derrida's concluding remarks in "Call it a Day for Democracy" as his interrogation turned towards the aporia of representation. Derrida, arguing that "public opinion does not *express itself*" (Derrida, OH, 95), set the ethical issue at how we are to represent our publics. Derrida would pose the ethical dimension of our publics as an aporetic duty to both "give a voice to minorities deprived of institutional representation[,]" and recognize that "this 'democratization' never legitimately represents. It never represents without filtering or screening – let us repeat it – a 'public opinion.'" (97-8, see also 100) In this statement, Derrida set out the ethical stakes of our public object(s). If we are to engage publics in a democratic fashion, Derrida suggests that we must the unilateral assent to a single (public) object. Our publics, in other words, must remain an *ephemeral* object of the *day*. In my view, the question of public representation turns not only upon how we represent our publics (in an object) but also in how we license these public objects to represent us. That is, not only how our publics are made to speak, but also how these speaking publics may become proxies for our own speech. I have attempted to show how, even in Derrida's ventriloquized publics and Laclau's social demands, the *speaking public* of modernity has become an object taken in advance. The ethical question to ask today is this: why do our publics have to be (living) speaking entities? Through a series of analogues, I have attempted to show that any object can do the work of a living breathing public.

## CHAPTER 5

### AN ETHICS OF COUNTERPUBLICITY

If public(s) are an *objet petit a*, specifically a voice, what then is a counterpublic? To answer this question, let us start by adjusting our terms a bit: from counterpublic to counterpublicity. Counterpublicity is not a public, it is a different way of loving publics. To discuss counterpublicity is not to address a particular group of people, fictional or otherwise, but requires grappling with the ways publics are represented as objects. When the operative terms are circulation (of a text) and the mere attention (to a text) how are we to say “No?” The conclusion of this dissertation evaluates the prospects for an ethics of counterpublicity, or learning to say “no” to our publics and the little public entrapments in circulation – a hard thing to do when our publics are trapping us in advance. This chapter suggests that an ethics of counterpublicity, a change in the way publics are represented, is an important facet of counterpublics. This chapter will proceed in three sections. In the first section, I discuss the importance of layering an ethics of counterpublicity over the investigation of publics and counterpublics. In the second section, I propose two preliminary characteristics for an ethics of counterpublicity: that publics are posed in the middle voice and become provisional representations. In the third section, I investigate Michel Foucault’s “This is Not a Pipe” as an analogue for an ethics of counterpublicity.

In 1990, Nancy Fraser’s “Rethinking the Public Sphere” coined the term “*subaltern counterpublics*” in order to account for how “women, workers, peoples of color, and gays and lesbians – have repeatedly found it advantageous to constitute alternative publics.” (67) In a

footnote, Fraser discusses the “subaltern counterpublic” as a merger of two terms: the “subaltern” from Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s “Can the Subaltern Speak?” (1988) and Rita Felski’s notion of a feminist public sphere in *Beyond Feminist Aesthetics* (1989). (Fraser, 79)<sup>103</sup>

From this merger, Fraser defines the subaltern counterpublic as “parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counterdiscourses, which in turn permit them to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs.”

(67) The stakes of counterpublicity are high: the *counter* (*aversus*) of the subaltern counterpublic names both the hope for a subaltern voice and the possibility of intervening in dominant public discourse. But, just a few lines later, Fraser halts to caution: “I do not mean to suggest that subaltern counterpublics are always necessarily virtuous; some of them, alas, are explicitly anti-democratic and anti-egalitarian.” (67) The stakes of Fraser’s hesitation are ethical. What, Fraser seems to ask, makes for not just a counterpublic, nor even a subaltern counterpublic, but a *virtuous* counterpublic?

Other scholars who have taken up Fraser’s notion of a counterpublic have had similar concerns with isolating, to use the inquiry of Robert Asen, “What is counter about counterpublics?” (426)<sup>104</sup> The pursuit of a counterpublic worthy of the name is exemplified in

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<sup>103</sup> Rita Felski argues that the “feminist counter-public must thus be understood as ultimately *rational*, in a Habermasian sense[.]” (12) Also, my mention of Fraser’s deployment of the “subaltern” here should not probably be confused with Spivak’s usage, which does not connect the term “subaltern” with “public.” Fraser’s usage of the “subaltern” is adapted for her own purposes.

<sup>104</sup> There is a good deal of literature on counterpublics beyond what I elect to discuss here. Robert Asen’s “Seeking The “Counter” In Counterpublics” (2006) explores a similar problem to what Warner finds in Fraser’s counterpublics. (426) Asen’s investigation is largely similar to Warner’s in posing the counterpublic as one public embroiled in a polemical relation with another, in his words, a “contest among publics.” (426) Asen’s account, however, does argue that counterpublics are articulated “through alternative discourse practices and norms” (427) and the “Circulation of counterdiscourses.” (428) These latter characterizations are closer to what I am discussing here. Joshua Gunn has characterized the move towards counterpublics as a part of a trend in scholarship to pluralize “the public” or the unitary public sphere into fragments. (2) A number of others rely on Warner’s theorization of counterpublics: see Palczewski 2002, Squires 2002, Pezullo 2003, Sowards and Renegar 2006, and Chávez 2011.

the conclusion of Michael Warner's "Publics and Counterpublics" which argues in rejoinder to Fraser that, "Fraser's description of what counterpublics do – 'formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs' – sounds like the classical Habermasian description of rational-critical publics with the word *oppositional* inserted." (Warner, 85) The problem with counterpublics, Warner suggests, is they are built in precisely the same way as a dominant public. In an effort to describe counterpublicity in a stronger sense, Warner contends that "A counterpublic maintains at some level, conscious or not, an *awareness* of its subordinate status." (86, my emphasis) And just a few lines later, he claims that this "friction against the dominant public" would serve to make the "poetic-expressive character" of a counterpublic "salient to consciousness." (86) Bringing "Publics and Counterpublics" to its close, Warner personifies his public: "Counterpublics are 'counter' to the extent that they try to supply different ways of imagining stranger-sociability and its reflexivity" (87-88) For Warner, the self-awareness of the counterpublic becomes the crucial differentiating element: its poetic-expressive character, its consciousness, and its reflexivity.

But could we not say that Warner's alternative formulation of the counterpublic also suffers from an inattention to the ethical dimension of the counterpublic? If Fraser's account is guilty of simply adding the term "oppositional" into the mix, is Warner's account not equally guilty of adding the term "awareness?" Warner's addendum simply makes the oppositional public *self-aware* of its own opposition. The problem, I would argue, is that Fraser's and Warner's theories of counterpublic formation both remain too committed to counterpublics as an imaginary polemicist. In other words, Warner's rejoinder to Fraser continues to frame counterpublics as doubly imaginary – a public imagined as imagining itself in opposition to an equally imagined dominant public. But can this account of a counterpublic be considered any

more “subaltern” or “queer” when both the public and its counterpart remain positioned on even terrain?<sup>105</sup> The theorization of counterpublics is insufficient so long as a counterpublic remains constrained by the idea that one (supposedly counter) public must point at its adversary and say “I see you!”

Christian Lundberg’s *Lacan in Public* has recently detailed the limits imposed by reducing rhetoric to Lacan’s imaginary register. Lundberg calls the reduction of rhetorical concepts to (Lacan’s) imaginary register “fetishized:”

Were one to hazard a diagnosis of contemporary rhetorical studies on the basis of Lacan’s three orders [Real, Symbolic, and Imaginary], it would go something like this: rhetorical studies has fetishized the imaginary register of rhetoric, focusing primarily on the contextually bound, intersubjective circulation of meaning at the expense of both a rigorous account of rhetoric’s symbolic charge and the Real that marks rhetoric’s constitutive limit. This imaginary focus both elides the centrality of the formal charge in rhetorical discourse by focusing on the intersubjective exchange of meanings and, simultaneously, causes rhetoric to exceed its ‘Real’ limit by presuming that the world can be exhausted in representation, or more accurately, that representations effortlessly stand in for their referents. (25)

Perhaps Lundberg’s criticism of the fetishized imaginary register of rhetoric should also be directed at the theorization of counterpublics. Indeed, not only is the counterpublic currently understood as a purified fantasy, it also remains its fetishized imaginary insofar as the counterpublic plays the part of an intersubjective agent. The counterpublic, at least on Warner’s

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<sup>105</sup> Warner tends to use the term “queer” more often than “subaltern” when discussing counterpublics.

terms, is defined only in terms of its *prosopopeic* agency. Lundberg's insistence upon Lacan's Symbolic and Real requires alternative accounts of counterpublicity.

To trouble an exclusively imaginary notion of counterpublicity, let us return to the very first example of a public from Chapter 1, Reik's microphone. Recall that Reik's analysand had been an adept public speaker, at least until she had been asked to practice in an empty room with nothing other than a microphone. From that point on, she became unable to speak not only in an empty room, but also in front of a populated classroom. She had become, in other words, trapped alone with her public: a little prosthetic object radically detached from any actual addressee. If the microphone itself, for Reik's public speaking student, is transferred into the position of a public, can we really expect a mere microphone to become *self-aware* – can we expect it to be a *polemicist*? The same question might be posed for a number of examples from previous chapters: Augustine's pears, the crown of Alcibiades, or the bullhorn from President Bush's address on September 14, 2001. We simply cannot say, whether pears, ribbons, or bullhorns, that a mere object may be virtuous on Warner's terms. We cannot expect the object to do our ethics for us.

### **Two Characteristics of Counterpublicity**

In my view, the ethical challenge today is to represent our publics as neither living, nor dead, but instead as an *objet petit a*. Warner's rejoinder to Fraser was quite right: re-imagining the character or content of our publics is in no way the same thing as re-figuring the prevailing structures of public formation. But let us also question Warner's belief that a counterpublic must look out upon the dominant public – that these two might see each other as if they were on the same plane of existence. Counterpublicity, in the alternative view I propose, is not simply one public embroiled in an imaginary polemic with another; it is not an empirical counterpart to a

public, nor would it “see” itself in a mirror. Rather, counterpublicity (or the counterpublic form<sup>106</sup>) is concerned with an altogether different register of public formation – a *counter formation* of a public. The following section will outline two characteristics of an ethics of counterpublicity: 1) A notion of publics in the middle voice, and 2) a rhetoric within the representation of publics.

### *Middle Voice*

An ethics of counterpublicity must learn to establish a public in the middle voice – meaning that today’s publics may be formed through a multiplicity of rhetorical modes. A public may be fashioned through *prosopopeia* or personification, on the one hand, but also through *apostrophe* or invocation, on the other. In 2004, Bradford Vivian’s book *Being Made Strange: Rhetoric Beyond Representation* challenged rhetorical scholarship to develop approaches to rhetoric which were not organized by “the representation of moral truth or transcendental reason nor representative of an ideal conception of human being.” (Vivian, 14) Vivian would go on to champion a notion of *ethos* couched in terms of difference rather than identity and what he called “*rhetoric in the middle voice*” –the “self-enactment of discourse” reducible to neither the active subject nor the passive object of discourse. (53) I suspect, however, that Vivian’s project would have encountered unique challenges if it had been directed more fervently at publics. Even today, it remains difficult to conceive of a *functioning* public, one that is politically relevant, in anything other than an active voice.

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<sup>106</sup> In the counterpublic form, I am thinking of Erin Rand’s discussion of polemics as a queer form. But one thing that I find particularly interesting about Rand’s analysis is its slippage in its pairing of queer-and-form. Early in her analysis, Rand takes the queer as a kind of form, but as the analysis nears its end there is a chiasmic flip wherein the emphasis increasingly becomes the queer-ing of form itself. In the terms I use here, the polemical form becomes a polemics *within* form. For me, the Lacanian distinction between the symbolic, imaginary, and the real helps to further parse Rand’s notion of the polemical form – radically separating it, potentially, from its polemicist.

A public in the middle voice is neither living nor dead but instead manifests as a rhetorical device at work between what Erik Doxstader terms the “space of deliberation that contains both opposition and agreement.” (339)<sup>107</sup> Doxstader adds that a public framed in a middle voice is “a movement between transgressive and intersubjective modes of communication.” (339) Doxstader understands the “middle of public life” as a figure that “inaugurates a dynamic in which the negativity of transgression rhetorically constitutes a motive for intersubjective dialogue.” (339) His “middle” shifts the emphasis from intersubjective dialogue between publics (as if these were social agents) to emphasis upon dialogue as a constituted effect of rhetoric. Thinking publics in the middle voice introduces an ethical dimension since publics (as devices) may operate in *more than one rhetorical mode*. At this level, a decision must be made between (at the very least) the *prosopopeia* of publics and the *invocation* of publics. Are we to make our publics speak or position them as a silent witness? On the one hand, the *prosopopeia* of publics, as I argued in Chapter 4, is the prevailing rhetorical mode of public formation today. As Derrida suggested at the end “Call it a Day for Democracy,” the question of representation is key: how are we to represent our public(s) and when are we to allow our public(s) to represent us? And today, as Derrida also suggested, public opinion is a ventriloquism. The consequence of Derrida’s argument is that, today, we only know how to love a *living* public rhetorically figured *as if* it were a breathing biological entity.<sup>108</sup> Take for example Dewey’s biological figuration of the public’s death when he wrote, “The public which generated political forms is *passing away*, but the power of lust of possession remains in

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<sup>107</sup> Michael Calvin McGee’s “In Search of the People,” similarly frames “the people” not only as an articulated effect but as a rhetorical device.

<sup>108</sup> It seems to me that Doxstader’s “middle voice of public *life*” retains the figure of *prosopopeia*. Hence, while Doxstader places intersubjective dialogue as an effect, his publics remain figured *as if* they were engaged in an intersubjective dialogue themselves. Doxstader’s commitment to the public’s “life” and “speech” hence is not necessarily consistent with Lundberg’s call to engage the Symbolic and the Real in rhetorical theory.

the hands of the officers and agencies which the *dying public* instituted.” (My emphasis, 31) A public that lives, which is to say either one which speaks for itself or one which must be spoken for, is necessarily a public that dies.<sup>109</sup> Our theories of counterpublics are no different. The counterpublic, as presently conceived, is necessarily a *prosopopeic* public because it must look its opposition in the eye in order to constitute itself. Today’s counterpublic, in other words, is necessarily a living, breathing, and active entity that plays the role of an oppositional public. The counterpublic, given its indebtedness to the *prosopopeic* device, is structured in the very same way as any old public. Hence, an analysis of public voice benefits from finding rhetorical alternatives to *prosopopeia* itself.

On the other hand, I have nominated a species of apostrophe, the invocation, as a rhetoric of publicity distinguishable from, and in some ways even dichotomous with, a directly personified public. The figure of invocation toys with the notion of public *ad*-dress, which taken literally means the direct dressing-up of our publics. To posit invocation as the sole modality of public address is less an ontological claim than a rhetorical maneuver aimed at dislodging our (active) publics from the perch they have been accorded in modernity. My effort here is not to discount the efforts of public address scholars, only to borrow their term to make a point. What is odd about public *ad*-dress is that even the mere bystander, one unaddressed, may stage themselves as a public through rhetorical uptake simply by saying “I like it” to a little public voice object. The classical Ciceronian figure of invocation, like *prosopopeia*, is a kind of trap for a public. However, the invocation is a trap that repositions publicity dramatically – rather than fabricating an agent of address in the active voice, the invocation subtly triangulates its

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<sup>109</sup> The stakes of the *prosopopeic* figuration of publics are also potentially biopolitical. To put this in Giorgio Agamben’s terms, we could say that our publics (today) are figured *as if* they were a kind of bare life. Interrogating Agamben’s claims, Joan Copjec has argued “that life is conceivable only in biological terms, that is, as *finite*, or as defined by its temporal limit, death.” (24)

addressee, placing it in the middle voice of a bystander. As a mere bystander of an indirect or even unintended address, an invocation traps its public in its silence. The (indirectly) invoked public appears as the byproduct of the invocatory device, which targets an altogether different source of authority, but nonetheless establishes a kind of public as a remainder. The figure of invocation, viewed specifically for the sort of public that escapes it, establishes an alternative public formation that remains efficacious (may be still taken as cause) even without ventriloquism.

The specific entailment of Vivian's argument for a rhetoric in the middle voice for an ethics of counterpublicity is this: A public in the middle voice is nothing more than a rhetorical device. Indeed, Roman rhetoric understood this tactical dimension of publics quite well. A public does not *act*, in fact it doesn't *do* anything, yet is it not ineffectual or absolutely passive either. For example, recall how the *fistula* of Gaius Gracchus, from Chapter 4, works as a kind of prop. The *fistula* (and the slave that plays it) serves as a kind of gimmick for Gracchus' speeches – an object presented to an audience as a convenient site of cathexis or a trap for desire. The *fistula* becomes a representative object or a stand-in for the elusive public object. Or as another example, return to Augustine's pears from Chapter 2, which fashion a kind of (aphonic) public as an excessive remainder of Augustine's repeated invocations of God. In the case of Augustine's pears, his public is formed quite inadvertently – indeed he cannot seem to escape fornicating with this little public despite his best efforts. The public, in Augustine's case, is the byproduct of Augustine's usage of *apostrophe*, specifically in his *invocatio* of God. The *invocatio*, however, is itself a rhetorical figure which triangulates its addressee and stages a public as a silent witness to the divine interaction. Even though this public can be made to speak, as Augustine parroted in the words “Let's go! Let's do it!,” the added layer of *prosopopeic*

embellishment appears as little more than an ornament. But from a certain point of view, it may be argued that attentiveness to the role of *prosopopeia* in the formation of publics is sufficient. Why not just stop at *prosopopeia* (of publics) in the middle voice and leave out alternative figurations?

### *Rhetoric within Representation*

Multiple figurations of publics are absolutely necessary for establishing an ethics of counterpublicity that creates the conditions for decision. While I endorse Vivian's effort to think rhetoric in the middle voice, particularly when it comes to publics, I see the project less as a rhetoric *beyond* representation than as establishing a rhetoric *within* representation. Vivian's project relies, almost exclusively, upon a definition of representation found in Deleuze and Guattari, which assumes that "identity *in itself* is the organizing principle of representation; difference only has value as a measure of identity." (Vivian, 23) The weakness of this definition of representation is that it mistakes one rhetoric of representation (that representation *is* identity) for representation as a whole.

In "Can the Subaltern Speak," Gayatri Spivak attends to the distinctions between the terminological manifestations of 'representation'—which are exemplified most clearly in German. Taking Marx and Derrida as points of departure, Spivak contrasts *Darstellung*, or the form of representation so often found in art or philosophy, to *Vertretung*, or political representation.<sup>110</sup> Spivak outlines two components of the former form of representation:

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<sup>110</sup> Using slightly different terms from Spivak, Derrida's distinction between representation and re-presentation in *Speech and Phenomena* described how representation may be understood in its relation to *vorstellung*, or presentation of an ideal, or in the sense of re-presentation or repetition (with a difference). In Derrida's words "Representation can be understood in the general sense of *Vorstellung*, but also in the sense of re-presentation, as repetition or re-production of presentation." (Derrida, S&P, 49) From this distinction Derrida would claim that the stakes of the term representation were nothing less than the entire project of metaphysics since "this representative structure is signification itself." (50) The slippage between these two terms (from presentation to repetition) was

“*Darstellung*—*Dar*, there, same cognate. *Stellen*, is to place, so “placing there.” (Spivak, *The Post-Colonial Critic*, 108-9) In short, *Darstellung* refers to the sort of representing involved in the production of a “portrait” as in art or philosophy. (108) Spivak’s criticism of Deleuze and Foucault stems from the manner in which they understand representation only as *darstellung*. To concentrate entirely upon representation as identity, for Spivak, is to ignore its political stakes, which she discussed in an interview in 1987. In this interview, Spivak describes *Vertretung* as “stepping in someone’s place” and noted that “*Tritt* (from *treten*, the second half of *vertretung*) has the English cognate *tread* [...] to tread in someone’s shoes.” (Spivak, *The Post-Colonial Critic*, 108-9) Spivak goes on to offer the congressperson as an example of this particular mode of representation – the duty of the congressperson is to “wear your shoes” or stand in your rightful place as a citizen. Hence, this notion of representation is most clearly exemplified in politics. Of course, just because a politician has a duty to “walk in your shoes” doesn’t necessarily mean they do it all that well, hence the distaste for politicians, but the role of political representation is one of necessity, convenience, or ethical obligation rather than of ideality or identity. Notice, for instance, how no one ever reads political representation in a way that *purely* buys into its ideality by reading its substitution backwards. No one ever says “I hate my local representative...therefore by deduction I hate myself!”

For Spivak, the stakes of distinguishing these two senses of representation, *darstellung* (portrait) and *vertretung* (proxy), are both ethical and political. Spivak argues that the importance of keeping these two senses of representation separate, not because they never come

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significant for Derrida since “A phoneme or grapheme is necessarily always to some extent different each time that it is presented in an operation or a perception.” (50) The insistence on the part of western art and philosophy on representation-as-presentation, as *vorstellung* or the “locus of ideality in general” became of paramount concern in Derrida’s critique of philosophy. (50)

into contact but because of the political risks of hastily conflating the terms with one another. She maintains that these two senses of representation intersect and interact but that reducing political representation to the status of identity posits politics as a mere outgrowth of philosophy.<sup>111</sup> Taking her own stance as a feminist as an example, Spivak describes these risks in the following way:

That way of representing: I speak for them and represent them. *Darstelling* them, portraying them as constituencies of feminism, myself as a feminist. Unless the complicity between these two things is kept in mind, there can be a great deal of political harm. The debate between essentialism and anti-essentialism is really not the crucial debate. It is not possible to be non-essentialist, as I said; the subject is always centered. The real debate is between these two ways of representing. (Spivak, *The Post-Colonial Critic*, 108-9)

What is at stake here goes far beyond a mere terminological quibble. For Spivak, the political and ethical stakes of representation stem from the “complicity of *Vertreten* and *Darstellen*, their identity-in-difference as the place of practice – since this complicity is precisely what Marxists must expose [...] can only be appreciated if they are not conflated by a sleight of word.” (72)

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<sup>111</sup> The relation between representation and western philosophy is underscored in *Speech and Phenomena* when Derrida transitions directly from the interrogation of representation (as the locus of ideality in general) to voice as a basic cornerstone of metaphysics. For Derrida the linkage between voice and representation is significant because “There is an unfailing complicity here between idealization and speech [*voix*]. An ideal object is an object whose showing may be repeated indefinitely.” (Derrida, S&P, 75) The “power of the voice lies” in its historical association with *vorstellung*—in its ability to anchor representation to the origins of identity and presence. (Derrida, S&P, 102) Derrida argues that “Representation can be understood in the general sense of *Vorstellung*, but also in the sense of re-presentation, as repetition or re-production of presentation.” (Derrida, S&P, 49) Hence, for Derrida, representation may be understood in its relation to *vorstellung*, or presentation of an ideal, or in the sense of re-presentation or repetition (with a difference). For Derrida, what is at stake in the term representation is nothing less than the entire project of metaphysics since “this representative structure is signification itself.” (50) The slippage between these two terms (from presentation to repetition) is significant for Derrida since “A phoneme or grapheme is necessarily always to some extent different each time that it is presented in an operation or a perception.” (50) The insistence on the part of western art and philosophy on representation-as-presentation, as *vorstellung* or the “locus of ideality in general” is of paramount concern in Derrida’s critique of philosophy. (50)

Spivak states that the “gravity of the problem” becomes apparent in the development of a “class consciousness” that “belongs to national links and political organizations, not to that other feeling of community whose structural model is the family.” (72) The key question, for Spivak, is not *whether* we represent, but *how* we represent people.<sup>112</sup> Given the ethical dimension of Spivak’s critique of representation, what can be said of our publics? There is undoubtedly a relation of the term “counterpublic” to Spivak’s “subaltern,” but I believe scholarship can benefit from pressing this connection further. The scholarship of counterpublics has yet to interrogate the interplay of Spivak’s *darstellung* and *vertretung* with respect to the representation of counterpublics. In other words, the question posed by an ethics of counterpublicity is: what are the other modes of representing the public object?

The *prosopopeia* of publics commits, as a kind of *darstellen*, a reduction of publicity to a philosophical structure of representation. As it stands, Spivak’s interrogation has not been pressed in the direction of how our *publics* have been re-presented as merely imaginary fantasies, and the ways in which publics have come to walk in our shoes. Today, both in practice and in theory, one makes a public in the same sense as one crafts a portrait. The result is, as Spivak suggests, that today there is no such thing as a true ethics of publicity precisely because publics remain so utterly indebted to *prosopopeia*. The problem of representation today stems not only from a question of ‘how am I represented *in public*’ but also from how a singular rhetorical device gives license for my public, just a little voice object, to ‘speak in my place’. The true problem with public representation is quite possibly that no public is more apathetic and apolitical than the one that takes a breath. Spivak’s cautionary note on the conflation of

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<sup>112</sup> Linda Alcoff's "The Problem of Speaking for Others" (1991-1992) characterizes the difference between Spivak’s two forms of representation in an aporetic sense.

representation into a single concept, which warns of collapsing politics into philosophy, requires that we consider *new rhetorics* of publicity distinguishable from the *living* publics of today.

In Lacanian terms, the reduction of our publics to a phantasmic portrait through *prosopopeia* becomes dangerous precisely due to the propensity of an *objet petit a* to be transposed into the position of cause. In other words, even if theorists place the *prosopopeia* of publics in the middle voice, the temporal slippage of the public as a voice object often renders it active once again. As an amorous object, an acknowledgement of the *prosopopeia* of publics as a mere device is not enough. As Lacan's theory of the object-cause suggests, an *objet petit a* has a nasty habit of becoming recast as mystical agent, and, as Lacan discusses in his lecture on Piaget's tap, becomes taken as an active cause of desire.<sup>113</sup> The necessity of a counterpublic to look itself in the mirror, or look its opposition in the eye, invariably regresses to a representation of the public object solely as a mode of *darstellung*, the fabrication of the (counter)public as a kind of idealized portrait as in art or philosophy. Hence, even when publics theorists know all too well that publics lack empirical substance, nevertheless they begin to be treated as if they were.<sup>114</sup> The criticism of *prosopopeia* has a nasty habit of allowing its very own *prosopopeia* of publics off the hook by taking it in-advance.<sup>115</sup> Hence, the entailments of a theory of the public voice must be sharply distinguished from the account of public formation provided by

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<sup>113</sup> See Lacan's seminar on anxiety, specifically his lectures on "The Cause of Desire" and "Piaget's Tap."

<sup>114</sup> The temporal circulation of the object, specifically the tendency for our publics to be taken as empirical entities is, of course, their fantastic dimension, or what Žižek calls ideology. (15-16) The notion of the voice as an aphonic object is discussed in Dolar (2006) and Miller (2007).

<sup>115</sup> For example, Christian Lundberg's book *Lacan in Public* adopts Warner's language to characterize *prosopopeia* as "the prosthetic production of the self as the stranger among other strangers, speaking a public language to other prosthetic persons." (135) Lundberg's characterization of *prosopopeia*, similar to Paul de Man's account, uses *prosopopeia* to explain the split figuration of Lacan's barred subject. Even *Lacan in Public* places the *agalma* of its love for its public (its public man, Lacan) right on its front cover. Just as the barred subject is taken-in-advance, so too is the voice of our publics.

articulation theory. It is not only that publics are articulated in rhetorical terms, nor simply that publics possess an imaginary or fictive dimension, but also that publics are an object in the Lacanian sense – an object taken-in-advance of its *own articulation*. In this sense, the characterization of publics as articulated effects of rhetoric almost invariably slides into its opposite. Given both Spivak’s bifurcated notion of representation and Lacan’s notion of the object-cause, there simply is no rhetoric beyond the representation of publics.

### **This is Not a Counterpublic**

This dissertation has suggested that we think of publics as a device of entrapment akin to the *agalma* within Socrates, the *fistula* of Gaius Gracchus, the shofar of Theodore Reik and Jacques Lacan, and the bullhorn of President George W. Bush at ground zero. In one final analogue, I argue that Michel Foucault’s *Ceci n’est pas une pipe* exhibits, and performs, how the figure of invocation may interrupt the modern prosopopeia of publics. Foucault’s *Ceci n’est pas une pipe*, appearing two years following *The Order of Things* in 1968, drew attention to the disarticulation of similitude from representation with its analysis of two drawings by Renè Magritte: *Ceci n’est pas une pipe* (1926) and *Les Deux mystères* (1966).<sup>116</sup> Foucault’s well known work, which originally appeared in article form, was later lengthened and compiled into a short book. However, I argue that Foucault’s distinction between similitude and representation relies on a performance of a *dichotomous* relation between voice and representation and, more specifically, between invocation and prosopopeia. Hence, beyond being a short treatise on representation, *This is Not a Pipe* enacts a kind of ethics of counterpublicity that uses an

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<sup>116</sup> See Foucault *The Order of Things* (1970, 17-24). Here, Foucault separates similitude (or resemblance) into *convenientia*, *aemulatio*, *analogy*, and the play of *sympathies*. I read these similitudes as Foucault’s terminology for tropology or figuration. As a ‘fifth’ category, Foucault then adds signatures as an “aperture” that prevents the “system” from becoming closed. (25) Foucault’s references to similitude in “This is Not a Pipe” are likely a reference to this section of *The Order of Things*.

invocatory figuration of voice. Without a doubt Foucault's "This is Not a Pipe" *is not* a counterpublic, but it performs an ethics of counterpublicity insofar as two rhetorical devices (*prosopopeia* and *invocatio*) are held in polemical suspense – a suspense not between fictive social agents, but between the different elements in the painting that serve as objects of desire. In the reading that follows I will attend to Foucault's analysis sequentially. In the first section I review Foucault's first two chapters entitled *Two Pipes* and *The Unraveled Calligram* and the role of rhetoric with respect to the Magritte's calligram. Then in the second section I turn specifically to Foucault's introduction of the teacher's voice at the conclusion of *The Unraveled Calligram*—an addendum to Foucault's original text. In the third section I will concentrate on Foucault's pivotal chapter entitled *Seven Seals of Affirmation* arguing that Foucault's affirmations are accompanied by invocations that interrupt and displace the "speech" of *prosopopeic* publics on the register of the paintings' rhetorical uptake. Using this final analogue, I conclude this dissertation by nominating invocation as an alternative to modern publicity.

### *The Rhetorical Calligram*

While not exclusively concerned with Magritte, Foucault's analysis in *Ceci n'est pas une pipe* largely turned on two versions of Magritte's pipe. With respect to the first version, *Ceci n'est pas une pipe* (1926), Foucault described a "carefully drawn" pipe with the statement "This is not a pipe" appearing underneath it. The statement is described by Foucault as "handwritten in a steady, painstaking, artificial script, a script from the convent, like that found heading the notebooks of schoolboys, or on a blackboard after an object lesson". (15)



Figure 5.1

And with respect to the second version, entitled *Les Deux mystères* (1966), the ‘same image’ is set within a frame that has been placed upon an easel on the floor. Beyond this the second painting is distinguished by the addition of another image of the pipe, yet this time larger and more abstractly rendered, hovering above the easel.

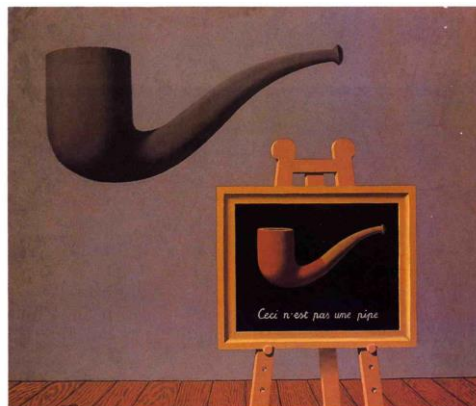


Figure 5.2

Hence, in Foucault’s initial section, three basic players are carved out: the statement<sup>117</sup>, the lower pipe that appears within the frame, and the higher pipe that hovers commandingly over the entire scene.

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<sup>117</sup> For my purposes, I will assume a distinction between Foucault’s use of the term “statement” in “This is Not a Pipe” and in his other works. However, there is also the possibility that Foucault’s use of the word “statement” here draws a distinction between the level of the statement and its enunciation.

The second section of Foucault's analysis, entitled *The Unraveled Calligram*, was devoted largely, but not solely, to the first version of Magritte's drawing. After positing that there is no necessary "contradiction" between the image and the text because "[c]ontradiction could only exist between two statements, or one and the same statement[,]" (19) Foucault remarks:

Must we say: My God, how simpleminded! The statement is perfectly true, since it is quite apparent that the drawing representing the pipe is not the pipe itself. And yet there is a convention of language: What is this drawing? Why it is a calf, a square, a flower. An old custom not without basis, because the entire function of so scholarly, so academic a drawing is to elicit recognition, to allow the object it represents to appear without hesitation or equivocation [...] It does not "aim" like an arrow or a pointer toward a particular pipe in the distance or elsewhere. *It is a pipe.* (19-20)

Foucault's contention is that an unstated calligram, the convention of language found in the phrase "*It is a pipe,*" serves as the basis for the statement "This is Not a Pipe." Magritte's painting plays itself off against this absent zero-player. In sum, Foucault claims that Magritte's drawing "secretly" forms a calligram<sup>118</sup> that asserts the representational relation between its elements only to be "carefully" and "ironic[ally]" unraveled. (20)

Foucault himself discusses the ironic deployment of the calligram as necessarily rhetorical. However, Foucault's discussion of rhetoric in *The Unraveled Calligram* is phrased entirely in the negative in a way that obfuscates its role. Indeed, Foucault wrote that even as the

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<sup>118</sup> Foucault definition of a "calligram" may be found in his notes: "a poem whose words are arranged in such fashion as to form a picture of its 'topic'" (60).

traditional function of the calligram is to “repeat something without the aid of rhetoric” (20) and to make “the text *say* what the drawing *represents*,” (21) Magritte’s ironic deployment takes the traditional functions of the calligram and (in Foucault’s words) “pervert[s] them, thereby disturbing all the traditional bonds of language and the image.” (22) Foucault’s negative phrasing occurs in at least two instances. The first time regards the traditional role of the calligram as “to repeat something without the aid of rhetoric,” (20) and then a second time when the calligram is posited “in opposition to rhetoric” (21) on the very next page.<sup>119</sup> However, even though it is phrased in the negative, Foucault’s *Unravelling Calligram* embeds a rhetoric deeply *within* his analysis of representation in *This is Not a Pipe*. This is exhibited when Foucault discusses Magritte’s calligram as an ironic double, and it is on account of this rhetoric that Foucault concludes that Magritte’s drawings “recover [the] three functions [of the calligram]—but only to pervert them”. (22) Hence, even as Foucault retains a reductive definition of representation as *darstellen*, in Spivak’s terms, his doubling of the calligram identifies a catachresis within his own (or to defend Foucault, modernity’s) reduction. To summarize, despite the fact that Foucault’s mention of rhetoric is phrased the negative, rhetoric plays a fundamental role in both the disillusion of the drawing’s “secret” calligram (the implicit and unstated statement “This *is* a Pipe”) and in the threat the drawing poses to the authority of representation.

But in addition to this ironic component, there is something about Magritte’s calligram that runs counter to prosopopeia. This is exhibited when Foucault writes that “the calligram never speaks and represents in the same moment [...] the very thing that is both seen and read is

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<sup>119</sup> Incidentally, it is here that Foucault offers an explicit definition of rhetoric with the statement: “The essence of rhetoric is in allegory.” (21)

hushed in the vision, hidden in the meaning.” (24-5) Hence, there is something about Magritte’s particular rhetorical deployment of the calligram that breaks from what Foucault described as the calligram’s “millennial tradition.” (20) And as Foucault turns to the word “This” in the statement, he suggests that a series of rhetorical contests subvert the calligram from within:

And it is indicated by the word ‘this.’ We must therefore admit between the figure and the text a whole series of intersections—or rather attacks launched by one against the other, arrows shot at the enemy target, enterprises of subversion and destruction, lance blows and wounds, a battle. (26)

This contingent set of intersections or attacks is later described by Foucault as “the trap of the calligram” that is “sprung on the thing it described.” (28) It is not therefore that Magritte’s calligram somehow escapes the “trap” of desire, as it retains an *agalma* for its public, but the rhetorical inner workings of Magritte’s particular trap are engaged in a kind of polemics. Hence, when Foucault concluded his analysis of the first version of Magritte’s painting with the claim that the ‘pipe’ had “utterly vanished” it was a claim largely predicated on the return of rhetoric to the calligram and a “battle” between figurations. (29) But in addition to the contest between rhetorical devices at work within Magritte’s calligram, Foucault’s analysis turned to a second version of Magritte’s *This is Not a Pipe* near the end of *The Unraveled Calligram*. And as Foucault attempted to chart with precision the displacement of representation (*darstellen*) in Magritte’s painting(s) he would become increasingly dependent upon figuring each of the statements at work in the painting(s) as a *voice*.

### *The Teacher’s Voice*

*Les Deux mystères* (1966), Magritte’s second drawing of the pipe, sets the pipe and its accompanying statement on a blackboard in a way that situates it within what Foucault called the

“very clearly defined surface of a picture.” (29) For Foucault, this second drawing was “the didactic continuation of a discourse” that solidly anchors everything “within a pedagogic space” (29). However, the original version of Foucault’s *The Unraveled Calligram* that appeared in *Les Cahiers du chemin* would cut its analysis of Magritte’s second painting short. The abrupt ending to the analysis of Magritte’s paintings in *Les Cahiers du chemin* is of no small import since the supplementations and addendums in later versions of *This is Not a Pipe* mark the points at which Foucault’s analysis, in his own estimation, remained incomplete. The original version of Foucault’s work would transition directly from the painting’s tie to pedagogic discourse to the provocation that the ‘pipe’ had “taken flight”:

So, on its beveled and visibly unstable mounts, the easel had any longer but to tile, the frame to loosen, the picture and the pipe to roll on the ground, the letters to be scattered. The commonplace—banal œuvre or mundane lesson—has disappeared. (1998, 195)

But how is it, exactly, that this “commonplace” disappeared? Whereas the original version of Foucault’s work in *Les Cahiers du chemin* simply references its reader back to the analysis of Magritte’s first painting, in the later (book) version, Foucault would (quite literally) supplement his explanation with two additional paragraphs.

These two short paragraphs, penned as an addendum to *The Unraveled Calligram*, suggest a significant departure from Foucault’s earlier work by grafting the element of voice into the painting. Foucault’s first (new) paragraph, while retaining the reference to the painting’s discourse, began by taking the subversion of that discourse in an imaginative direction:

Everything is solidly anchored within a pedagogic space. A painting “shows” a drawing that “shows” the form of a pipe; a text written by a zealous instructor

“shows” that a pipe is really what is meant. We do not see the teacher’s pointer, but it rules throughout—precisely like his voice, in the act of articulating very clearly, ‘This is a pipe.’ From painting to image, from image to text, from text to voice, a sort of imaginary pointer indicates, shows, fixes, locates, imposes a system of references, tries to stabilize a unique space.” (29-30)<sup>120</sup>

But what is the necessity of this “imaginary pointer” and why introduce a “teacher’s voice” at all? Of course, at first glance, the introduction of this “voice” would seem to be flatly unnecessary because, strictly speaking, neither the “pointer,” nor the “teacher’s voice” appears in either painting. And yet Foucault seems to have augmented his first reading with the forceful claim that this pointer, this voice, is what “rules throughout.” In fact Foucault *insists* upon this voice as an “imaginary pointer” that “indicates, shows, fixes, locates, imposes a system of references, [and] tries to stabilize a unique space.” Between the statement “This is not a pipe” and the pedagogic discourse of the second drawing Foucault had added another element, the voice, which “fixes” and “locates” the “references” necessary to its “system” from a structural position extimate to the drawing itself.

As Foucault continued, the peculiar introduction of this seemingly unnecessary voice became an object of interest for Foucault himself:

But why have we introduced the teacher’s voice? Because scarcely has he stated, ‘This is a pipe,’ before he must correct himself and stutter, ‘This is not a pipe, but

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<sup>120</sup> These few passages on the “teacher’s voice” are not, however, included within some versions of Foucault’s *Ceci n’est pas une pipe*. While appearing in the book which was published later, the “teacher’s voice” does not make an appearance in the version of *Ceci n’est pas une pipe* published in journal articles. Presumably, these paragraphs were added later by Foucault. The use of “voice” in the section entitled *The Seven Seals of Affirmation*, however, did appear in the journal versions. Thus, it would stand to reason that the section on the “teacher’s voice” was an addendum that was informed by Foucault’s work on Magritte that had previously been written in *The Seven Seals*.

a drawing of a pipe,’ ‘This is not a pipe but a sentence saying that this is not a pipe,’ ‘The sentence ‘this is not a pipe’ is not a pipe,’ ‘In the sentence ‘this is not a pipe,’ *this* is not a pipe: the painting, written sentence, drawing of a pipe—all this is not a pipe. (30)

What is the structure of the “teacher’s voice” as an imaginary device and why is it so indispensable? The actual statement “This is not a pipe” must necessarily be accompanied by some number of virtual statements that come to accompany it in Foucault’s analysis. And strictly speaking none of the ‘utterances’ of our stuttering teacher are actual statements, but virtual spin-offs of the single statement posed by the (fracturing) calligram. As Foucault inquired into the necessity of the “teacher’s voice” we find Foucault himself ventriloquizing his imaginary teacher’s virtual statements: “This is a pipe,” “This is not a pipe, but a drawing of a pipe,” and so on. In other words, in this supplemental, and more invigorated, attempt to explain the collapse of representation Foucault himself performed modernity’s structure of *prosopopeic* representation that occurs in the rhetorical uptake of Magritte’s painting(s).<sup>121</sup> Make no mistake, this is not to suggest an element of imprecision in Foucault’s analysis but much the opposite—in order to fully explain the painting’s subversion of representation it became necessary for Foucault to chart the painting’s various rhetorical formations of desire. Strangely, Foucault’s supplementary passage abandons his standard theoretical nomenclature (statement/discourse) for

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<sup>121</sup> I have elected here not to make the focus of this paper an exhibition of the reading strategy that is being deployed, but perhaps a few notes on it are in order. The conceptualization of uptake that is being applied here as a reading strategy is largely indebted to the work of Erin Rand and J.L. Austin’s perlocutionary effect of the ‘speech act’. The emphasis here is on her notion of rhetorical agency as the unpredictability that persists between rhetorical production and uptake. If translated into terms familiar to speech act theory the reading strategy emphasizes the perlocutionary force of Foucault’s text (what is done *by* speech, rather the illocutionary what is done *in* speech) over and above the constative. The difference between perlocution and illocution, in other words, is that perlocution is a performative in the middle rather than active voice – and more associated with uptake. Given Derrida’s supplementation of Austin’s speech act theory, reading Foucault purely on the level of the ‘constative’ in this case should be held to the greatest level of suspicion.

this more playful “voice.” Foucault had, quite inadvertently, conducted an analysis of the rhetorical uptake of Magritte’s paintings in a way that remains utterly foreign to the study of uptake by the circulation theory of publics we have today. Rather than evaluate uptake empirically, studying actual uptakes of Magritte’s paintings, Foucault instead charts a host of the paintings elements as sites of potential cathexis and attends to the interactions between them. And in assigning a voice to Magritte’s various elements, Foucault was not only mapping the *prosopopeic* potentiality of these elements (their ability to become figural traps for publics), but also the ways in which *prosopopeic* representation itself may become displaced in modernity by invocation. By cycling through a series of invocations, each (public) voice in Foucault’s analysis became punctuated by a *stutter*.

Indeed, as Foucault continued into the second paragraph of his addendum, this invocatory *stutter* (a shift in addressee) shattered the authority of each *prosopeon* in the series. On the one hand, the visual element (the object) becomes figured as a voice in order to become fixed into a system of authority, but on the other hand it is by way of this very same figuration that the authority of Foucault’s imaginary teacher may be disarticulated:

Negations multiply themselves, the voice is confused and choked. The baffled master lowers his extended pointer, turns his back to the board, regards the uproarious students, and does not realize that they laugh so loudly because above the blackboard and his stammered denials, a vapor has just risen, little by little taking shape and now creating, precisely and without a doubt, a pipe. ‘A pipe, a pipe,’ cry the students, stamping away while the teacher, his voice sinking ever lower, murmurs always with the same obstinacy though no one is listening, ‘And yet it is not a pipe.’ He is not mistaken; because the pipe floating so obviously

overhead (like the object the blackboard refers to, and in whose name the text can justifiably say that the drawing is truly not a pipe) is itself merely a drawing. It is *not a pipe*[...] So, on its beveled and clearly rickety mounts, the easel has but to tilt, the frame to loosen, the painting to tumble down, the words to be scattered.

(30-31)

Foucault's dramatic use of humor in this passage is nothing trivial, and in fact the stuttering dissolution of the teacher's authority is placed directly between Foucault's claim that the voice is a "pointer" that "rules throughout" and his concluding claim regarding the disappearance of representation as a "common place." Thus, there is something to be learned not only from Foucault's analysis of Magritte's paintings, but also the rhetoric that facilitated the performance of that analysis. Each of Foucault's teacher's invocations of authority becomes a choked and murmuring voice and a carnivalesque shattering of pedagogical authority before a little rabble of laughing "students." Foucault's addendum, against his own claims to the contrary, had grafted a number of external elements into the painting itself: the teacher's pointer, the teacher's voice, the teacher's stuttering attempts to explain what the painting represents, and ultimately even a peanut gallery of students gawking at the entire scene. But it might still be maintained that Foucault's two extra paragraphs were no more than an embellishment with no bearing on his larger argument. We might inquire, for instance, whether the inclusion of voice was only a factor within Magritte's second painting and essentially irrelevant to the first. Or we might point to how voice largely disappeared in the two sections that followed *The Unraveled Calligram* (Klee, Kandinsky, Magritte and *Burrowing Words*).<sup>122</sup> However, after this brief foray into Klee

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<sup>122</sup> In these sections, Foucault isolates two principles that "ruled Western painting from the fifteenth to the twentieth century" (32) and traces their disillusion. The first principle, whose abolition is exemplified by Paul Klee, is the "separation between plastic representation (which implies resemblance) and linguistic reference (which excludes it)." (32) And the second principle, likewise "ruptured" by Wassily Kandinsky, is the "equivalence between the fact

and Kandinsky, Foucault returned to Magritte and the “ambiguous” power of discourse in a section entitled *Seven Seals of Affirmation*, a section which would (re)turn to the role of voice.

### *Seven Seals of Affirmation*

The *Seven Seals of Affirmation* formed the linchpin for Foucault’s claim that Magritte “dissociated similitude from resemblance, and brought the former into play against the latter.” (44) To this end, Foucault resumed his analysis of Magritte’s paintings in order to explain how such a disarticulation is possible. And again, it was at this crucial juncture that Foucault reintroduced the figuration of voice through a *series of affirmations* that “reject the assertion of resemblance and are found concentrated in the proposition: This is not a pipe.” (47) It stands to reason that the role of voice in this section, which *did* appear in the original journal version of *This is Not a Pipe*, may have influenced Foucault’s (later) addition of the more vigorous claim that the teacher’s voice “rules throughout.” It also suggests that the role of voice is not merely particular to *Les Deux mystères* (1966) since Foucault discusses the two pipe paintings collectively in the *Seven Seals*. Hence, in both published versions of Foucault’s *This is Not a Pipe*, the inclusion of *voice* is neither a mere humorous ornament, nor a simple peculiarity of Magritte’s second painting, but rather *is indispensable to the dissociation of similitude from resemblance*.

Let us look more closely at Foucault’s purpose for turning to this *series of affirmations*. Foucault argued that the discontinuities between the series of “elements” in Magritte’s paintings “annul the intrinsic resemblance they seem to bear within themselves, and gradually sketch an

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of resemblance and the affirmation of a representative bond.” (34) But Foucault argues that Magritte’s *Ceci n’est pas une pipe*, in distinction to Klee and Kandinsky, “exemplifies the penetration of discourse into the form of things; it reveals discourse’s ambiguous power to deny and to redouble.” (37)

open network of similitudes.” (47) But Foucault’s analysis still lacked an explanation for the agency that had enabled the formation of this “open network.” To compensate, Foucault introduced his *series of affirmations* to answer the question: “Who speaks in the statement?” (48) In order to explain the annulment of resemblance Foucault had grafted a notion of psychoanalytic transference, or cathexis, over his very own concept of the statement in an effort to identify *something more* in the statement “This is Not a Pipe” than the statement itself.<sup>123</sup> (48) Foucault’s *Seven Seals of Affirmation* described the destabilization of modern representation by demonstrating, indeed by himself performing, the similitude of transferences that had been made available to him by Magritte’s paintings.<sup>124</sup> The *Seven Seals of Affirmation* charted seven ways the painting attempts to trap its public voice, it mapped seven *agalmata* in the painting, and it did so by crafting seven little *prosopons* making each aspect of the statement “speak” in our shoes.

The first in the series of affirmations takes the form of a *prosopopeia* of the lower pipe that is made to “speak” as a surrogate or witness to the authority of its discourse. Specifically, the *prosopopeia* of the lower pipe appears as the following:

First the pipe itself: ‘What you see here, the lines I form or that form me, is not a pipe as you doubtless believe; but a drawing in a relation of vertical similitude to

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<sup>123</sup> A typical diversion at this juncture regards the (albeit interesting) correspondence between Foucault and Magritte. This is an interaction that I fear may have led us astray. Take for instance the statement by James Harkness, the book’s translator and editor, who concludes his introductory comments with what he terms a final question: “To what degree *does* Foucault’s pipe remain faithful to Magritte’s?” (11) To this end the notion of rhetorical agency proposed by Erin Rand proves useful by offering a way of reading Foucault’s *Seven Seals* as performing the undecidable gap between Magritte’s production of *Ceci n’est pas une pipe* and Foucault’s own dramatic enactment of possible uptake(s) of the painting.

<sup>124</sup> Whether Foucault and Magritte aligned, and whether Foucault’s attribution of these “elements” *faithfully represents* Magritte’s intention as the painting’s author is inconsequential for my purposes. One need not assert the author’s intention in order for the painting to have (unforeseen) rhetorical outcomes in its uptake. Even if these “elements” were never designed or placed in the painting for the purposes of producing a similitude, Foucault himself demonstrates the possibility that a similitude may be formed in the uptake of the painting.

the other pipe (real or not, true or false, I do not know) that you see over there—  
just above the painting where I am, a simple and solitary similitude. (48)

Note the similarity to Foucault's supplementary passages on the teacher's voice. Much like the teacher's virtual statements the device of *prosopopeia* does not appear in either of Magritte's paintings. Rather, the "speech" of the lower pipe must be performed as a transference, in this case, by Foucault himself. But the authority of the lower pipe and the discourse to which it appeals is interrupted by a second player—the higher pipe.

The second affirmation, of the higher pipe, again attempts to endow an element of Magritte's painting with "speech." The invocation of the higher pipe calls this first witness down from the stand and replaces it with another. And as Foucault continued, the higher pipe would "speak" by *prosopopeia* in a manner not different from its predecessor:

To which the higher pipe responds in the same words: 'What you see floating before your eyes, beyond space and without fixed foundation, this mist that settles neither on canvas nor on a page, how could it really be a pipe? Don't be misled: I am mere similarity—not something similar to a pipe, but the cloudy similitude that, referring to nothing, traverses and brings together texts such as the one you can read and drawings such as the one below.' (48)

Even though Foucault's second witness represents a different position, it nonetheless speaks as if it were an orator perched upon Magritte's canvass. But this second affirmation is once again shuffled off the stage by another element.

In the third affirmation Foucault turns to the 'voice' of yet another witness: that of the statement "This is Not a Pipe." As before, this third witness comes forward to rebut its

predecessors. Within this third affirmation the “statement” itself is called upon to speak as its own source of authority:

But the statement, already articulated twice by different voices, in turn comes forward to speak for itself. ‘The letters that form me and that you see—the moment you try to read them as naming the pipe, how can they say that they are a pipe, these things so divorced from what they name? This is a graphism that resembles only itself, and that could never replace what it describes.’ (48)

It is of no small consequence that this passage (re)introduces the term “voice” as the object of each of the three affirmations in the series thus far. Furthermore, the “statement,” a term undoubtedly wielded with care by Foucault, occupies a structural position that is conceptually distinct from *voice*. Indeed, Foucault claims that what we have here is a single statement which has (up to this point) been articulated in three different ‘voices’—or to be more precise—three different little traps for various publics.

As Foucault introduces the next three affirmations it becomes increasingly clear that each affirmation not only corresponds to an “element” in the painting but also is figured in the guise of a *prosopopeic* public. In each of these affirmations the three witnesses called thus far come to form imaginary coalitions. Rather than introducing new witnesses the fourth, fifth, and sixth of Foucault’s affirmations are “Two by two” pairings in which these “voices mingle to say a third element is not a pipe.” (48) In other words, the figure of *prosopopeia* is intensified, beyond mere speech, such that our little orators form themselves into political blocs. The fourth affirmation, in Foucault’s words, consists of both the “text and the lower pipe” such that they “enter into complicity.” (48) Foucault adds that the “designating power of words and the illustrative power of drawing denounce the higher pipe.” (48-9) Hence the text and the lower pipe are no longer at

odds but rather have formed a coalition against the higher pipe. The fifth affirmation, following the same pattern, calls upon the higher and lower pipes who become “bound together by their reciprocal similitude [to] contest the written statement’s right to call itself a pipe[.]” (49) And not to be outdone, the sixth affirmation in turn establishes an alliance between the text and the higher pipe who “join to assert that the pipe in the painting is not a pipe.” (49) In sum, the fourth, fifth, and sixth affirmations establish traps for increasingly virtual public voices wherein each of Foucault’s “statements” became endowed with an imaginary willingness to form contingent coalitions. However, as Foucault performed the potentiality of rhetorical uptakes of the various elements of Magritte’s paintings by affirming six *prosopopeic* traps he had laid the groundwork for a seventh.

Beyond the possibilities of rhetorical contingency the seventh seal of affirmation invokes an element of radical contingency:

[P]erhaps we must also assume that from beyond these three alliances, a dislocated voice (that of the painting or the blackboard, possibly) speaks of both the pipe in the painting and the one above it: ‘None of these is a pipe, but rather a text that simulates a pipe; a drawing of a pipe that simulates a drawing of a pipe; a pipe (drawn other than as a drawing) that is the simulacrum of a pipe (drawn after a pipe that itself would be other than a drawing).’ (49)

It is fitting, of course, that Foucault’s *Seven Seals of Affirmation* turned to a dislocated voice as a “Seventh Seal” corresponding to a silence throughout heaven, a silence of God, and a silence of authority in Book of Revelations.<sup>125</sup> In contrast to the previous six affirmations, Foucault’s

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<sup>125</sup> This silence of God might be likened to the claim by Joan Copjec that a “different notion of difference” in American democracy “will only emerge once our appeals to the Other have been abandoned, once we accept the fact that there is ‘no Other of the Other.’ Nothing guarantees the Other’s certainty, consistency, or completeness.” (Copjec, 151)

seventh affirmation attempted a *prosopopeia* of the element he had transferred into the painting himself: voice. It is as though Foucault's seventh affirmation had called his own little imaginary teacher to the stand—a bumbling witness attesting to the authority of its own incompetence. Foucault's final uptake had made a device of his own design, the teacher's stutter, the affirmed object in the painting.<sup>126</sup>

Is it not fitting that Foucault, whom has since become known as one of the academy's greatest teachers, would conclude this seventh seal with his own stutter? Unlike the other six affirmations, which each unequivocally coincided with a single visual element, on the seventh Foucault was uncharacteristically speculative. Where is this seventh element of "voice" in the painting and to what visual element does it correspond? Foucault himself admitted that this "dislocated" voice *might* be attributable to either "the painting" or "the blackboard," but hastened to add the doubtful qualifier "*possibly*." Indeed right from the start, Foucault's terminological selection of a "dislocated" voice resigned itself in-advance to an impossibility of locating it in the painting. Although Foucault assuredly maintained that "in Magritte's art we find infinite games of purified similitude that never overflow the painting,"(49) was it not also Foucault himself who insisted in his supplementary paragraphs that the teacher's (stuttering) voice "rules throughout"? Rather than an "alliance" the dislocated voice "speaks" from a position external to the painting itself, and *in no way corresponds* to an element within Magritte's painting(s). Similar to the previous six *prosopons*, the seventh attempts to capture a public by making Magritte's painting speak in-advance; however on the seventh attempt, Foucault's little

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<sup>126</sup> My point at this juncture is only that Foucault's dislocated voice becomes strikingly similar to the notion of the object voice in Lacanian circles. In fact, Foucault's concept-metaphor of the teacher's pointer may be a helpful addition to efforts to think the voice as an object cause of desire.

*prosopopeia* could no longer identify the visual element to which it corresponded. It was a *prosopon* which could no longer see its own face in the mirror.

Foucault's seventh little voice had shifted his focus to the spaces between the painting's representational discourses, not beyond them, but to the rhetoric(s) at work within them. A rhetoric *within* representation. From his seventh seal Foucault transitioned directly into his most forceful conclusions regarding representation. For Foucault, it is precisely the similitude between this series of affirmations that enables the disarticulation of similitude from representation. In fact, every conclusive assertion written by Foucault follows directly from his description of the interplay of "voice" and "affirmation" in the seven seals. Indeed Foucault would assert himself conclusively on the grounds of "Seven discourses in a single statement—more than enough to demolish the fortress where similitude was held prisoner to the assertion of resemblance." (49) The dislocated voice occupies an extimate position relative to the painting: it neither corresponds directly with any of Magritte's visual elements and yet at the same time this voice never released its grip on Foucault's analysis.

Perhaps then it was Foucault himself, a thinker Spivak criticized for reducing all representation to the ideality of *darstellen*, who was best positioned to think his way out of the modern reduction of publicity to *prosopopeia*. The "dislocated voice" in Magritte's painting(s), the seventh of Foucault's uptakes, directs our attention at the invocatory device interrupting each of the painting's six little preceding orators. The dislocation of voice in the invocation, facilitated by a redirection of address through the triangulation of its addressee, fashions a similitude of rhetorical uptakes of the painting and counterbalances the representational device of *prosopopeia*. Within the shift between Magritte's visual elements, Foucault had inadvertently performed an invocation in his own play of transferences. Between each of Foucault's

“affirmations” he had given the “hook” to the *prosopon* that had preceded it. The repeated invocation of other *agalmata* in the painting made it possible for Foucault’s uptakes to cancel each other out. In exploring the radical potentiality of rhetorical uptakes of Magritte’s painting(s), Foucault exhibited how an invocatory series may dislodge *prosopopeia* from its perch. On account of this series, no single visual element (no little imaginary public) was given license to walk in Foucault’s own shoes. It could be maintained that beyond the visual similitude discussed by Foucault there was also another kind of similitude at work in the uptake of the painting. While there is no doubt that the painting never ‘points out’ at anything like a ‘pipe’ and never ultimately represents anything, Foucault’s own analysis was repeatedly facilitated by the voice as an indisputably foreign element. None of the elements deployed by Magritte has a voice and yet there is a strong desire in the instance of uptake to *put a voice in the pipe*. Beyond the visual similitude discussed by Foucault there is evidence of a *similitude of desire* that works alongside it—animating what Foucault himself termed its “play of transferences.” (49) At each critical juncture of Foucault’s analysis there is another secret calligram at work in the rhetorical uptake of Magritte’s paintings. This invocatory device returns again and again in the gaps between each of the seven affirmations such that the authority of the preceding orator is placed into jeopardy. Animating every one of Foucault’s moves, and in the space below each of Foucault’s seals, we could write a second (corrupted) calligram:

*This is Not a Voice.*

Foucault’s analysis of Magritte demonstrates that its true source of similitude is not visual but produced by a corresponding similitude of rhetorical devices, a similitude of traps, or what we might call a contest between the objects (or elements) in the painting. The similitude of the painting stems from the repetition of this desire in tandem with the elusive character of the voice

as an object that stubbornly escapes representation (*darstellen*). The pursuit of what Michael Warner called a “counterpublic” cannot be predicated upon the very same structure of desire as their supposed adversaries. An ethics of counterpublicity must rather establish formations of desire running “counter” to the prevailing form of publicity itself. Foucault’s little voices provide us with our first rudimentary, admittedly playful, but true, example of what a member of a “counterpublic” has to *do*. The series of invocations interrupting each of Foucault’s seven seals established a similitude within the public rhetorical form. Perhaps for the first time, modernity’s little *prosopopeic* publics had been given the hiccups of Aristophanes.

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## CHAPTER 5: AN ETHICS OF COUNTERPUBLICITY

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