

THE RHETORICAL SECRET AND THE EPISTEMOLOGY OF NON-KNOWLEDGE

by

GUSTAF ATILLA TORBJÖRN HALLSBY

(Under the Direction of Barbara Biesecker)

ABSTRACT

This dissertation presents a rhetorical theory of the secret as an epistemology of non-knowledge, or a discursive construction of what is publicly not known. Drawing upon contexts of Rhetorical intra-disciplinary conflict, the public ‘outing’ of Valerie Plame, the Republican uptake of Saul Alinsky’s *Rules for Radicals*, and the popular recollection of Alan Turing and Chelsea Manning, I suggest that the rhetorical secret describes how the unknown of discourse is organized as *trope*, which gives a recognizable form to moments of contingency, conflict, and uncertainty. Each case is unique in its account of the tropes that organize distinct ‘unknowns,’ namely, the disciplinary identity of Rhetoric, the covert actions of the George W. Bush Presidency, and the consequences of massive public disclosures (like that of WikiLeaks). The force of this argument is to resituate the relationship between Rhetoric and Truth as immanent to academic, public, and political discourses, and that speaking the truth about any of these contexts depends upon the prior existence of the rhetorical secret.

INDEX WORDS: Rhetoric, Psychoanalysis, Secrets, Valerie Plame, Saul Alinsky, Alan Turing, Chelsea Manning.

THE RHETORICAL SECRET AND THE EPISTEMOLOGY OF NON-KNOWLEDGE

by

GUSTAF ATILLA TORBJÖRN HALLSBY

BA, The University of Illinois, 2007

MA, The University of Iowa, 2010

A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of The University of Georgia in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

ATHENS, GEORGIA

2015

© 2015

Gustaf Atilla Torbjörn Hallsby

All Rights Reserved

THE RHETORICAL SECRET AND THE EPISTEMOLOGY OF NON-KNOWLEDGE

by

GUSTAF ATILLA TORBJÖRN HALLSBY

Major Professor:	Barbara A. Biesecker
Committee:	Michelle Ballif
	Celeste M. Condit
	Edward Panetta
	Roger Stahl

Electronic Version Approved:

Suzanne Barbour
Dean of the Graduate School
The University of Georgia
December 2015

DEDICATION

For my brothers, who taught me that what is hidden always hides in plain sight.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Secrets first occupied my attention when Mark Thompson first exposed to Franz Kafka and Jorge Borges. I also owe much to Matthew Hart for introducing me to the writings of Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, and Jacques Lacan, all of whom continue to teach me the way that the secret is immanent and invisible to those who speak it. I am also deeply indebted to Richard Besel, who awakened my love of speech, continental philosophy, and rhetorical criticism. As a pedagogy, a practice, and a discipline, rhetoric would remain unknown to me were it not for him.

I also owe a tremendous debt to those who awakened my thirst for criticism at the University of Iowa, whose contributions are too numerous to name here. Bruce Gronbeck, David Depew, David Hingstman, Isaac West, John Peters, and David Wittenberg all played a tremendous role in shaping my early graduate career. I owe equal thanks to Dan Faltesek, Megan Foley, Meryl Irwin, Paul Johnson, Jason Moyer, Niko Poulakos, and Chad Vollrath for their comradery, love, and inspiration.

I reserve my most heartfelt thanks for my University of Georgia family: Kristen Anderson, Ashley Gellert, Logan Gramzinski, Dustin Greenwalt, Jeremy Grossman, Thomas Lessl, Jason Myres, Mary-Lee Cunill, Lee Pierce, Mikaela Malsin, Eric Sloss, Sally Spalding, Roger Stahl, Belinda Stillion-Southard, Jason Williamson, and Emily Winderman. During the dissertation stage of my PhD, Michelle Ballif, Celeste Condit, Edward Panetta, and Roger Stahl each provided invaluable feedback and helped me to push this project to its current – and future – form. I also extend a belated thanks to Ernesto Laclau, who was involved in the initial stages of

project. Would that he could also have joined our conversation! I owe the greatest debt of gratitude to Barbara Biesecker, who has always driven me to produce my very best. Her generosity and support are treasures whose significance cannot be understated. They are gifts I can only hope to give to others, but can never fully return.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
LIST OF FIGURES	x
CHAPTERS	
1 AN EPISTEMOLOGY OF NON-KNOWLEDGE	1
Background and Rationale: An Orthodoxy of Truth	5
Inquiry and Intervention: Epistemic Rhetoric's Second Death	15
Reading Strategy: The Epistemology of Non-Knowledge	28
Chapter Descriptions: The Secrets to Follow	39
2 IMAGINE THERE'S NO PRESIDENT: THE RHETORICAL SECRET AND THE EXPOSURE OF VALERIE PLAME	43
The Rhetorical Criticism of Secrets and the George W. Bush Presidency	46
Rethinking Rhetoric and the Secret	50
Part I: <i>Jacques Lacan's "Seminar on the Purloined Letter"</i>	53
Part II: <i>From Epistemology to Ontology in Rhetoric</i>	55
Part III: <i>Tropes of the Secret, or Parts that are the Whole</i>	58
Part IV: <i>Synecdoche and the Reagan Presidency</i>	60
Imagine There's No President	62
<i>The Repetition of Joe Wilson's Missing Link</i>	63
<i>Caesura, or the Erasure of Valerie Plame</i>	67

	<i>Synecdoche and the Uncanny Presidency of George W. Bush</i>	72
	Inviting the Unknown	77
3	THE CONSERVATIVE LEGACY OF SAUL ALINSKY: THE OPEN SECRET AND THE IRONY OF <i>RULES FOR RADICALS</i>	80
	Alinskyean Experience and the Open Secret	84
	The Ironic Enjoyment of Political Antagonism	91
	Part I: <i>Enjoying the Open Secret</i>	93
	Part II: <i>The Return of Political Antagonism</i>	96
	Part III: <i>Saul Alinsky and the Socratic Eiron</i>	100
	Rules for Conservative Populism	102
	<i>The Right Enjoys Rules for Radicals</i>	104
	<i>The Return of Conservative Gridlock</i>	108
	Better Caul Saul, or the Open Secret of American Politics	113
4	CHELSEA MANNING’S TURING TEST: THE DIRTY SECRET AND THE PORNOGRAPHY OF NUMBER	116
	The WikiLeaks Effect	120
	The Infomania of Julian Assange	124
	The Pornography of Number	130
	Alan Turing’s Test for Machine Intelligence	136
	Chelsea Manning’s Turing Test	141
	Telling Dirty Secrets	144
5	THE SECRET IS THERE IS NO SECRET	146
	Must the Secret be Rhetorical?	147

Rhetoric, Truth, and Ontology	151
The Limits of the Rhetorical Secret	154
Is the Rhetorical Secret Epistemic or Not?	156
The End of the Rhetorical Secret	157
REFERENCES	161

LIST OF FIGURES

	Page
Figure 1: “Anatomy of a Leak”	128

CHAPTER 1

AN EPISTEMOLOGY OF NON-KNOWLEDGE

There is a battle “for truth,” or at least, “around truth” – it being understood once again that by truth I do not mean “the ensemble of truths which are to be discovered and accepted,” but rather “the ensemble of rules according to which the true and the false are separated and the specific effects of power attached to the true,” it being understood also that it’s not a matter of a battle “on behalf” of the truth, but of a battle about the status of truth and the economic and political role it plays.

-- Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, 132

The master must be obeyed – not because we’ll all be better off that way or for some other such rationale – but because he or she says so. No justification is given for his or her power: it just is.

-- Bruce Fink, *The Lacanian Subject*, 131

The standard account of rhetoric’s origin maintains that between 5 and 4 B.C.E the sophists surfaced as a movement of “itinerant orators and teachers of rhetoric” in ancient Athens.¹ Before 5 B.C.E, “sophist” had been a descriptive title reserved for “the poet, the seer,

¹Much of the phrasing of this first sentence is borrowed from Edward Schiappa (1999, 6) who critiques the tacit assumption of classical scholars that ‘rhetoric’ (*rhêtorikê*) was a common Greek term used to designate the teaching

and the sage,” all of whom were granted the gift of insight not possessed by average mortals.²

But amid the profound social and political changes of early Athenian democracy, the sophists were unwelcome guests. Many were “resident aliens”) who held controversial and cosmopolitan views.³ And for a price, they promised ordinary citizens a chance to participate in the agonistic theater of politics.⁴

For many, Plato has the final word on the sophists. In the *Sophist*, their willingness to accept coin led Socrates to define the speech teacher as “a paid hunter of rich young men” (Plato, 23d 2-3), a purveyor of mere illusions, irrationality, and a dangerous moral ambivalence.⁵ In the *Gorgias*, Socrates calls the sophistic art, *rhētorikē*, an “*eidolon*” (463b) or image-counterfeit.⁶

² G.B. Kerferd, *The Sophistic Movement* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 24.

³ John Poulakos, *Sophistical Rhetoric in Classical Greece* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1995), 16.

⁴ Accordingly, John Poulakos argues that “[b]efore the emergence of the Sophists, poets like Pindar had stood at the sidelines of athletic contests exalting the sons of aristocrats and praising heroic deeds and ideals (Jaeger 1970, 303-310; Marrou 1956, 10-47). By contrast, the Sophists, like other athletes, musicians, poets, and dramatists in their era, thought of themselves as contestants and participated in competitions, seeking to achieve victories by overcoming other contestants, dislodging opponents, and overpowering adversaries (Plato *Protagoras* 335a; *Hippias Minor* 363c-364a). With this change from observation to participation in place, to be an orator meant both to accept and issue symbolic challenges of various kinds (Sprague 1972 [82 A1a]). It also meant to engage in the production and critique of rhetoric, the sort of linguistic combat in which no point of view remained unopposed and no argument stayed unassailed for long. Last, it meant to acknowledge that a prevalent argument was prevalent not by virtue of its historical status or its compelling logic but because it had been tested by and withstood the attacks of the opposing side(s).” (1993, 57-58)

⁵ Classical scholars often texture Plato’s claims by depicting the sophists’ speeches as celebrations of speech’s creative capacity for deception. In Parmenides’ fragmented poetic dialogue with the goddess Justice, for instance, the sophist is warned “against any reliance on sense impression (and, perhaps, conventional language), since what we perceive (and, perhaps, say) invariably and fundamentally misrepresents the way things really are” (Wardy 1996, 10). According to Wardy, sense perception was for Protagoras a “habitual delusion” (11), a mortal compulsion that wrongly guides us toward the apparent and nonexistent. It weaves a kosmos of words, “an attractive appearance of superficial order masking essential incoherence.” Deception is similarly centered within Susan Jarratt’s reading of the Encomium of Helen, although she notes that “whereas a philosopher like Parmenides finds a ‘true’ formulation of reality in the speech of a master poet or philosopher ... logos is for Gorgias the only kind of speech possible, necessarily an *apatē* (deception)” (1991, 56). According to Scott Consigny, the significance of Gorgias’ so-called ‘deception’ thesis is not that all speech is a misrepresentation of reality; but rather that it places all possible representations of reality on equal epistemological footing (2001, 58-59).

⁶ Martin Jay writes that Plato was generally hostile to imitations of ‘true’ sight: “[In Plato’s] philosophy, ‘vision’ seems to have meant only that of the inner eye of the mind; in fact, Plato often expressed severe reservations about the reliability of the two eyes of normal perception. ... From this distrust followed Plato’s notorious hostility to the mimetic arts – most notably painting, which he banned from his utopian state in *The Republic*. Theater was equally suspect for its fictitious simulation of true action.” (1993, 27) David Ambuel elaborates on rhetoric’s status as a reproduction or mimetic art: “An opposition of truth to appearance underlies the Platonic analysis (*Phdr.* 262c). Like the patient, Gorgias has no genuine understanding of why the physician’s prescription is the appropriate therapy, but

Like cosmetics and cookery, Plato instructs, rhetoric is a technique of deceptive mimicry, a facsimile of justice and legislation. In the *Phaedrus*, Socrates describes rhetoric as an impossible science. Unlike the sophists' teachings, which shackled orators to their lascivious appetites, an ideal rhetorical art would discipline uncontrolled "*mania*"⁷ with "*sōphrosunē*" (271 a-b) or self-possessing reason. A science of political oratory is also the subject of Plato's *Protagoras*, which sets *technē*, "a deliberate application of human intelligence to some part of the world," against *tuchē*: "what just happens," random chance, and contingency; the opposite of human agency.⁸ There, Socrates argues that the randomness of sophistical thought needed a singular ideal, a "qualitative singleness and homogeneity of the values" (115a) that avoided rhetoric's otherwise disruptive and unpredictable consequences.⁹

And so the story goes: rhetoric is truth's antithesis.¹⁰ It is the vehicle for false apparition (*eidola*), appetite (*mania*), and contingency (*tuchē*); it still connotes a false spectacle of deceptive

he can create the appearance that it is. This is how, in the *Gorgias*, insofar as rhetoric is a knack, a τριβή, it is classed with cooking as opposed to nutrition, that is, with other practices that produce appearances without being able to give any account of these products" (2007, 45).

⁷ Martha Nussbaum elaborates on *mania* in the *Phaedrus*: "What is madness or possession? Consistently, in pre-*Phaedrus* dialogues, Plato has use '*mania*' and related words to designate the state of the soul in which non-intellectual elements – appetites and emotions – are in control and lead or guide the intellectual part. Consistently, as here, *mania* is contrasted with *sōphrosunē*, the state of the soul in which intellect rules securely over the other elements. It is linked particularly with the dominance of erotic appetite. The mad person, then, is one who is in the sway of inner forces that eclipse or transform, for a time at least, the calculations and valuations of pure intellect. The insights of *mania* will be reached not by the measuring, counting, and reckoning of the *logistikon*, but by non-discursive processes less perfectly transparent to the agent's awareness and possibly more difficult to control" (1986, 204).

⁸ Martha C. Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness: Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1986), 95.

⁹ Plato's *Sophist* corroborates the argument that the transition from rhetoric to philosophy is a transition from unruly heterogeneity to singular ideals. In the first half of the dialogue, Plato attempts to define the sophists by taking each of their heterogeneous characteristics and attempts to collapse them into a single category. What the sophist 'is,' however, remains notoriously indeterminate. The Eliatic visitor and Theatetus come to the conclusion that there is no apparent unity of the sophistic arts: "the sophist appears to have many competences and that whoever is taken in by this will find it hard to spot a single aspect of the sophists' art in which all these presumed competences converge" (Crivelli 2002, 22). In the second half of the dialogue, the interlocutors settle on a definition of the sophist as one who possesses "a sort of universal knowledge which is a mere appearance but no true reality" (*Sophist*, 233c). Rather than possessing a unifying principle, sophists are most alike in their difference: they "lie in hiding among the subdivisions of mimicry" (235c) and profess belief in the non-existent (237e-239d).

¹⁰ To the antitheses that are described here (*technē/epistēmē*; *rhētorikē/parrhesia*; *eidolon/technē*;

mimicry.¹¹ While many rhetorical scholars would object to this definition *prima facie*, it is my contention that rhetorical theory nonetheless remains obsessed with – and constrained by – a persisting investment in the antitheses of rhetoric/truth. This dissertation sets forth a psychoanalytically-inflected theory of *the secret* as an alternative to this dichotomy. As I will argue, the secret resituates rhetoric as the available means of materializing the relationship between truth and *itself*.

As background, I first recount how ‘truth’ surfaced as the centralizing *topos* of rhetorical theory during the 1967-1993 rhetoric-as-epistemic debates. Next, I offer a strategic intervention into this conversation with what I call epistemic rhetoric’s second death, which describes how epistemic rhetoric continues to inhabit contemporary rhetorical theory as a *secret*. I then provide a detailed account of my reading strategy: *the epistemology of non-knowledge*.

mania/sōphrosunē; technē/tuchē) I might have also added the antithesis of *physis* and *nomos*. I refrain from doing so because the articulation of these concepts to rhetoric varies somewhat. George Kennedy notes that “the antithesis between what the Greeks called *physis*, or nature (i.e. that which is objectively true) and *nomos*, which means ‘law,’ but that included institutions, conventions, and beliefs.” (1982, 32) Here, the force of *physis* appears to belong to a singular and true philosophical discourse, while the creations of humans are merely contingent *nomoi*. Michelle Ballif draws the opposite conclusion, citing Bruce Thornton’s *Erōs: The Myth of Ancient Greek Sexuality*: “‘*physis* comes from the word *phuo*, ‘grow,’ ‘spring up,’ and refers to the organic world of material growth and decay the givens of our bodies with their appetites and passions, and the earth and its forces, the ahistorical realm of necessity and chance, the raw material upon which custom and law [*nomos*] act. *Technē* in service of *nomos* sought to control *tuchē* and *physis*; indeed, *technē* evidences the superiority of man’s intelligence in the face of brute forces.” (2001, 37)

¹¹ Continental and rhetorical scholarship frequently resembles classicists’ accounts by inaugurating the history of philosophy with a break or split from rhetoric. “At the beginning of its history philosophy separates *technē* from *ēpistēmē*,” writes Bernard Stiegler, “the separation is determined by a political context, in which the philosopher accuses the Sophist of instrumentalizing the logos as rhetoric and logography, that is, as both an instrument of power and as a renunciation of knowledge.” (1998, 1) Rhetorical scholars also assume this ‘break’ as the point of departure for the study of rhetoric. Edward Schiappa contends that Plato may have invented *rhētorikē* because his dialogues demonstrate a “penchant for coining technical jargon,” (1999, 17) re-defining common terms in ways that bucked convention. Jane Sutton, by contrast, suggests that Aristotle first defined rhetoric. Unlike Plato, who chooses to call *rhētorikē* a tribe (a knack or aptitude) Aristotle’s use of this term imposes “a determinate structure onto sophistical rhetoric.” (1993, 86)

Lacan almost goes so far as to suggest a sort of historical movement from the master's discourse to the university discourse, the university discourse providing a sort of legitimation or rationalization of the master's will.

-- Bruce Fink, *The Lacanian Subject*, 132

Background and Rationale: An Orthodoxy of Truth

In 1967, Robert L. Scott published "On Viewing Rhetoric as Epistemic," which advanced the thesis that rhetoric creates social reality.¹² Rhetorical scholars were obliged to move toward a conception of rhetoric as the moment-by-moment creation of truth. In subsequent articles, Scott and others borrowed the philosophical tools of social constructionism to define rhetoric's generative capacities.¹³ Throughout, Scott maintained that a key virtue of epistemic rhetoric was its novel ethical imperative. As he first noted in 1967, the world-making rhetor should "act with intentions for good consequences, but ... accept the responsibilities for all the consequences in so far as they can be known."¹⁴

Ten years following Scott's initial publication rhetorical scholars were divided between competing epistemic claims, and it was clear that the article had produced disruptive and unpredictable consequences.¹⁵ Either social truths were the effect of rhetoric, or truth was the pre-existing 'stuff' of rhetorical invention. The former view was representative of the "intersubjectivist" (or consensus) approach to rhetoric, which held that 'truth' was social

¹² Robert L. Scott, "On Viewing Rhetoric as Epistemic," *Central States Speech Journal* 18 (1967): 17.

¹³ See also: C. Jack Orr, "How Shall We Say: 'Reality is Socially Constructed through Communication,'" *Central States Speech Journal* 29 (1978):263-274 and Robert L. Scott, "On Viewing Rhetoric as Epistemic: Ten Years Later," *Central States Speech Journal* 27 (1976): 263.

¹⁴ Scott, "On Viewing Rhetoric as Epistemic," 17.

¹⁵ See Michael C. Leff, "In Search of Ariadne's Thread: A Review of the Recent Literature on Rhetorical Theory," *The Central States Speech Journal* 29 (1978): 73-91.

knowledge created by shared symbolic relationships.¹⁶ Rhetoric, for the intersubjectivists, was the process of creating commonly shared social knowledge.¹⁷ Conversely, “objectivists” (or perspectivists) argued that “a world of entities independent of our attitudes, beliefs, and values” preceded rhetorical action.¹⁸ For this second camp, objective truth was a horizon that could only be apprehended by one or another rhetorical point of view.¹⁹ Rhetoric was therefore unable to *create* realities: it was rather “a tool which attempts to maximize the argumentative clash of opposing ideas.”²⁰

In the following years, critiques of the objectivist and intersubjectivist camps multiplied, giving rise to new theories of social knowledge and objective materiality. Bearing a striking resemblance to the intersubjectivist position, Thomas B. Farrell’s theory of social knowledge emphasized the role of consensus in constituting public truths.²¹ But whereas Brummett’s intersubjectivism held that *all* “human reality always has a meaningful and symbolic substance,” Farrell insisted on a strict separation between “social” and “technical” knowledge. Technical knowledge described matters of certainty that required no deliberation (i.e. whether it is

¹⁶ See also: Barry Brummett, “A Defense of Ethical Relativism as Rhetorically Grounded,” *The Western Journal of Speech Communication* 45 (1981):286-298; Barry Brummett, “On to Rhetorical Relativism,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 68 (1982):425-437.

¹⁷ Barry Brummett, “Some Implications of ‘Process’ or ‘Intersubjectivity’ Postmodern Rhetoric,” *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 9 (1976): 34.

¹⁸ Richard A. Cherwitz and James W. Hikins, “Rhetorical Perspectivism,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 69 (1983): 249-266. See also: James W. Hikins, “The Epistemological Relevance of Intrapersonal Rhetoric,” *The Southern Speech Communication Journal* 42 (1977):220-227; Richard B. Gregg, “Rhetoric and Knowing: The Search for Perspective,” *The Central States Speech Journal* 32 (1981): 130-144; James W. Hikins, “Plato’s Rhetorical Theory: Old Perspectives on the Epistemology of New Rhetoric,” *The Central States Speech Journal* 32 (1981): 160-176; Richard A. Cherwitz and Charles W. Kneupper, “Rhetoric as Epistemic: A Conversation with Richard A. Cherwitz,” *Pre/Text* 5 (1984): 197-235; Richard A. Cherwitz and James W. Hikins, *Communication and Knowledge: An Investigation in Rhetorical Epistemology* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1986).

¹⁹ See Richard A. Cherwitz and James W. Hikins, “Rhetorical Perspectivism,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 69 (1983): 249-266.

²⁰ Earl Croasman and Richard A. Cherwitz, “Beyond Rhetorical Relativism,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 68 (1982): 8.

²¹ Thomas B. Farrell, “Knowledge, Consensus, and Rhetorical Theory,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 62 (1976): 9. See also: Walter M. Carleton, “What is Rhetorical Knowledge? A Response to Farrell — and More,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 64 (1978): 313-328; Thomas B. Farrell, “Social Knowledge II,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 64 (1978): 329-334.

presently raining). Rhetoric was concerned with social knowledge, “knowledge in a state of potential or indeterminance ... validated through the reasoned judgment and action of an audience.”²² As Farrell put it, “[T]here is something which this art is about. That ‘something’ is a kind of knowledge which is attributed, audience-dependent, potential in state, generative, and normative in implication.”²³

In 1983, Celeste M. Condit offered a competing materialist position, landing ostensibly more on the side of the objectivists. Separating “objective truth” from “objective reality,” Condit postulated that reality was a rhetorical constraint that “frequently impinge[s] upon a language network to restrain its still-impressive creative possibilities.”²⁴ Condit also contested the intersubjectivist claim that reality is entirely relative to cultural context. There were, in fact, universal constraints that restricted symbolic action; reality was not *just* a linguistic play. Materiality (neurochemistry and hunger, for instance) placed finite limits on the possibilities for human speech. The distinction between objective truth and reality also set Condit’s theory apart from other objectivists because she insisted that their asymptotic metaphors (that critics can ‘approach’ or ‘approximate’ reality) ignored the heterogeneity of possible language structures used to describe matter:

Truth cannot be tied directly to material reality because, although only one material reality may exist (at a given time), millions of possible language structures for describing and interacting with that material reality exist. There is hence not one truth to be

²² Brummett, “Postmodern Rhetoric,” 9.

²³ Farrell, “Knowledge, Consensus, and Rhetorical Theory,” 11.

²⁴ Celeste M. Condit Railsback, “Beyond Rhetorical Relativism: A Structural-Material Model of Truth and Objective Reality,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 69 (1983): 353.

discovered and approached, but many temporarily useful characterizations among which we may choose.²⁵

For Condit, the give and take between “objective truth” and “objective reality” finessed a complex intertwining of rhetoric and matter. Objective truth admitted some degree of contingency as language structures fluctuated; but objective reality was a point of determinacy, one that demarcated the true from the false.

Epistemic Rhetoric's Movements

The controversy over epistemic rhetoric also spawned discipline-wide movements that aspired to turn away from the debate entirely. The first and most notable of these movements was the Rhetoric of Inquiry, which claimed to bring a uniquely rhetorical perspective to technical discourses.²⁶ Committed scholars argued that they had “move[d] beyond both objectivism and relativism,” bridging disciplinary divides by taking aim at objectivist discourses.²⁷ Through a systematic analysis of the foundational texts and research of biology, economics, chemistry, and optics,²⁸ rhetoricians of science endeavored to “[reconstruct] the means by which scientists

²⁵ Condit Railsback, “Beyond Rhetorical Relativism,” 357.

²⁶ See also: John Angus Campbell, “Darwin and *The Origin of Species*: The Rhetorical Ancestry of an Idea,” *Speech Monographs* 37 (1970): 1-14; Herbert W. Simons, “The Rhetoric of Science and the Science of Rhetoric,” *The Western Journal of Speech Communication* 42 (1978): 37-43; John Lyne, “Discourse, Knowledge, and Social Process: Some Changing Equations,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 68 (1982): 201-226; John Lyne, “Rhetorics of Inquiry,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 71 (1985): 65-73; Donald N. McCloskey, “The Rhetoric of Economics,” *Journal of Economic Literature* 21 (1985): 481-517; John S. Nelson and Allan Megill, “Rhetoric of Inquiry: Projects and Prospects,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 72 (1986): 23; John S. Nelson, Allan Megill, and Donald N. McCloskey, “Rhetoric of Inquiry,” in *Rhetoric of the Human Sciences: Language and Argument in Scholarship and Public Affairs* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987), 3-18; Alan G. Gross, “On the Shoulders of Giants: Seventeenth-Century Optics as an Argument Field,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 74 (1988): 1-7; James W. Hinkins and Kenneth S. Zagacki, “Rhetoric, Philosophy, and Objectivism: An Attenuation of the Claims of the Rhetoric of Inquiry,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 74 (1988): 201-228.

²⁷ John Lyne, “Rhetorics of Inquiry,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 71 (1985): 66. Summarizing the 1984 Iowa Symposium on Rhetoric and the Human Sciences, John Lyne offered “at least five different functions” (1985, 66) of rhetoric drawn from various disciplinary specialists in argumentation, social science, and philosophy. Rhetoric, he contended, served as the means of crafting academic arguments, bridging distinct interest-groups, demanding accountability, crafting narratives of origination, and orchestrating power relations.

²⁸ In his critique of social-scientific theories of persuasion, for instance, Herbert W. Simons argued that the “science of rhetoric,” or the application of positivist methods to human persuasion, was altogether misguided and was in need of a thorough ‘debunking’: “How does one choose between laboratory experiments with poor external validity and

convince themselves and others that their claims are true of the world.”²⁹ The rhetoric of inquiry also claimed to set itself apart because it brought focus back onto *rhetoric* as the method and means of analyzing discourse:

For more than a decade, specialists have examined how rhetoric is epistemic: how it can produce and shape as well as communicate knowledge. Thus far, however, few of the epistemic inspirations for rhetoric of inquiry come from communication theory. Partly they come instead from reconsiderations of foundationalism in philosophy; partly they stem from the practical rhetorics of research in diverse fields of the human sciences; but mostly they spring from explorations of rhetorical theory by scholars outside of rhetorical studies.³⁰

But even as rhetoricians of inquiry sought to set themselves apart from the epistemic debate, they also muddled their signature term: rhetoric. As Dilip Gaonkar noted in 1997, the diverse methodological commitments made the ‘rhetoric’ of Rhetoric of Science unspecific and ambiguous.³¹ In some instances ‘rhetoric’ was intentioned persuasion, in others neo-Aristotelian categories, while still others pledged simultaneous allegiance to phenomenological, hermeneutical, rational deliberative, and post-structural theory.³² In the mid-1980’s, a separate

field experiments with questionable internal validity; between complex deception experiments that are difficult to replicate and paper and pencil role-playing experiments that are prone to experimenter artifacts; between theoretically interesting definitions, whose novelty adds terminological confusion, and conformity with definitional conventions at the risk of reinforcing tired old ways of thinking; or between broad conceptualizations of independent or dependent variables that invite specious comparisons of research findings and narrow conceptualizations that then require identification of additional variables and distinctions among them? (1978, 40-41)”

²⁹ Alan G. Gross, “On the Shoulders of Giants: Seventeenth-Century Optics as an Argumentative Field,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 74 (1988): 2.

³⁰ John S. Nelson and Allan Megill, ‘Rhetoric of Inquiry: Projects and Prospects,’ *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 72 (1986): 23.

³¹ Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar, “The Idea of Rhetoric in the Rhetoric of Science,” in *Rhetorical Hermeneutics* eds. Alan G. Gross and William M. Keith (New York, NY: State University of New York Press, 1997), 36.

³² Gaonkar explains his position at length: “My own response to and readings of promiscuous uses and invocations of rhetoric is rather different. I am inclined to descriptively map the ways in which the term *rhetoric* is deployed and try to ascertain what sort of hermeneutic burden it is made to carry. Instead of regarding promiscuity as an indication of a failure of scholarly scruples, or of a disregard for tradition, or of a lack of commitment to rhetoric (all of which

discipline-wide movement emerged under the heading of critical rhetoric, which attempted to relieve the pressures of intersubjectivism and objectivism by abandoning *episteme* (knowledge) as rhetoric's god term:

A critical rhetoric must be grounded on a reconstitution of the concept of *doxa* (Hariman, 1986). Plato's impact on the status of rhetoric needs little elaboration – the attempts to rehabilitate rhetoric, to save it from its own “shame” are many and varied (Hariman, 1986; Nelson & Megill 1986). In essence, that is what the “epistemic” movement attempts, regardless of its claim to establish rhetoric's role in the constitution of subjects.³³

For McKerrow, the shift from *episteme* (knowledge) to *doxa* (belief) changed the purpose of criticism by emphasizing *praxis* in the sense of “what [symbols] ‘do’ in society as contrasted to what they ‘are’.”³⁴ Epistemic rhetoric had remained too focused on *knowing*, focusing its efforts on what rhetoric ‘is’ and how scholars might know it when they saw it. Critical rhetoric set out to show what *belief* truly did: It naturalized oppression through quotidian discourse-practices.

The Death of Epistemic Rhetoric

The answers to epistemic rhetoric – social knowledge, objective materialism, the rhetoric of inquiry, and critical rhetoric – illustrate ways that the fragmented field of rhetorical knowledge remained committed to truth as its centralizing problematic. Truth was a fault line

it may very well be), I am inclined to view it as the very object of cultural analysis. When the use of a term such as *rhetoric* becomes culturally so fervid, it hardly makes sense to bemoan its illicit deployment. I begin instead with two assumptions: First, the practice of invoking rhetoric is a culturally significant phenomenon and that practice is symptomatically related to the crisis in the human sciences marked by the demise of “foundationalism” in philosophy and “high modernism” in art and literature. Second, the seemingly careless and ubiquitous uses and invocations of rhetoric deflect our attention from its strategic deployment. Sheer multiplicity of usage that stretches from the inane to the idiosyncratic makes an overwhelmed reader abandon the hope of ever finding what motivates and steers rhetoric. It is precisely in this state — fatigue combined with a traditional distaste for rhetoric — that one is prone to overlook its strategic deployment in criticism and interpretation.” (1997, 38-39)

³³ Raymie E. McKerrow, “Critical Rhetoric: Theory and Praxis,” *Communication Monographs* 56 (1989): 103.

³⁴ McKerrow, “Critical Rhetoric,” 104.

along which rhetorical scholars oriented their arguments, a rupture that birthed and re-birthed rhetorical theory. In 1990, the *Quarterly Journal of Speech* published a forum on “The Reported Demise of Epistemic Rhetoric,” hosting a dialogue between many of its major contributors.³⁵ Citing the decline of scholarship devoted to epistemic rhetoric in the previous decade, Barry Brummett speculated that the movement had “burned itself out.”³⁶ By contrast, Richard A. Cherwitz and James W. Hikins denied outright that epistemic rhetoric was dead.³⁷ In spite of their differences, all of epistemic rhetoric’s eulogists agreed that new programs for rhetorical theory had already emerged. Cherwitz and Hikins argued that the ascendant critical rhetoric presumed to, but could not, side-step difficult epistemological questions. Alan G. Gross boldly titled his contribution “The Rhetoric of Science *IS* Epistemic Rhetoric.”³⁸ Taking stock of the debate, Thomas Farrell noted that the confusion over what rhetoric meant set a dangerous precedent for future scholarship:

If we equate rhetoric with symbols generally, we will conflate meaning and knowledge and find rhetorical texts everywhere: from wallpaper to wallflowers; from fables to (I know some of our discipline’s serious scholars will find this hard to swallow) food. Of course, because of our own diluted sense of what rhetoric is, we won’t be able to do much with these texts, once we find them. But find them we will. We will have texts galore, but no code. If we think of rhetoric as linguisticity generally, or perhaps the

³⁵ Robert L. Scott, “Epistemic Rhetoric and Criticism: Where Barry Brummett Goes Wrong,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 76 (1990): 300-301.

³⁶ Barry Brummett, “A Eulogy for Epistemic Rhetoric,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 76 (1990): 69-72.

³⁷ Richard A. Cherwitz and James W. Hikins, “Burying the Undertaker: A Eulogy for the Eulogists of Rhetorical Epistemology,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 76 (1990): 73-77

³⁸ Alan G. Gross, “Rhetoric of Science *IS *Epistemic Rhetoric,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 76 (1990): 304-306.

intentionality of perception, we will have similar problems. We will have – if you will – “so much to study, so little to say.”³⁹

According to Farrell, untethering rhetoric from its epistemic backing would multiply rhetorical texts at the expense of a coherent and well-defined discipline.⁴⁰ Indeed, if epistemic rhetoric met its demise because scholars were less and less able to define rhetoric, its legacy would be an undefined theoretical void.

The Resurrection of Epistemic Rhetoric

Just two years after the *Quarterly Journal of Speech* forum, new theoretical agendas for rhetorical scholarship reignited old conflicts over rhetoric and truth. Edward Schiappa’s 1992 vision to renew rhetorical theory adopted a critical Foucauldian vocabulary to argue that the fifth-century invention of the term ‘*rhêtorikê*’ functioned as an “institution of knowledge” that defined “the scope of permissible objects and objectives” of Athenian political oratory:

[T]he coining of *rhetorikê* was a watershed event in the history of conceptualized Rhetoric in ancient Greece. Specifically, prior to the coining of *rhetorikê*, the verbal arts were understood as less differentiated and more holistic in scope than they were in the fourth century; the teaching and training associated with *logos* do not draw a sharp line between the goals of seeking success and seeking truth as is the case once Rhetoric and Philosophy were defined as distinct disciplines.⁴¹

Any serious rhetorical theory would have to grapple first with rhetoric’s linguistic emergence as a meta-discourse, the first systematic philosophy of speech. As Schiappa claimed, “[t]he process

³⁹ Thomas B. Farrell, “From the Parthenon to the Bassinet: Death and Rebirth along the Epistemic Trail,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 76 (1990): 82.

⁴⁰ Regarding the projected ‘ends’ of rhetoric see Calvin O. Schrag, “Rhetoric Resituated at the End of Philosophy,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 71 (1985): 164-174; John Bender and David E. Wellbery, “Rhetorality: On the Modernist Return of Rhetoric,” in *The Ends of Rhetoric: History, Theory, Practice* ed. John Bender and David E. Wellbery (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999).

⁴¹ Edward Schiappa, “*Rhetorikê*: What’s in a Name? Toward a Revised History of Early Greek Rhetorical Theory,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 78 (1992): 10.

of revising the history of early Greek rhetorical theory will render certain long-standing traditions problematic, including such givens as the Corax and Tisias myth, the differences between “sophistical” and “philosophical” approaches to rhetoric, and the historical agenda of Plato’s *Gorgias*.⁴² Rhetorical theory would be a bi-product of the truth begotten of careful, accurate historicism.

Soon after Schiappa’s article appeared in print, Steve Whitson and John Poulakos published “Nietzsche and the Aesthetics of Rhetoric.” Offering a “discursive lifeboat for those who had abandoned the ship of epistemics,” Whitson and Poulakos argued that the study of rhetoric had force because it insisted on the impermanence of *all* philosophical meta-discourse.⁴³ Truth was a purely aesthetic performance, an alluring illusion created by signs, affect, and experience:

Inescapable bias in our perspectives leads to competing and conflicting perceptions of reality. But, while epistemologists defend the rightfulness of their perceptions, Nietzsche insists that “the right perception ... is a self-contradictory absurdity ... [T]here can be ... at most an *aesthetic* stance, I mean an allusive transference, a stammering translation into a completely foreign medium (*Truth* 252). Insofar as all perceptions yield aesthetic stances, that perception prevails among many which proves to be most appealing at a given time. ... “Truths,” it bears repeating, function aesthetically to render people’s lives stable; they are but artistic products that breathe form into the chaos of existence.⁴⁴

⁴² Schiappa, “Rhetorikē,” 11.

⁴³ Steve Whitson and John Poulakos, “Nietzsche and the Aesthetics of Rhetoric,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 79 (1993):132.

⁴⁴ Whitson and Poulakos, “Nietzsche and the Aesthetics of Rhetoric,” 137-8.

The dispute marked a key moment in the history of rhetorical theory, transforming the theoretical work of rhetoric into *either* a rigorous historical enterprise *or* fleeting, aesthetic enactments.⁴⁵

Once again, rhetoric would *either* be conceptually indebted to the notion that history was truth, verifiable and visible *or* truth would be the mere effect of rhetorical artistry.

Contrary to Farrell's concerns, then, the study of rhetoric did not simultaneously dissipate into everything and nothing. Rather, rhetorical theory quickly became an uncanny version of its previous self, replicating the old rhetoric/truth theoretical divide along the new axes of "historicism" and "aesthetics." In other words, when neither the arguments nor the advocates of epistemic rhetoric remained, what persisted in rhetorical theory was the oppositional logic that organized the field as a whole. The recurrent feature of rhetorical theory was its descent into incommensurability: Epistemic rhetoric 'died' only to return to the choice of '*either* rhetoric *or* truth,' moving past its past so as to live it out again.

⁴⁵ It is worth noting that these articles continued an ongoing disagreement between Schiappa and Poulakos that extends from 1987 until (at least) 2007. Sophistical rhetorical practices, Poulakos argued, stemmed from the early Sophists' terms for opportunity (*kairos*), the appropriate (*to prepon*) and the possible (*to dunaton*). By contrast to the version of rhetoric offered by Plato and Aristotle, "sophistical rhetoric" celebrated epistemological plurality and revision (Poulakos 1983, 37). Schiappa, by contrast, claimed that the absence of an objective historical record supporting these claims made 'sophistical rhetoric' an anachronism. He instead proposed to reconstruct individual sophists' techniques of oratory. The debate resurfaced for the next decade in various permutations. In 1990, Schiappa argued, risked turning rhetorical history into "self-affirming discoveries of early anticipations of voguish philosophical theories" (196). In his rejoinder, Poulakos accused Schiappa of reveling in a rehearsed, reductive, and claustrophobic history (1990, 226). Schiappa had also disavowed the way that texts influence *any* critical reading, especially his own. His historical reconstruction was at best an aesthetic stance, one that could only problematically claim to authoritatively 'know' the actual conditions of post-sophistical Athens. Schiappa to this day refuses to grant the existence of a formalized sophistical rhetoric beyond the limited linguistic and historical contexts in which *rhētorikē* emerged.

The hysteric pushes the master – incarnated in a partner, teacher, or whomever – to the point where he or she can find the master’s knowledge lacking. Either the master does not have an explanation for everything, or his or her reasoning does not hold water. In addressing the master, the hysteric demands that he or she produce knowledge and then goes on to disprove his or her theories.

-- Bruce Fink, *The Lacanian Subject*, 134

Inquiry and Intervention: Epistemic Rhetoric’s Second Death

The resurrection of old theoretical oppositions in this dispute has several implications worth our attention. First, and most obviously, the compulsive return to ‘dead’ theoretical dilemmas begs the question of whether rhetorical scholars have moved past epistemic rhetoric. If rhetorical scholarship is still holding on to unresolved epistemic baggage, how is contemporary rhetorical theory burdened by the unconscious influence of its own history? Second, if rhetorical theory remains stuck in the same groove, what conceptual resources might unstick this historical record? Finally, if epistemic oppositions *insist* in the division between historicism and aesthetics, how might rhetoric name this recurring theoretical fracture? This section will provide the following responses to the three questions posed above: first, epistemic rhetoric lingers because it has yet to die its second death. Second, rhetorical theory might ‘unstick’ itself by turning from a logic of alienation to one of sublimation. Finally, rhetoric might name its recurrent theoretical fracture the *secret*, a break that structures and re-structures one’s relationship to undisclosed knowledge.

Between the Two Deaths, or Repetition in Theory

In the first place, if epistemic rhetoric did not *actually* die with “The Reported Demise of Epistemic Rhetoric,” it is perhaps because the news of its passing was premature. It may instead make sense to speak of *two* deaths for epistemic rhetoric, so as account for the grip it still holds upon rhetorical scholarship. Slavoj Žižek elaborates:

Lacan conceives this difference between the two deaths as the difference between real (biological) death and its symbolization, the ‘settling of accounts,’ the accomplishment of symbolic destiny (deathbed confession in Catholicism, for example). This gap can be filled in various ways; it can contain either sublime beauty or fearsome monsters: in Antigone’s case, her symbolic death, her exclusion from the symbolic community of the city, precedes her actual death and imbues her character with sublime beauty, whereas the ghost of Hamlet’s father represents the opposite case – actual death unaccompanied by symbolic death, without a settling of accounts – which is why he returns as a frightful apparition until his debt has been repaid.⁴⁶

The first death of epistemic rhetoric would be the symbolic commemoration of its passing, indefinitely prolonged with eulogies, undertakers, and undertakers for undertakers.⁴⁷ The second

⁴⁶ Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (Brooklyn, NY: Verso 1989), 150.

⁴⁷ Richard A. Cherwitz and Thomas J. Darwin, “Why the ‘Epistemic’ in Epistemic Rhetoric? The Paradox of Rhetoric as Performance,” *Text and Performance Quarterly* 13 (1995): 189-205; James W. Hinks, “Nietzsche, Eristic, and the Rhetoric of the Possible: A Commentary on the Whitson and Poulakos ‘Aesthetic View’ of Rhetoric,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 81 (1995): 353-377; John Poulakos and Steve Whitson, “Rhetoric Denuded and Redressed: Figs and Figures,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 81 (1995): 378-385; James W. Hinks, “The Seductive Waltz: Rhetoric and Contemporary Interpretations of Nietzsche,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 85 (1999): 380-399; Richard A. Cherwitz and James W. Hinks, “Climbing the Academic Ladder: A Critique of Provincialism in Contemporary Rhetoric,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 86 (2000): 375-385; Michael McGuire, “Dancing in the Darkness on the Edge of Town: A Reply to Hinks’ ‘Seductive Waltz,’” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 87 (2001): 96-104; Edward Schiappa, Alan G. Gross, Raymie McKerrow, and Robert L. Scott, “Rhetorical Studies as Reduction or Redescription? A Response to Cherwitz and Hinks,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 88 (2002): 112-120; Kevin Ayotte, John Poulakos, and Steve Whitson, “Mistaking Nietzsche: Rhetoric and the Epistemic Pest,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 88 (2002): 121-127.

would be its as-yet unconsummated ‘actual’ death. This ‘actual death’ would consist of coming to terms with the ways in which rhetorical scholarship has failed to let epistemic rhetoric go.

Admittedly, if this document indicts contemporary rhetorical theory for carrying too much epistemic baggage, my version of events is no less saddled by its own (theoretical) past. The ‘two deaths’ argument, it could be argued, is no less indebted to epistemic rhetoric than historicism and aesthetics. Borrowing again from Žižek:

The whole problem of repetition is here: ... A certain act through which breaks historical necessity is perceived by the consciousness as arbitrary, as something which also could not have happened ... but when this act repeats itself it is finally perceived as an expression of underlying historical necessity. In other words, repetition is the way historical necessity asserts itself in the eyes of ‘opinion’.⁴⁸

A strong case could be made that these ‘two deaths’ of epistemic rhetoric are nothing less than an aesthetic rhetoric, preceded by the very history that it critiques. Epistemic rhetoric’s ‘second death’ would be aesthetic, in other words, because repetition would function as the rhetorical mode by which ‘truth’ (as historical necessity) becomes legible. If there is a leap, it would be in the presumption that theoretical discourse always and already references a prior event, at once forgotten by discourse and ceaselessly revisited by it.

There are at least two responses to this objection. The first (and lesser) of these is that the “two deaths” thesis markedly departs from other ways that rhetorical scholars have already thought through ‘forgetting’. The most persuasive theories of forgetting have relied on one or another conception of power: a dispersed, immanent force which articulates discourses in the service of entrenched institutional regimes. Barbara Biesecker, for instance, compellingly argues

⁴⁸ Žižek, *Sublime Object*, 64.

that the discourses commemorating World War II effectively allowed Americans to ‘forget’ the social unrest of the 1990’s:

By manufacturing and embracing a particular kind of American, a certain idea of what it means to be a “good citizen,” these popular cultural texts, best understood as technologies of national cultural transformation, promote social cohesion by rhetorically inducing differently positioned audiences – by class, race, ethnicity, sexuality, and gender – to disregard rather than actively to seek to dismantle the inequitable power relations that continue to structure collective life in the United States.⁴⁹

Relatedly, Bradford Vivian describes forgetting “as a symbolic resource of public speech and action” so as to explain how its “idioms... [are] occasionally necessary, even indispensable, aspects of those cultures of memory from which public institutions derive their purpose and authority.”⁵⁰ The forgetting characteristic of epistemic rhetoric, however (the fact that epistemic rhetoric has ‘forgotten to die,’ or alternatively, that scholars have forgotten to let it go) has no singular, governing institution to which we can attribute its force. Furthermore, if it is possible to observe in the epistemic debates an insistence of the classical split of *rhêtorikê* from philosophy, then epistemic rhetoric would *itself* be a ‘second death,’ a commemoration of this first Platonic schism. Such forgetting could not be attributed to a particular political institution or immanent governing interest. Rather, it places into question the presumption that discourses *must* be enlisted into the service of institutional power. Joan Copjec concurs:

What is it that prevents Foucault from accomplishing his declared task? His disallowance of any reference to a principle or a subject that “transcends” the regime of power he

⁴⁹ Barbara Biesecker, “Remembering World War II: The Rhetoric and Politics of National Commemoration at the Turn of the 21st Century,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 88 (2002): 394.

⁵⁰ Bradford Vivian, *Public Forgetting: The Rhetoric and Politics of Beginning Again* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010), 7-11.

analyses. He correctly and strongly believes that the principle of a regime's institution cannot be conceived as a *meta*-principle, that is, as a logical observation that is simply added to all the other observations one may make about a particular regime in order to organize, embrace, or comprehend them. The principle of construction or staging cannot occupy a different, a superior, position with respect to the regime it stages. Not wishing to look for it in some exterior realm, Foucault eventually abandons, without actually acknowledging that he is doing so, his attempt to define the very principle he supposedly seeks.⁵¹

In other words, what is absent in a theory of power that joins discourses with institutions is a developed understanding of the institution *as such*. In the case of epistemic rhetoric, what is the generative agency of its discursive repetition? If scholarship is to marshal a theory of power to explain the recurrence of the epistemic debate, in the service of what, or whom, has scholarship forgotten to let go of epistemic rhetoric? In the service of what regime (or regimes) of power would the truth/rhetoric fracture persist?

The second (and greater) response to the objection that 'the two deaths' is the product of its own conceptual history is that I do *not* claim that rhetoric produces truth as its effect. Rather, the notion of 'two deaths' borrows the psychoanalytic concept of *Nachträglichkeit* (or afterwordness) to describe the way events become meaningful only after their symbolization. The paradox of afterwordness is that past events can only be retroactively infused with meaning. As the source and origin for a current state of affairs, the past explains a 'present' that is always sliding away. Meaning, then, is something that is only ever captured in hindsight. To call truth the effect of rhetoric (or the opposite) is like a trick of memory; one that imparts significance to something which comes 'before,' but can do so only 'after' that 'before' has transpired. To

⁵¹ Joan Copjec, *Read My Desire: Lacan Against the Historicists* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1994), 7.

displace this paradox, Jacques Lacan allows us to argue that it is the *separation* between rhetoric/truth that possesses agency, if for no other reason than it gives rise to this naturalized illusion of cause and effect. As he explains:

The gap of the unconscious may be said to be pre-ontological. I have stressed that all too often forgotten characteristic – forgotten in a way that is not without significance – of the first emergence of the unconscious, namely, that it does not lend itself to ontology.

Indeed, what became apparent at first to Freud, to the discoverers, to those who made the first steps, and what still becomes apparent to anyone in analysis who spends some time observing what truly belongs to the order of the unconscious, is that it is neither being, nor non-being, but the unrealized.⁵²

With respect to the ‘two deaths’ of epistemic rhetoric, then, the unconscious is the separation that we witness and re-witness as the fracture between truth and rhetoric. It is that aggregate of discourse that becomes apparent only in retrospect, or as Christian Lundberg puts it, “all the latent associations that inhere in the accreted history of a signifier, and by extension, the whole network of meanings.”⁵³ The unconscious is “unrealized,” as Lacan says, because this gap inhabits speech without making itself known.

From Alienation to Sublimation

Second, if the two deaths thesis suggests that rhetorical theory has become ‘stuck,’ it may become ‘unstuck’ by turning from the logic of *alienation* to one of *sublimation*. Speaking generally, alienation describes the conditions under which epistemic rhetoric has failed to live out its ‘second death’. To again borrow a turn of phrase from Slavoj Žižek, alienation describes

⁵² Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York, NY: W.W. Norton, 1981), 29-30.

⁵³ Christian Lundberg, *Lacan in Public: Psychoanalysis and the Science of Rhetoric* (Tuscaloosa, AL: The University of Alabama Press, 2012), 52.

the ways in which rhetorical scholars know very well that epistemic rhetoric has ‘passed on,’ yet nonetheless continue to labor as if still under its suggestion. Drawing from a still more credible source:

This fact expresses merely that the object which labor produces – labor’s product – confronts it as *something alien*, as a *power independent* of the producer. The product of labor is labor which has been embodied in an object, which has become material: it is the *objectification* of labor. Labor’s realization is its objectification. Under these economic conditions this realization of labor appears as *loss of realization* for the workers; objectification as *loss of the object and bondage to it*; appropriation as *estrangement*, as *alienation*.⁵⁴

Parsed in Marx’s language, if historicist and aesthetic rhetorical theory is a product of, but confronts itself as *something alien* to, epistemic rhetoric, then we may say that the labor of epistemic rhetoric has become embodied, materialized, and objectified as historicist and aesthetic rhetorical theory. This realization of epistemic rhetoric is a *loss of realization* for scholarship: Those who labor under historicist and aesthetic pretenses would have both *lost epistemic rhetoric and remained bonded to it*, adopting it as *estranged* and therefore *alienated*. Jacques Lacan, by contrast, describes the structure of alienation as a *vel*, an either/or choice with lose/lose outcomes:

This alienating *or* is not an arbitrary invention, nor is it a matter of *how one sees things*. It is a part of language itself. This *or* exists. It is so much a part of language that one should distinguish it when one is dealing with linguistics. I will give you an example at once.

Your money or your life! If I choose the money, I lose both. If I choose life, I have life

⁵⁴ Karl Marx, *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*, ed. Dirk J. Struik, trans. Martin Milligan. <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/pdf/Economic-Philosophic-Manuscripts-1844.pdf>.

without the money, namely, a life deprived of something. ... It is in Hegel that I have found a legitimate justification for the term alienating *vel*. What does Hegel mean by it? To cut a long story short, it concerns the production of the primary alienation, that by which man enters into the way of slavery. *Your freedom or your life!* If he chooses freedom, he loses both immediately – if he chooses life, he has life deprived of freedom.⁵⁵

A *vel*, in other words, is a false choice: it is the choice between a Coca-Cola and a Pepsi,⁵⁶ between gluttony and thinner waistline. In the debate between Poulakos and Schiappa, the *either/or* is the false choice between either historicism *or* aesthetics. Framed somewhat differently, (and as appears earlier) it is the choice in which rhetoric is *either* conceptually indebted to the notion that history is truth, verifiable and visible, *or* that truth is the mere effect of rhetorical artistry.

Predictably, this *either/or* relinquishes its own gains. Electing, on the one hand, historicism as *the* method for inventing rhetorical theory, scholars would decisively answer ‘what is rhetoric?’ with an epistemology that introduces a *new* element of uncertainty. To take Schiappa as an example, he implies that rhetorical histories must acknowledge a limit to the textual archive, and therefore, to the ‘truth’ that can be gotten of historicism:

Fifth-century language-use did not clearly delineate an explicit art of the *rhêtôr*. Possibly, of course such a notion could be pointed to *within* a given text even without giving a distinct lexical marker. Implicit, intra-textual evidence concerning such a conclusion is largely a matter of interpretation. Nevertheless, if one temporarily brackets the fourth-century notion of *rhêtorikê* when reading several key fifth-century pre-disciplinary texts,

⁵⁵ Jacques Lacan, *Four Fundamental Concepts*, 212.

⁵⁶ Given that I currently live in Athens, this statement is, of course, an absolute heresy.

it is apparent that the art of discourse is conceptualized in terms broader and less differentiated than that found in the fourth-century texts.⁵⁷

A historical truth about rhetoric purchases its limited certainty at the price of ‘Truth’: the oratory theorized by the fifth-century term rhetoric remains shrouded in mystery, “broader and less differentiated” than its philosophical counterpart. By even temporarily relinquishing the ability to know what rhetoric was, the historicist claim to know what rhetoric ‘is’ becomes murky and obscure. Taken to its logical extreme, Schiappa’s argument suggests that the original rhetorical arts cannot be known for the mere fact that the written archive of this ‘art’ could not have existed before Plato.⁵⁸ Scholars are therefore unable to know whether this (or any) historicist account of rhetoric can ever be complete. As Martin Heidegger puts it, “[w]hat can all merely historiological philosophies of history tell us about our history if they only dazzle us with surveys of its sedimented stuff; if they explain history without ever thinking out, from the essence of history, the fundamentals of their way of explaining events.”⁵⁹ If rhetoric is ‘truly’ historical, it will then always admit sufficient uncertainty so as to undermine its claims to “truth.”

Of course, the opposite is also the case: the choice of an aesthetic rhetoric *without* epistemic truth sacrifices the ability to ‘know’ rhetoric. As Douglas Thomas argues: “[w]hile Whitson and Poulakos are explicit about there no longer being a need to ‘demonstrate the artistry of truth, the rhetoricity of philosophy, or the doxastic character of knowledge,’ the ‘knowledge

⁵⁷ Schiappa, “Rhetorikē,” 5.

⁵⁸ This is a criticism that has followed Schiappa long after this exchange. As he writes in his 1999 book-length exploration of the origins of *rhetorikē*: “The last objection I want to address is the claim that it does not matter precisely when *rhetorikē* entered popular usage because ‘rhetoric’ did not exist amounts to saying that things do not exist if we do not have words for them. So, as one scholar argued at a convention I attended, just because the Greek texts of a period do not use a word for urination does not mean that no one was urinating at the time” (Schiappa, 1999, 21).

⁵⁹ Martin Heidegger, “The Anaximander Fragment” in *Early Greek Thinking*, trans. David F. Krell and Frank A. Capuzzi (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1975), 17.

drive' remains, and I fear the temptation to engage in precisely those endeavors may prove irresistible."⁶⁰ Even for Whitson and Poulakos, a rhetoric divorced from epistemology can *only* claim to know what rhetoric is at the price of the verbs 'know' and 'is':

Under the light of our remarks, one may see that we have rendered our own reading problematic: if all discourse is figural, it is impossible to articulate that fact since any articulation would be implicated in the figuration it presupposes; if all language is rhetorical, so too, is our reading of the debate over rhetoric's epistemic status as well as the Nietzschean alternative.⁶¹

Even as it avows 'rhetoric' in name, aesthetic rhetoric disavows the linguistic authority that comes of this naming. Taken together (and not without a hint of irony) the two positions are not unlike the famous dispute between Corax and Tisias: one cannot but contradict their own vote of confidence. Hence the lose/lose of *either* historicism *or* aesthetics: Choosing a 'historical truth about rhetoric' effectively negates the possibility of knowing the 'truth'; choosing a 'rhetorical artistry of truth' effectively negates one's ability to know rhetoric.

As an alternative, we can read in Lacan a counter-example, a third option to the *either/or* dilemma that unbinds the rhetorical critic from the alienating structure of this choice. This option, sublimation, is concerned with the specific choice of *death*, and the unique kind of agency such choices produce. Joan Copjec explains:

Now, it would seem that the revolutionary slogan, "Freedom or death," offers a choice with the same alienating structure. ... In the second example, however, by choosing one does *not* automatically lose what is not chosen, but instead *wins* some of it. Lacan attributes the difference between the two examples to the appearance of death in the

⁶⁰ Douglas Thomas, "Reflections on a Nietzschean Turn in Rhetorical Theory: Rhetoric without Epistemology," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 80 (1994): 73.

⁶¹ Whitson and Poulakos, "Nietzsche and the Aesthetics of Rhetoric," 142-3.

second. It is through the introduction of the “lethal factor,” as he puts it, ‘that the revolutionary choice opens the possibility of an act about which it is improper to say that it sacrifices freedom, that it loses it to the structure of alienation. The choice of death gains freedom. This point is utterly incomprehensible unless one assumes that the death one opts for in the second example is not the same one that is avoided in the first. That is, at the point at which death intersects freedom ... it ceases to be conceivable in literal or biological terms.’⁶²

By contrast to the *vel* of alienation, sublimation describes a scenario in which the choice between *either* historicism *or* aesthetics begets, rather than forecloses, its opposite. In other words, unlike ‘your money or your life’ in which both choices result in a ‘loss’ of the thing chosen, the affirmation ‘freedom or death!’ grants the *rhêtor* a measure of freedom, regardless of the outcome. The choice of freedom begets death because the freedom that is ‘granted’ cannot be free. The choice of death begets freedom because it proclaims that no measure of granted freedom can substitute for the death that is willfully approached. According to Copjec, the distinction between the death of the first and second example is that in the latter, a ‘non-literal,’ ‘non-biological’ death describes an act that affirms the accomplishment it receives by routinely failing to fully accomplish its goals. In the context of epistemic rhetoric, if alienation consists in thinking that either historicism or aesthetics escape epistemic rhetoric’s gravitational pull (and disappointingly fail to do so), sublimation consists in recognizing that these are nothing more than pleasurable *routines* or ‘little deaths,’ compulsive labors completed for the sake of their own doing. As Copjec writes elsewhere, sublimation is “the satisfaction of the drive through the inhibition of its aim,” a going-through-the-motions which is at times painful and at others

⁶² Joan Copjec, *Imagine There’s No Woman: Ethics and Sublimation* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2002), 18.

gratifying, but which principally functions to give meaning and identity to the subject who is put into this circuit.⁶³

Rhetoric and the Secret

Finally, if rhetoric has been stuck in the circuit or loop of epistemic rhetoric, then one way to name its “second death” is as a *secret*. Put very simply, the secret is knowledge that cannot be had, or that is prohibited. If, as I have argued, those who have followed in the footsteps of epistemic rhetoric suffer a “loss of realization” because they perpetuate the rhetoric/Truth tension, then this loss of realization materializes as a secret: as discursive form for what cannot or must not be said. A secret comes into existence when discourse provides an available means of depicting something that cannot be discussed, which remains off-limits, taboo, or unacknowledged. What, then, is the secret, and what is rhetoric – and is there a difference?

To define the secret, on the one hand, one might say that the epistemic rhetoric dilemma illuminates one of Rhetoric’s disciplinary *secrets*. As I have argued, epistemic rhetoric wages a conflict between rhetoric and truth which still persists, but cannot precisely be named. The secret is at once this conflict-that-is-a-mysterious origin, the fact that this ‘origin’ comes to us after the fact, and the markers of non-knowledge that signal that some truth exists. In this case, epistemic rhetoric arrives as an ‘origin’ for historicist and aesthetic rhetorics, after the fact. Moreover, the resemblance of the rhetoric/truth divide between the epistemic and aesthetic/historicist contexts marks the recurring tension of ‘rhetoric/truth’ as a symptom of this primal association.

Rhetoric, as I account for it in this dissertation, is a discursive form of a failed representation. Put somewhat differently, rhetoric describes how discourse marshalled to account for the ‘unknown,’ using an available means to shore up what cannot be represented. For this

⁶³ Copjec, *Imagine There’s No Woman*, 30.

reason, it makes sense to divorce rhetoric from *representation*.⁶⁴ If rhetoric describes those patterns or arrangements of discourse that result in a *failure* of apprehension, representation, or understanding, then rhetoric is situated less at the level of ideological fantasy, and more at the level of this fantasy's Real disruption. Rhetoric, in this inverted view, is not the pattern *in* discourse, but the pattern *of* discourse that allows the critic to apprehend the failure of discourse to perpetuate a stable fantasy.

The role of *sublimation* in this process is crucial. If sublimation describes a non-literal, non-biological death that takes the form of an unconscious routine, then rhetoric is the routine for revisiting this non-literal place that is the secret. Throughout this dissertation, I draw attention to this rhetoric as trope. In this regard, I am indebted to Christian Lundberg, who formulates trope in Jacques Lacan's seminars as follows:

The whole of Lacan's theory of trope could be accounted for as an elaborate version of metaleptic substitution of tropes for other tropes, although reducing Lacan's conception of trope to metalepsis would entail a risk: it elides the specificity of metaphor and metonymy as different modes of signifying articulation.⁶⁵

Unlike Lundberg, however, I do not rest my theory of trope-as-failure-of-representation on metaphor and metonymy alone. As employed in this dissertation, trope (whether formulated as chiasmus, repetition, caesura, synecdoche, irony, or catachresis) gestures toward an impulse or drive to manifest the secret, to define or describe what cannot or must not be had.

⁶⁴ It would, after all, be nonsensical to state that "rhetoric is the representation of a failure of representation."

⁶⁵ Christian Lundberg, *Lacan in Public: Psychoanalysis and the Science of Rhetoric* (Tuscaloosa, AL: The University of Alabama Press, 2012), 74.

The analyst sets the patient to work, to associate, and the product of that laborious association is a new master signifier. The patient in a sense “coughs up” a master signifier that has not yet been brought into relation with any other signifier. -- Bruce Fink, *The Lacanian Subject*, 135

Reading Strategy: The Epistemology of Non-Knowledge

The splitting of discourse, the failure to die a ‘second death,’ and the turn to sublimation model a method for this dissertation’s critique of the secrets. This reading strategy, which I term *the epistemology of non-knowledge*, enables a rhetorical critique of public discourses that stages closed choices as *the* mode of exercising agency. As I will suggest, this strategy adopts a novel ethical imperative: to witness the discourses of absence that preserve social order.

The purpose of this section is to show my cards by clearly identifying the strategies that have guided my reading of epistemic rhetoric’s second death. First, I describe the process of *problematization*, of locating the moments at which a given discourse emerges, fractures, and multiplies. Next, I trace the structure of these discursive conflicts as double-binds or *resistances*. Finally, I mark the recurrence of these double binds as *sublimations*, or discourses that only ‘succeed’ by failing to accomplish their express goals. The final section of this prospectus previews the dissertation chapters that will employ my strategy of reading.

Problematization

Drawn from the writings of Michel Foucault, the term *problematization* is often understood in divergent, if not conflicting, senses. In its most general form, problematization describes Foucault’s response to traditional (or “total”) historicism.⁶⁶ More frequently, critics use

⁶⁶ As Foucault argues in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*: The project of a total history is one that seeks to

the term to describe “techniques of subjectivation” or alternatively, as the strategy for mapping discursive relations. When problematization appears alongside techniques of subjectivation, for instance, it becomes coeval with the conflicting institutional practices that make sexual, medical, and political subjects intelligible to themselves. Colin Koopman, for instance, defines problematization as “a historical diagnosis of the difficulties that motivate the continued elaboration of ourselves in the present.”⁶⁷ Rudi Visker elaborates:

Foucault’s attention is not directed in the first instance to the moral prescriptions to which sexuality has been subjected, but to the fact that behaviour came up for ethical “problematization.” He evinced astonishment that this required an ‘exercise of self upon self, one does not become a ‘subject of desire’ and a subject of sexuality in the modern sense of the word. Other forms of *askesis*, which have led to other *forms of subjectivity* or have been practiced for other *reasons*, are conceivable and actually exist.⁶⁸

In other words, problematization highlights the points at which subjects are *split*, and inhabit oppositional roles. Problematization is at other times is used to describe singular, unresolvable, and historically particular concerns manifested by distinct discourses. In his careful genealogy of perception, Jonathan Crary traces the relationship between philosophical and physiological discourses at the turn of the twentieth century. There, he suggests that certain aesthetic practices manifested the emergent ‘problem of perception,’ or in his words, certain works of art “are

reconstitute the overall form of a civilization, the principle – material or spiritual – of a society, the significance common to all the phenomena of a period, the law that accounts for their cohesion – what is called metaphorically the ‘face’ of a period. Such a project is linked to two or three hypotheses; it is supposed that between all the events of a well-defined spatio-temporal area, between all the phenomena of which traces have been found, it must be possible to establish a system of homogeneous relations: a network of causality that makes it possible to derive each of them, relations of analogy that show how they symbolize one another, or how they all express one and the same central core; it is also supposed that one and the same form of historicity operates upon economic structures, social institutions and customs, the inertia of mental attitudes, technological practice, political behaviour, and subjects them all to the same type of transformation; lastly, it is supposed that history itself may be articulated into great units – stages or phases – which contain within themselves their own principle of cohesion (1972, 9-10).

⁶⁷ Colin Koopman, *Genealogy as Critique: Foucault and the Problems of Modernity* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2013), 218-9.

⁶⁸ Rudi Visker, *Michel Foucault: Genealogy as Critique*, trans. Chris Turner (New York, NY: Verso, 1995), 89.

constitutive elements of that same field of events, they are *original* fashionings of related problems.”⁶⁹ Problematization in this usage describes when *discourses* are split around a centralizing problematic: in this case, perception. Juxtaposed, then, these uses of problematization illustrate an interesting dilemma. Problematization is both a discursive split (in the subject, or between distinct discourses) and has *itself* been problematized. The fact that this conceptual lever has been discursively split leads me to adopt problematization to describe the dual process of discursive emergence and divergence.

Foucault’s reflections on genealogy offer a still more exacting explanation of problematization. Setting genealogical method against the term *Ursprung* (origin), Foucault notes that it is not possible “to capture the exact essence of things, their purest possibilities, and their carefully protected identities.”⁷⁰ Instead he replaces *Ursprung* with the dueling terms *Herkunft* (descent) and *Entstehung* (emergence). The former is traditionally associated with “bonds of blood, tradition, or social class.” Foucault’s appropriation of *Herkunft* modifies this definition to describe descent as a science of identifying successive contingencies and ruptures:

[It] is to identify the accidents, the minute deviations – or conversely, the complete reversals – the errors, false appraisals, and the faulty calculations that gave birth to those things that continue to exist and have value for us; it is to discover that truth or being do not lie at the root of what we know and what we are, but the exteriority of accidents.⁷¹

In the context of epistemic rhetoric, *Herkunft* appears as the fissuring of rhetorical studies in the wake of Robert Scott’s “On Viewing Rhetoric as Epistemic.” The ‘descent’ of epistemic rhetoric can be witnessed in the initial split between objectivism and intersubjectivism, the development

⁶⁹ Jonathan Crary, *Suspensions of Perception: Attention, Spectacle, and Modern Culture* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1999), 9.

⁷⁰ Michel Foucault, “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History,” in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, ed. Donald F. Bouchard, trans. Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1977), 142.

⁷¹ Foucault, “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History,” 145.

of social knowledge and objective materialism, and the lasting discipline-wide movements of critical rhetoric and the rhetoric of inquiry.

Enstehung, by contrast, designates the particular moment or threshold at which a given problem becomes exigent, “the current episode in a series of subjugations.”⁷² Foucault elsewhere describes such episodes as “the outcome of the interplay, the encounter, the junction, the struggle, and the compromise between the instincts. Something is produced because the instincts meet, fight one another, and at the end of their battles finally reach a compromise.”⁷³ “On Viewing Rhetoric as Epistemic” marks a clear moment of emergence, a nodal point from which present rhetorical theory has descended. Similarly, the aesthetic/historicist conflict is a similar ‘emergence,’ marking the end of one theoretical conversation and the inauguration of another.

As a reading strategy, then, the first stage of the epistemology of non-knowledge is to identify problematizations through the careful account of both emergence and descent. Accounts of such problematizations are also what Foucault calls “counter-memories,” a resistance to the history of the present as a necessary culmination of the past. As Foucault notes, “[to] diagnose the present is to say what the present is, and how our present is absolutely different from all that is not it, that is to say, from our past.”⁷⁴ The purpose of problematization is therefore to remind us that the history of the present is always riddled with unseen complexities. It exposes the past as a dense tangle of conflict, and repudiates the all-too convenient fictions that function as its substitutes.

⁷² Foucault, “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History,” 148.

⁷³ Michel Foucault, “Truth and Juridical Forms,” in *Power*, ed. James D. Faubion and Paul Rabinow, trans. Robert Hurley (New York, NY: The New Press, 2000), 9.

⁷⁴ Michel Foucault, *Security Territory, Population: Lectures at the College de France 1977-1978*, ed. Michel Senellart, Francois Ewald, Alessandro Fontana, and Arnold Davidson, trans. Graham Burchell (New York, NY: Picador, 2007), 101.

Resistance

For many critics, Foucault runs aground when he theorizes resistance. According to Aurelia Armstrong, the Foucault of *Madness and Civilization* and *The History of Sexuality Vol. 1* describes the body as a site of resistance *to* power, the point of recalcitrance against which institutions consistently mobilize their disciplinary practices.⁷⁵ In his later writing, however, Foucault renounces resistance as an embodied capacity and instead adopts the term “counter-conduct,” or the “struggle against the processes implemented for conducting others.”⁷⁶ The key distinction between resistance and counter-conduct is that the latter is always a resistance *of* power, an act proscribed by the pre-existing forces it opposes. As Toby Miller writes, “[There] can be no absolute independence from the categories of person enunciated by the powerful discourses already encountered. Attempts to resist dominance always implicate themselves with what they struggle against.”⁷⁷ Foucault elaborates on this second version of resistance:

In itself, the exercise of power is not a violence that sometimes hides, or an implicitly renewed consent. It operates on the field of possibilities in which the behavior of active subjects is able to inscribe itself. It is a set of actions on possible actions; it incites, it induces, it seduces, it makes easier or more difficult; it releases or contrives, makes more probable or less; in the extreme, it constrains and forbids absolutely, but it is always a way of acting upon one or more acting subjects by virtue of their acting or being capable of action.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ Aurelia Armstrong, “Beyond Resistance: A Response to Žižek’s Critique of Foucault’s Subject of Freedom,” *Parrhesia* 5 (2008): 19

⁷⁶ Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, 201.

⁷⁷ Toby Miller, “New Technologies to Form New Selves,” in *The Well-Tempered Self: Citizenship, Culture, and the Postmodern Subject* (Baltimore, MA: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 174.

⁷⁸ Michel Foucault, “The Subject and Power” in *Power*, ed. James D. Faubion and Paul Rabinos, trans. Robert Hurley (New York, NY: The New Press, 2000), 341.

The contradiction between “resistance” and “counter-conduct” is difficult to reconcile. On the one hand, “resistance” makes the body the site of power’s simultaneous application and evasion. On the other, “counter-conduct” suggests that it is impossible to evade power: power enables and constrains every act of resistance. As with problematization, Foucault’s own discourse *about* resistance demonstrates this critical concept in action: Resistance *is* the double bind. As defined here, resistance describes that paradox in which the subject discovers the capacity to exercise agency, but already finds herself constrained by a forced choice.

Jacques Derrida offers a succinct explanation of this double bind in his 1991 lecture titled “The Notion of Analysis.” He notes that in psychoanalysis there exist two competing, though interwoven, concepts of resistance. The first is the psychoanalytic “resistance *to* analysis,” consisting of an analysand’s refusal to discourse. Whether by way of an absent memory, a bout of anger, or a verbal tic, this “resistance” indicates to an analyst that they *must* probe further. Derrida notes that such resistances mark the legibility of a secret: “for the moment, the secret refuses analysis, but as sense it is analyzable; it is homogeneous to the order of the analyzable.”⁷⁹ The second kind of resistance is a “resistance *of* analysis,” which draws attention to the analyst’s discourse: “To analyze anything whatsoever, anyone whatsoever, for anyone whatsoever, would mean saying to the other: choose my solution, prefer my solution, take my solution, love my solution; you will be in the truth if you do not resist my solution.”⁸⁰

The double bind is this: even as the analysand cannot help *but* resist analysis in her discourse, the analyst’s discourse cannot help *but* be unburdened from this same hermeneutic demand. A completed analysis therefore stages a paradox in which, on the one hand, the

⁷⁹ Jacques Derrida, “Resistances” in *Resistances of Psychoanalysis*, trans. Peggy Kamuf, Pascale-Anne Brault, and Michael Naas (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998), 4.

⁸⁰ Derrida, *Resistances*, 9.

analysand *must* resist and on the other, the analyst's discourse *must be* excepted from its own critical scrutiny. Again from Derrida:

The paradox ... is thus the paradox of a double "one must": "one must," to be sure, analyze the "one must" of analytic desire as the desire to undo a composition or an originary contamination so as finally to attain a primitive, proper, or elementary simplicity that would be by rights the sole and true point of departure But here, without delay, comes the double bind: to analyze such a desire does not mean to renounce its law and to suspend the order of reason, of meaning, of the question the origin, of the social bond. One must equally take into account, so as to render an account of, the archeo-logical, anagogical, and also hermeneutic demand of reason and the principle of reason, as concerns meaning, resistance, repression, conflict of forces and so forth.⁸¹

The paradox of resistance advanced by Derrida closely resembles Foucault's already-mentioned account. Like the resistance *to* power, resistance *to* analysis makes the subject the site of permanent recalcitrance and refusal. Like the resistance *of* power, the resistance *of* analysis makes the subject the always moved site of resistance, and the analyst is the subject who refuses refusal because he is always permeated by a desire beyond his control. Hence the double bind: resistance describes both the agency the subject exercises over speech and the agency speech exercises over the subject.

As a reading strategy, the double bind of resistance joins the earlier intervention under the moniker of the *vel*. In the dissertation to follow, the discursive conflicts that will be discovered by means of problematization ultimately arrive to a *vel*, a forced choice in which one subject or group of subjects resists another – but ultimately undermines their own choice. In the context of epistemic rhetoric, the double-bind is the forced choice between *either* historicism *or*

⁸¹ Derrida, *Resistances*, 36.

aesthetic rhetoric that begets neither. If choosing historical truth begets non-truth and choosing aesthetic rhetoric begets non-rhetoric, then the subjective act of resistance as a choice between A or B prescribes an outcome which directly contradicts the intended aim: A returns as not-A, B returns as not-B.⁸² Resistance is the *vel* or double bind. It is the choice that masquerades as agency, but which undermines the subject's capacity to act.

Sublimation

Having identified one or another *vel* of desire, the third and final strategy of this dissertation is to displace these closed-ended logics by demonstrating how they recur across distinct discourses. This strategy is called *sublimation*, and can be summarized by two related maxims. The first corresponds with Jacques Lacan's ethical dictum to "never give up on your desire." The second comes from Joan Copjec, who writes that "sublimation is the proper activity of the drive ... it is the satisfaction of the drive through the inhibition of its aim."⁸³ In what follows, I will explain these phrases and the relationship between them.

The first step to understanding Jacques Lacan's dictum "never give way on your desire," is to distinguish between "desire" and its conventional understanding as "wish-fulfillment." If translating the phrase as "never give way on your wishes" would transform it into an endorsement of unadulterated hedonism, Lacan inverts this reasoning. Rather than a goal that one can reach, he explains that desire is that which never gets what it wants. It describes an endless deferral such that what the subject 'wants' can never quite satisfy his hunger. In fact, with desire, when you 'get' what you want, it's never what you expected. Instead, desire always

⁸² It should be noted that the phrasing 'A returns as not-A' is traditionally attributed to irony, and not paradox. It is appropriate in this context because Derrida's paradoxical double bind consists of a self-undermining choice, in which the selection of A prohibits the subject from realizing his stated goal. A is paradoxical, in other words, insofar as the selection of A prohibits its attainment. As I argue in Chapter 3, within rhetorical scholarship a similarly self-undermining quality of discourse is more commonly attributed the master trope of irony. As I argue there, irony figures the *open secret* as commonly possessed but unaddressed knowledge. The key similarity of paradox and irony is that both inform fundamentally similar post-structuralist critiques of ideology.

⁸³ Copjec, *Imagine There's No Woman*, 30.

finds another object, and no object is quite the same as any other. This is because the ‘object’ of desire always belongs to an elusive ‘someone else,’ to a position labeled ‘the (big) Other.’ As he explains, what desire always wants is “the desire of the Other,” meaning that the subject in desire is one who wishes to become – but is prevented from becoming – the Other’s object. Thus, to “never give way on your desire” means to bear witness to the ways that the subject displays his incompleteness, to the ceaseless ways he always tries to fill a void in his own being.

The term ‘resistance’ illustrates this principle neatly. The subject confronted with a forced choice *can never get what he wants*, he can only be disappointed when his search gives way to uncertainty and contradiction. Instead of getting what he wants, the desiring subject falls back into the same circuit, and is always forced to make the same choice. To return to Lacan’s maxim, “never give way on your desire” suggests that we should never cease to bear witness to this *vel*, or to fall into the trap of thinking that the desiring subject can get what she wants. This failure to get what you want is analogous to the ‘first death’ of epistemic rhetoric: In failing to arrive at an expected outcome, scholarship had then to pursue a new ‘object,’ a new program of study that played out fundamentally similar conceptual dilemmas.

Conversely, the term *drive* describes a state of want in which the subject *always* gets what she wants. In the drive, the objects found always satisfy a craving, instinct, or urge for one simple reason: the objects of the drive are *all the same object*. In Freud’s words, the essence of the drive is a repetition compulsion, an instinct that impels the subject ‘homeward,’ to return to the same place. Discursive ruptures are evidence of the drive: it marks points at which discourse comes into conflict with itself. Foucault’s problematization compellingly narrates the consistency of such irruptive moments:

In a sense, only a single drama is ever staged in this “non-place,” the endlessly repeated play of dominations. The domination of certain men over others leads to the differentiation of values; class domination generates the idea of liberty, and the forceful appropriation of things necessary to survival and the imposition of a duration not intrinsic to them to account for the origin of logic. This relationship of domination is no more a “relationship” than the place where it occurs is a place; and, precisely for this reason, it is fixed, throughout its history, in rituals, in meticulous procedures that impose rights and obligations.⁸⁴

Problematization, like the drive, always irrupts as a conflict, as a struggle that cannot but repeat itself. Yet the notion of drive adds something important to Foucault’s observations: it observes in the consistency of problems a certain gratification by returning to the contradiction between reading strategies, arguments, and hermeneutics. Joan Copjec elaborates on what surfaces in the drive:

When desire gives way to drive, this private beyond no longer remains hidden. What’s involved in the drive, Lacan tells us, is a *making oneself heard* or *making oneself seen*; that is to say, the intimate core of our being, no longer sheltered by sense, ceases to be supposed and suddenly becomes exposed. It thrusts itself forward, pushing through the surface of speech. This does not mean that the merely supposed, hence empty, domain of private being emerges unveiled, its contents finally visible for anyone to see. In shifting its topological position, being does not lose its essential nature as resistance to sense: what is made audible – or visible – is the void as such, content-less and non-sensical.⁸⁵

⁸⁴ Foucault, “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History,” 151.

⁸⁵ Copjec, *Read My Desire*, 190.

When the drive ‘pushes through’ discourse, the subject recognizes the choice of *either A or B* as a forced choice. Between the *vel* of ‘intersubjectivism/objectivism’ and ‘historicism/aesthetics,’ the drive highlights the essential ‘nothing’ that such choices have in common. Both terminate in the failure to arrive at their intended aim. The irruption of the drive is the ‘second death’: It reveals the contingency of desire as a regular habit, routine, or repetition.

Moreover, when Copjec writes that “sublimation is the proper activity of the drive ... it is the satisfaction of the drive through the inhibition of its aim,” she defines sublimations as the successes begotten of repetitive, logical ‘failures.’ Drive is what reveals choice to be compulsive and automatic; it displaces the intentional selection of *either A or B* with the realization that every choice has already been structured in this way. This contradictory logic offers an alternative to the *vel* because it performs agency not as a subjective choice, but as a persistent return to the same decision. It is also what returns in this dissertation in “secret” to name the break that inhabits *every* choice but refuses to present itself as such.

For rhetorical studies, sublimation demonstrates that the choice of rhetoric *or* truth is sealed off, prescribed, and endlessly relived. As I hope to have shown in this introductory chapter, rhetorical studies successive theoretical battles has been a fight over a Truth that has been sublimated across historical and disciplinary contexts. Whether in its ancient, epistemic, or historicist/aesthetic context, discursive battles over the primacy of *either* rhetoric *or* truth have become *the* fixture around which Rhetorical scholars hash out their mutual identity. Sublimation also demonstrates, however, a certain difference between the truths of a political now and those of a political before. It demonstrates that even though scholars today fight the *same* battle as those who have come before them, retelling this history as a recurrent conflict imagines rhetoric as a powerful analytic for placing Truth alongside itself.

In summary, the reading strategy I have termed the “Epistemology of Non-Knowledge” marks the descent/emergence of discursive problems and traces their self-contradictory and recurring resistances. The final stage of analysis, sublimation, enunciates what is within, but more than, any forced choice. It performs agency as a subjective limit, a repetition that snares the subject in a pleasurable, vicious cycle. It reminds us that we need not remain bound to our given forced choices, but that we are always drawn homeward, back toward our illusory place of origin.

Chapter Descriptions: The Secrets to Follow

The remainder of this dissertation turns its attention away from the internal conflicts of rhetorical scholarship and toward the public discourse of secrets. I do so because ‘secrets’ so often trade in connotations of concealment and deception, particularly within the arena of contemporary American politics. Yet as I will claim, to identify the *rhetorical secret* at work within American political discourse encourages greater attention to the way that we increasingly materialize our political institutions *as secretive*. The dominant attitude toward political secrecy is that political actors and institutions keep some aspect of themselves in hiding. By drawing attention to this attitude in each chapter, I wish to earmark the concomitant emergence and diversification of rhetorics that account for and materialize the secret. In other words, as much as we may suppose that the government ‘hides’ information, we might also witness a rise in the rhetorics that have emerged to account for what the American political subject *cannot know* or *cannot say* about the operations of Liberal-Democratic government.

In this dissertation, I am not trying to argue that the rhetorical secret is *really* the central category for the American public’s imagination of politics. Nor am I claiming that the sum of the texts I engage equal what it means to be a politically duped, American citizen-subject at the

outset of the 21st century. Instead, the construction of the secret is not a ‘duping’ but a rhetorical reaction formation to the danger of *not knowing* but *needing to know*. The rhetoric of the secret, in other words, bridges those practices that Chantal Mouffe would call *politics* with the *political* by formalizing the ways in which we are knowingly deprived of access to information we know *exists*, but never presents itself *as such*.

I have selected the central texts of this dissertation -- Valerie Plame’s Exposure, Saul Alinsky’s Republican Uptake, and the resemblance between Alan Turing and Chelsea Manning - with a simple strategy in mind. Each chapter centers an exigency of national security or controversy of political secrecy through an ancillary or marginal figure. This is most pronounced with Valerie Plame, who was prohibited from speaking publicly about her employment throughout most of her time in the public spotlight. It is, however, also true of Saul Alinsky, whose *Rules for Radicals* is frequently invoked (but seldom read) by pundits and politicians and of Alan Turing and Chelsea Manning, each of whom performs a unique silencing at the hands of government intelligence institutions and judicial system. Each case, moreover, describes rhetoric as a *failure of representation*, or a discursive constitution of the secret as a trope that indicates a hidden, inaccessible ‘truth’.

In Chapter 2, “Imagine There’s No President: The Rhetorical Secret and the Exposure of Valerie Plame,” I take up the public revelation of Valerie Plame’s identity as a covert CIA agent. There, I respond to scholars of presidential rhetoric who have addressed the problem of secrecy as one of concealment, linguistic obfuscation, and policy barriers. Against this backdrop, I elaborate on the notion of rhetoric introduced pages ago by describing how the reaction to the Plame incident is structured tropologically. Using the tropes of repetition, caesura, and synecdoche, I describe how American mass media outlets materialized the secret as *that which*

could not be known and attached this persistent not-knowing to the signifier of George W. Bush's speech over the course of his presidency.

In Chapter 3, "The Conservative Legacy of Saul Alinsky: Irony and the Open Secret of *Rules for Radicals*," I argue that the *open secret* describes an element of discourse that names what everyone knows but no one can say. For contemporary conservative commentators, Saul Alinsky materializes an open secret as knowledge that is held but disavowed. By theorizing the open secret out of Alinsky's *Rules for Radicals*, I suggest that the open secret is always visible as irony. In the context of Obama's struggle to break through partisan gridlock, the open secret of Saul Alinsky depicts how the liberal and conservative split has always already been founded on an adversarial relationship – one secured by a pact of silence and nothing more.

In Chapter 4, "Chelsea Manning's Turing Test: The Dirty Secret and the Pornography of Number," I discuss how 'dirty secrets' express the exhaustion of a field of representation. As I argue, the dirty secret, most clearly emblemized by *sex* and *number*, means everything, too much, and thereby opens up an 'unfillable gap'. Drawing upon the WikiLeaks disclosures of 2011 and the subsequent arrest of Private Chelsea (then Bradley) Manning, I discuss how the display of WikiLeaks's numbers and Manning's sex was *pornographic*, alluding to an unknown that could not otherwise be assimilated into public discourse. In the form of sex and number, public not-knowing took on the form of a *catachresis*; an excess the significance of which could not be signified.

In the conclusion, I draw together major themes across the chapters using the theme "the secret is there is no secret," and justify the rhetorical secret as a uniquely rhetorical object of inquiry. If, as I argue, the secret is that there is no secret, there is nonetheless, *rhetoric*. Rhetoric testifies to the necessary contingency and seeming permanence of discourse. To tell the truth,

there must first be a *secret*, or knowledge in the fact that one cannot – or must not – know. This project describes rhetoric as the formative logic of these discursive vanishing points, as well as the public responses to them.

CHAPTER 2

IMAGINE THERE'S NO PRESIDENT: THE RHETORICAL SECRET AND THE EXPOSURE OF VALERIE PLAME

Rhetoricity, as a dimension of signification, has no limits in its field of operation.

It is coterminous with the very structure of objectivity. ... This entails that it is equivalent to the social production of meaning – that is, to the very fabric of social life.

-- Ernesto Laclau, *The Rhetorical Foundations of Society*, 65

In early 2003, President George W. Bush delivered a controversial State of the Union address, alleging that Iraq was conspiring with Niger to purchase raw materials for nuclear weapons. In July of the same year Joe Wilson IV, who had acted as envoy to Niger for the CIA, published an opinion piece in *The New York Times* titled “What I didn’t find in Africa.” The editorial chastised the Bush administration for misrepresenting factual information and accused the executive of war-mongering. Little more than a week later, *Washington Post* columnist Robert Novak revealed the clandestine identity of Wilson’s spouse, CIA agent Valerie Plame. Seeing the connection between the July 4 critique and the July 15 information leak, Plame and Wilson were outraged, opening a federal investigation of the White House that culminated in the conviction of Vice-Presidential Aide I. Lewis “Scooter” Libby. In 2007, Libby was found guilty on counts of obstruction of justice, perjury, and issuing false statements. He was penalized with a

hefty fine, two years of probation, and a thirty-month term in a federal penitentiary, which was quickly commuted. In 2010, the Wilson-Plame story was released as a feature film called “Fair Game,” an alleged reference to republican strategist Karl Rove’s statement that Plame’s identity had been “fair game” in Joe Wilson’s flame war.

This essay takes up the Plame scandal to critique executive secrecy, but rejects the conventional hypothesis that secrets are only (or even primarily) strategies of concealment. Such a view is, I contend, emblematic of a traditional view of the secret. A traditional view of the secret is one in which individuals strategically employ rhetoric to conceal their actions or dissimulate their motives. My task is instead to describe a more deeply rhetorical secret that challenges the very foundation of this traditional conception, namely that individuals have autonomy over the act of revelation. Quite to the contrary, I suggest that the secret – what subjects always already do not know – is always already prefigured as *trope*. The theoretical upshot of my argument is to resituate rhetoric as the way that subjects figure the secret. In other words, rhetoric’s role in this essay is to describe how folks establish that they *don’t* know something, and how such not-knowing resonates across political discourse. From this perspective, rhetoric is *ontological*: it figures “what the presidency is” prior to an overt act of revelation.

The title of this essay illustrates the difference between the traditional and rhetorical secret. The traditional view might interpret the phrase “Imagine there's no President” to suggest that from 2000-2008, mastermind Vice-President Dick Cheney secretly wielded power in the White House. Conceived as the rhetorical secret, by contrast, “Imagine there's no President” insists that George W. Bush was prefigured as a non-existent president through tropes of

repetition, caesura, and synecdoche.⁸⁶ Rhetorically, the secret is the discursive reminder that President George W. Bush will have been missing in action.

I do not argue that secrets, particularly the secret of Valerie Plame, *caused* George W. Bush's downfall. Rather, I follow the advice of David Zarefsky, who argues that rhetorical criticism is most forceful when it addresses matters of uncertainty, probability, and contingency.⁸⁷ I part ways only with Zarefsky's conclusion that presidential speech signifies the substance and strategy of the man behind it. I believe the very opposite: discourse concerning the presidency, academic or otherwise, is a retroactive, public, and rhetorical effect. Under the circumstances considered in this essay, the secret is subversive because, as a rhetorical effect, it continues to shape public recollections of the George W. Bush presidency.

It is also worth noting that the Plame incident was not the most pressing issue during Bush's tenure. For most, Valerie Plame was an unremarkable figure. Even the feature film about Plame performed poorly in box office sales, grossing only 9.5 million dollars in the United States, its total profit barely exceeding production costs.⁸⁸ There is little evidence to suggest that the public followed her case closely. But that is precisely the point. What makes of Plame's plight a potent critique of the presidency is her invisibility. Her repeated silencing, redaction, and disavowal are agential in retrospect because they register the secret as the *incapacity* to represent the presidency.

⁸⁶ The formulation of synecdoche offered in this essay is particularly indebted to Barbara Biesecker's account of *anamorphosis*. See especially Barbara A. Biesecker, "Rhetorical Studies and the 'New' Psychoanalysis: What's the Real Problem? or Framing the Problem of the Real," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 84, no. 2 (1998): 227; "Prospects of Rhetoric for the Twenty-First Century: Speculations on Eventual Rhetoric Ending with a Note on Barack Obama and a Benediction by Jacques Lacan," in *Reengaging the Prospects of Rhetoric: Current Conversations and Contemporary Challenges*, ed. Mark J. Porrovecchio (New York, NY: Routledge, 2010), 27; Jacques Lacan, "Anamorphosis," in *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis: The Seminar of Jacques Lacan Book XI* ed. Jacques-Alain Miller trans. Alan Sheridan (New York, NY: W.W. Norton, 1998), 79-90.

⁸⁷ David Zarefsky, "Presidential Rhetoric and the Power of Definition" *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 34 no. 3 (2004): 609-10.

⁸⁸ Justin Kroll and Alexa Harrison, "Box-Office Report," *Variety* February 21 (2011): 10.

In the essay that follows, I will first present the traditional ways in which secrets have been conceived as a problem of the presidency, focusing in particular on the presidency of George W. Bush. I will then offer a Lacanian-inflected, rhetorical rethinking of how subjects prefigure the secret. Finally, I describe the transformation of the George W. Bush presidency through the lens of the Valerie Plame scandal.

The Rhetorical Criticism of Secrets and the George W. Bush Presidency

Secrecy is a long-recurring motif of rhetorical scholarship. Edwin Black describes the public as divided by the response to rhetorical forms of secrecy and disclosure. While “one public, convinced that concealment is bad, is disposed to embrace ... values [of] disclosure, openness, sharing, being equal, being unacquisitive,” another is “convinced that some knowledge can be dangerous.”⁸⁹ Joshua Gunn observes that secrets are necessary for collective civic identity: “It is not the fact that secrets are known or can be known that keeps folks from joining civic groups.... Rather, it is the notion that the secret is exhausted, that there is nothing more to sustain a public, that there is no mystery.”⁹⁰ Charles Morris III theorizes the addressivity of secrets with “the fourth persona,” which transmits repressed content through a textual wink,⁹¹ and Nathan Stormer notes of the 1955 Planned Parenthood Association Conference, the “statistical measurement of bodies and conduct” made the past a secret so as “to meet the needs of governmentality.”⁹²

Notably, rhetorical critics have also accounted for secrets as a uniquely rhetorical problem of political discourse. In 1965, Richard Hofstadter suggested that “the paranoid style”

⁸⁹ Edwin Black, “Secrecy and Disclosure as Rhetorical Forms,” *The Quarterly Journal of Speech* 74, no. 2 (1988): 149.

⁹⁰ Joshua Gunn, “Death By Publicity: U.S. Freemasonry and the Drama of Public Secrecy,” *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 11, no. 2 (2008): 268.

⁹¹ Charles E. Morris III, “The Pink Herring & the Fourth Persona: J. Edgar Hoover’s Sex Crime Panic,” *The Quarterly Journal of Speech* 88, no. 2 (2002): 228-44.

⁹² Nathan Stormer, “A Likely Past: Abortion Social Data and a Collective Memory of Secrets in 1950’s America,” *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 7, no. 4 (2010): 339.

was a key strategy of militant conservative leaders in the “conflict between secrecy and democracy.”⁹³ Drawing on Hofstadter’s essay in 1981, G. Thomas Goodnight and John Poulakos noted that the paranoid style was no longer a conservative phenomenon. “Mainstream speakers and audiences” had appropriated this style to critique President Richard Nixon during the infamous Watergate scandal. Conspiracies, once revealed, demonstrated that “the rhetoric of the conspirators is revealed to be nothing more than the perpetuation of fantasy. The past motives, actions, and statements of the conspirators are seen as part of a twisted, secret world....”⁹⁴ Echoing Goodnight and Poulakos in 1991, Anne Norton argued that the “revelation” of Nixon’s corruption was an “ironic inversion.” The scandal transformed Nixon from a master of political secrets into a secretive subject:

The President was no longer on display; he was under surveillance. He could command the gaze, but he could also be commanded to subject himself to it. He had held covert meetings, kept secrets. Those meetings, and those secrets, were revealed. The end was multiply ironic. Nixon’s attempt to extend his surveillance over the Democratic party, and then to conceal this attempt, were the occasions for his undoing. The means that he had employed to keep his subordinates under his surveillance became the means for making his secrets public.⁹⁵

Conceived ironically, Nixon’s secrets were dangerously double-edged. Whereas the president had once been able to conceal his political maneuvers, he was now subject to the public’s gaze. From Hofstadter to Norton, the key observation of rhetorical criticism is that secrets cut back.

⁹³ Douglas Hofstadter, *The Paranoid Style in American Politics and Other Essays*. (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 1965), 16.

⁹⁴ G. Thomas Goodnight and John Poulakos “Conspiracy Rhetoric: From Pragmatism to Fantasy in Public Discourse,” *Western Journal of Speech Communication* 45 no. 4 (1981): 301.

⁹⁵ Anne Norton, *Republic of Signs: Liberal Theory and American Popular Culture*, (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 120.

Secrets are neither a uniquely conservative phenomenon, nor do they need to serve the ruling interest.

Following the George W. Bush presidency, academic discourse about executive secrets boomed. In the 2007 *Presidential Secrecy and the Law*, for instance, Robert Pallitto and William Weaver contend that Bush set a legal precedent for regular executive unilateralism, suggesting that “because much of the power given to the president is backed by new and increasing bureaucratic machinery and legal processes, it is unlikely that executive secrecy and clandestine operations will subside.”⁹⁶ The claim is representative of a more general scholarly perspective. Shirley Anne Warshaw suggests that many dangerous legal precedents are owed to Vice-President Dick Cheney’s secret policy agenda.⁹⁷ Timothy Naftali comments that “a vast chasm separated public views of national priorities from the U.S. national security establishment’s concerns about terrorism.”⁹⁸ Jasbir Puar argues that secret interrogation facilities articulated the war on terror with a brutal and dehumanizing homonationalism.⁹⁹ Scholars agreed, in short, that the secretiveness of the Bush administration violated a fundamental public trust.

The secrecy boom has been taken up by rhetorical scholars in at least three ways. First, executive secrecy has been critiqued as an evidentiary weakness of official wartime discourse. Kathleen Hall Jamieson argues, for instance, that the case against Saddam Hussein was built upon circumstantial evidence, and the path to public revelation was “circuitous.” Zarefsky similarly contends that the accusations against Iraq were misleading because they refused the burden of proof. Because Iraq was “allegedly developing its weapons in secret,” Powell’s

⁹⁶ Robert M. Pallitto and William G. Weaver, *Presidential Secrecy and the Law*. (Baltimore, MA: The Johns-Hopkins University Press, 2007), 18.

⁹⁷ Shirley Anne Warshaw. *The Co-Presidency of Bush and Cheney*. (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009).

⁹⁸ Naftali, Timothy, “George W. Bush and the ‘War on Terror’,” in *The Presidency of George W. Bush: A First Historical Assessment*, ed. Julian E. Zelizer (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010), 60.

⁹⁹ Puar, Jasbir K., *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times*. (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), 79-113.

address to the United Nations encouraging multilateral military intervention hinged on circumstantial evidence: “In the parlance of Watergate, there was no ‘smoking gun’.”¹⁰⁰ Critics of argument, in short, have been equipped to respond to the exigency of secrecy because it identifies how evidence was deliberately omitted from the public record. A second group of rhetorical scholars has drawn attention to the implicit obfuscation of presidential public address. Donovan Conley and William Saas argue that redaction, esoteric language, and stonewalling (or the deliberate “obstruction of all possible avenues for self-exposure”) characterize the Bush administration’s “occultic style” that kept forceful interrogation policies a secret.¹⁰¹ Stephen J. Hartnett and Jennifer Merceica similarly suggest that speech acts meant to “confuse public opinion, prevent citizen action, and frustrate citizen deliberation” are part of the “post-rhetorical presidency” inaugurated by George W. Bush.¹⁰² Because presidential secrets are masked by rhetorical strategy, they prevent democratic exchange and encourage public disinterest. Finally, other rhetorical critics have understood Bush-era secrecy as an important precedent for future political secrecy. In her careful discussion of the legal theory of the Unitary Executive, Vanessa Beasley suggests that President Ronald Reagan illustrates how “a chief executive’s expanded rhetorical skill set accompanies an expansion of his office’s powers.”¹⁰³ Such expansion was dramatically amplified by the George W. Bush administration, which engaged in similar efforts to balance an affable public president with the clandestine expansion of executive powers.¹⁰⁴ Mary Stuckey agrees when she argues that the Reagan- and Bush-era restrictions upon archival

¹⁰⁰ David Zarefsky, “Making the Case for War: Colin Powell at the United Nations,” *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 10 no.2 (2007): 287.

¹⁰¹ Donovan Conley and William O. Saas, “Occultatio: The Bush Administration’s Rhetorical War,” *Western Journal of Communication* 74 no. 4 (2010), 329-350.

¹⁰² Stephen J. Hartnett and Jennifer R. Merceica, “A Discovered Dissembler Can Achieve Nothing Great; or, Four Theses on the Death of Presidential Rhetoric in an Age of Empire,” *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 37 no.4 (2009): 599-619.

¹⁰³ Vanessa B. Beasley, “The Rhetorical Presidency Meets the Unitary Executive: Implications for Presidential Rhetoric on Public Policy” *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 13, no. 1 (2010): 27.

¹⁰⁴ Vanessa B. Beasley, “The Rhetorical Presidency Meets the Unitary Executive, 28.

records repress presidential scholarship for the foreseeable future. Pointing a finger at Bush's Executive Order 13233, Stuckey claims that Bush

launched an all-out assault on the practice of preserving and opening presidential documents by reducing the power of the archivists over presidential papers and increasing the power of individual presidents – and their heirs – to determine what gets opened, and more importantly, what remains closed.¹⁰⁵

As a whole, these accounts of Bush-era secrecy suggest that executive concealment promotes bad scholarship, obscures the national policy-agenda, promotes mass ignorance, and sanctions the use of impoverished evidence. Whether taken as the improper use of warrants, stylistic opacity, or official acts of concealment, executive secrets pose a clear and present danger because of *what they hide*. The solution, therefore, is to *reveal* the presidential secret: to employ better reasoning, encourage transparency in presidential public address, and open legislative gateways to the presidential archive.

Like these scholars, the key exigence for my study is the Bush administration's unusual levels of secrecy. However, in the sections that follow I offer a heterodox account of the secret in contrast to the received account of secrets-as-concealed content. As I will argue, rhetoric might be better understood as the mode by which the secret -- the unknown immanent to discourse -- is materialized.

Rethinking Rhetoric and the Secret

For rhetoric to refigure its relation to the secret, the secret must be understood as something other than the particular contents it conceals. As I will argue, psychoanalytic theory

¹⁰⁵ Mary E. Stuckey, "Presidential Secrecy: Keeping the Archives Open," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 9 (2006), 138. See also: Shawn J. Parry-Giles, "Archival Research and the American Presidency," in *The Handbook of Rhetoric and Public Address*, ed. Shawn J. Parry-Giles and J. Michael Hogan (Malden: Blackwell Publishing Company, 2010), 159-163.

opens the way toward this new and rhetorical way of thinking of the secret by inviting us to attend to its formal features. I explain in the following paragraphs that psychoanalytic theorists describe the secret as one of two related modes: that of *enjoyment* and that of the *structural dynamic*. The remainder of my theoretical discussion explores the psychoanalytic concept of the structural dynamic and the crucial role that rhetorical trope plays within it. The section ends by exploring how trope figures the secret in the context of the Reagan presidency, foreshadowing the tropological analysis of the Valerie Plame affair to follow.

First, the Lacanian concept of *enjoyment* describes the compulsive return to a site of unresolved tension; a return, importantly, that occurs without conscious awareness that one is repeating the same behavior under different circumstances. Enjoyment, according to Christian Lundberg, is a psychoanalytic term that describes how the subject assures itself of its identity.¹⁰⁶ It is also, for Lacan, an unconscious repetition or redundancy in which subjects return to past habits or routines as safe templates for present behavior. Lundberg reminds us that the term enjoyment must not be conflated with pleasure. This is because the subject's efforts to make sense of himself through repetition often come at the cost of anxiety, particularly when subjects repeat a learned response to trauma. Thus, the pain of enjoyment forms one rationale for the psychoanalytic cure: the past must be re-signified to relieve the subject's quotidian stress.

According to Diane Rubenstein, presidential secrets are one form of political enjoyment because they perpetuate an anxious compulsion to search.¹⁰⁷ Describing the highly publicized

¹⁰⁶ Diane Rubenstein, *This is Not a President: Sense, Nonsense, and the Political Imaginary*, (New York, NY: NYU Press), 19-21.

¹⁰⁷ See also Barbara A. Biesecker, "Rhetorical Studies and the 'New' Psychoanalysis; What's the Real Problem? or Framing the Problem of the Real," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 84 no.2 (1998): 222-240; Christian O. Lundberg, "Enjoying God's Death: *The Passion of the Christ* and the Practices of an Evangelical Public," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 95 no. 4 (2009): 401-2; Christian O. Lundberg, "On Missed Encounters: Lacan and the Materiality of Rhetoric," in *Rhetoric, Materiality, & Politics* ed. Barbara A. Biesecker and John Louis Lucaites (New York, NY: Peter Lang, 2009), 161-83; Barbara A. Biesecker, "Whither Ideology? Toward a Different Take on Enjoyment as a Political Factor," *Western Journal of Communication* 75 no. 4 (2011): 445-450; Joshua Gunn, "Maranatha,"

Iran-Contra affair, for instance, Rubenstein argues that confidential hearings, briefings, and missing intelligence reports shored up tremendous public speculation regarding President Ronald Reagan's "hidden referential content," or the clandestine truth that Reagan concealed.¹⁰⁸ The legal proceedings, however, never recovered hard evidence that the president had foreknowledge of the incident. Public observers were thereby sanctioned to *never* find what they were looking for, or to always be on the hunt for the president's truth. Thus, the political enjoyment of the secret assumed the form of a search that was obsessive, circular, and self-defeating.¹⁰⁹ Rubenstein goes on to note that the enjoyable obsession with secrets also marks an important shift in American political life. Secrets replace the "pursuit of happiness" with an imperative to pursue a self-defeating enjoyment.¹¹⁰

Second, the secret also takes the form of a *structural dynamic*, or a rhetorical patterning of discourse. As Rubenstein writes, "[k]nowledge ... is not a substance" but a "structural dynamic ... [which] comes about out of the mutual apprenticeship between two partially unconscious speakers which *both say more than they know*."¹¹¹ Whenever a subject exchanges speech with another subject, there is always an unconscious something more to her discourse than can be recognized. This "something more" is the ongoing and unfinished structure of one's interaction, a yet to be formalized pattern of discursive exchange. This is the structural dynamic: the secret beyond content, a rhetorical structure that is both immanent and invisible in discourse.

Notably, the psychoanalytic pairing of *enjoyment* and the *structural dynamic* is different from comparable immanentist accounts of secrecy. The most prominent alternative comes from

Quarterly Journal of Speech 98 no.4 (2012): 9-10; Christian O. Lundberg, *Lacan in Public: Psychoanalysis and the Science of Rhetoric* (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 2012), 98-123.

¹⁰⁸ Diane Rubenstein, *This is Not a President*, 52.

¹⁰⁹ Diane Rubenstein, *This is Not a President*, 20-1.

¹¹⁰ Diane Rubenstein, *This is Not a President*, 8.

¹¹¹ Diane Rubenstein, *This is Not a President*, 11, italics in text.

Jack Bratich, who argues that government security apparatuses have made “secrecy immanent to everyday life.” If Bratich argues that recent security and activist programs have naturalized secrecy as a culturally dominant political discourse, then psychoanalysis counters this historicism with a uniquely rhetorical formulation of immanence. Parsed in psychoanalytic terms, immanence testifies to the force of *rhetoric*, herein understood as a retroactive patterning of discourse. Taken together, enjoyment and the structural dynamic illustrate how the secret is more than concealed content. As I will argue, *the secret is also prefigured as rhetorical trope*. The following sections explain that identifying these rhetorical forms requires the naming of a structural dynamic, modeled here by Jacques Lacan’s “Seminar on the Purloined Letter.”

Part I : Jacques Lacan’s “Seminar on the Purloined Letter”

The interrelationship between enjoyment and the structural dynamic receives its clearest formulation in Jacques Lacan’s “Seminar on the Purloined Letter,” which explores Edgar Allan Poe’s short story of the same name.¹¹² The seminar underscores the key point that secrets are not just content, but also and more crucially the relations of the characters structured by it. In Poe’s “Purloined Letter,” a Queen receives a letter that implicates her in disloyalty to her King. She is blackmailed by the Minister D-, who steals the letter. The queen subsequently enlists the help of an analyst, Auguste Dupin, who successfully retrieves her letter.

As Lacan informs us, a crucial element of the “The Purloined Letter” is the fact that it consists of two recurring scenes. The first transpires in a “royal boudoir” where the King and Queen are present. The Queen receives the compromising letter in the King’s presence, whereupon the Minister D- enters. The Minister quickly recognizes that the Queen is keeping a secret, and casually drops a decoy letter on the table. He then steals the dangerous document as

¹¹² Jacques Lacan, “Seminar on ‘The Purloined Letter,’” in *Écrits* trans. Bruce Fink (New York, NY: W.M. Norton, 2006), 6-48.

the Queen watches, unable to stop him. The second scene features Poe's analyst, Auguste Dupin. At this time, the Queen has commanded the Prefect of the Police to retrieve the letter. Although his officers employ state-of-the-art scientific techniques to find the letter, no amount of searching can uncover it. Exhausted by their failure, the Prefect consults Dupin for assistance. When Dupin enters the Minister's home for a casual visit, he immediately sees the letter perched in plain sight, crumpled and "apparently thrust carelessly" between the legs of the Minister's mantel. Artfully forgetting his snuffbox on the table, Dupin returns the following day, and substitutes the letter with a facsimile that bears his own signature.

Lacan's instructs us to read the structural dynamic of "The Purloined Letter" as three recurring relations between characters and the letter. The King's oblivious gaze recurs in the Prefect's blindness, the Queen's concealment recurs when the Minister crumples and hides the letter, and the Minister's theft recurs when Dupin leaves his own false copy. The three relations to the letter are blindness, concealment, and realignment. The first relation is blind to the letter (the King, and then the Prefect of the Police). From this position, characters cannot see the secret, despite being implicated in it. The second relation hides the letter so as to maintain the status quo (the Queen, and then the Minister D-). The third purloins the letter, and thereby shifts the whole set of relations to it (the Minister D-, and then Auguste Dupin).

The fact that these relations recur is crucial, on the one hand, because they indicate that the secret is a site of narrative *enjoyment* or a *topos* to which characters unconsciously return. As characters shift across the plot like chess pawns, it becomes obvious that no one is in control of the secret. Characters are instead controlled *by* it. Shoshana Felman concurs: "What is repeated, in other words, is not a psychological act committed as a function of the individual psychology of a character, but three functional positions in a structure which, determining three different

viewpoints, embody three different relations to the act of seeing – of seeing, specifically, the purloined letter.”¹¹³ Characters’ identities, in other words, depend upon which limited view of the secret that they take.

On the other hand, the recurring relations of the secret also illustrate the *structural dynamic*. In the story, the structural dynamic of the King, Queen, and Minister is a secret because these relations remain nascent, or unrealized, until they are repeated in the second. To borrow Rubenstein’s phrasing, the structural dynamic is “more than [the King, the Queen, and the Minister] know”: it is the secret that demands resolution. The structural dynamic is embedded in the original speech acts of the first scene. Dupin’s repetition, however, makes this dynamic visible. By re-staging the theft in the Minister’s apartment, his act of repetition effectively and retroactively grants form and meaning to the original scene.

The key continuity between *enjoyment* and the *structural dynamic* of “The Purloined Letter” is that the secret is not in the letter. Lacan even underscores Dupin’s refusal to let readers in on what it says. What instead characterizes the secret are the finite ways it can be taken. Unseen, left in plain sight, or purloined, it matters less what is in the Queen’s envelope than the way that it draws actors into its gravitational pull.

Part II: From Epistemology to Ontology in Rhetoric

The distinction between the tradition and the rhetorical secret strongly resembles the difference between rhetoric’s *epistemological* and *ontological* functions.¹¹⁴ Political philosopher Ernesto Laclau elaborates on the epistemological position when, drawing upon Cicero, he

¹¹³ Shoshana Felman. *Jacques Lacan and the Adventure of Insight: Psychoanalysis in Contemporary Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), 41.

¹¹⁴ Laclau is not the only scholar to theorize rhetoric’s ontology. See also: Ernesto Grassi, *Rhetoric as Philosophy: The Humanist Tradition*, (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1980); Calvin O. Schrag, “Rhetoric Resituated at the End of Philosophy,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 71 (1985): 164-74.

informs us that rhetoric is most often theorized as a means of coping with an empirical problem posed by the external world:

Cicero, reflecting on the origin of rhetorical devices, imagined a primitive stage of society in which there were more things to be named than the words available in language, so that it was necessary to use words in more than one sense, deviating them from their literal, primordial meaning. For him, of course, this shortage of words represented a purely empirical lack.¹¹⁵

Because there are more things in the world than names for them, rhetoric is a necessary compensatory mechanism, a way of allowing a single name to service multiple things. This use of rhetoric is therefore epistemological; it employs language improperly to make unnamed, empirical things knowable. This, however, is the idea that Lacan's "Seminar on the Purloined Letter" critiques: empirical secrets that can be "known" fundamentally lack positive constancy. Instead, the secret is there is no secret: the only positive constancy to the secret is its rhetorical form. Analogously, rhetoric positions language with respect to its own absolute incompleteness. The secret is that there is no whole of language, that language has no natural closure until rhetoric intervenes.¹¹⁶

When Laclau informs us that rhetoric might also be conceptualized *ontologically*, he thus offers it as a response to the epistemological view. Conceived ontologically, what is lacking from

¹¹⁵ Ernesto Laclau, *On Populist Reason*, 71.

¹¹⁶ We might make the same point with Jacques Derrida, who argues in *Speech and Phenomena* that language's non-identity from itself is precisely what allows Husserl to make a fundamental distinction between "expression" and "indication." The significance of this claim is that language preserves an excess (what I here call rhetoric) to which it must consistently return to form itself as a closed, coherent, and unified set. Derrida rids us of the necessity of using a language of essence to describe the core of meaning. Rather, it is *precisely language's difference from itself which allowed Husserl to differentiate between expression and indication in the first place*. This, then, would be Derrida's version of language's secret: the production of a difference within the sign that distinguishes precisely between nothing at all. This is the sign's concealment, or deferral, of its potential to reach outside of itself, to become same but not same. For lack of a better way of saying it, we attempt to name without naming that difference which makes a difference. Jacques Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena and Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1973), 18-22.

language is *not* empirical, but rhetorical. In other words, if language is *always* finding more secrets, then the secret is better described as an internal feature of *language* rather than of the empirical reality it seeks to uncover:

Let us imagine, however, that this lack is not empirical, that it is linked to a constitutive blockage in language which requires naming something which is essentially unnameable as a condition of language functioning. In that case the original language would not be literal but figural, for without giving names to the unnameable there would be no language at all.¹¹⁷

Rhetoric, conceived ontologically, allows language to cope with its secret, or its own always-present *internal* limit. Moreover, if rhetoric's function is to "[give] names to the unnameable," then the secret is not an empirical object that has been omitted from language.

The logic which says that an element is added to the structure in order to mark what is lacking in it should not lead us to imagine this element as an isolatable excess hidden beneath the structure. The excess element is, instead, located on the same surface as the structure, that is, it is manifest in the latter's very functioning. It is under the species of default that the excess marker of lack appears, in the internal limitation that prevents the signifier from coinciding with itself.¹¹⁸

Read in this admittedly very different ontological way, rhetoric denotes the "excess element" of language, not the epistemic function of naming that Cicero assumed. It names the structural dynamic of language, or the conflict that resides "on the same surface as [language's] structure." Rhetoric is nonetheless imperceptible to those who use it – or better yet, those who are used *by* it. Moreover, these recurring conflicts prevent language from "coinciding with itself," from

¹¹⁷ Ernesto Laclau, *On Populist Reason*, 71.

¹¹⁸ Joan Copjec, *Read My Desire*, 175.

knowing itself “wholly.” Rhetoric names the way that language copes with its immanent and imperceptible secret.

Part III: Tropes of the Secret, or Parts that are the W(hole)

The move toward an ontological rhetoric thus allows us to conceptualize the secret as a division that is *added* to language. Indeed, Lacan’s focus on the letter in Poe’s story is both figural and literal, and he deliberately plays off the two meanings. Poe’s letter is equally a sealed envelope and the signifier, a non-signifying element of language. What is common to both “letters” is that they signify or possess meaning only after a constituting division or break. Thus, the secret itself is merely division. It is the split between Poe’s two scenes, for instance, or between the letter’s different linguistic significations.

The function of rhetoric is to give a tropological structure to this division. As Barbara Biesecker argues, “the ‘rhetorical dimension’ of the text signifies not just the play of the tropological figures operating on its surface level, but also the (non) originary finessing of a division that produces the meaning of the text as such.”¹¹⁹ Rhetoric is not just textual content, but also the disruption that gives rise to this content. In the context of the “Seminar,” Biesecker might offer the following insight: like the subversive repetition that grants “The Purloined Letter” narrative coherence, rhetoric is the suture for the secret. Rhetoric is not just *in* the text, but also and more crucially the symbolic structure *of* the text that grants it the appearance of fullness. Lundberg describes this apparent fullness as “the illusion of communion between subjects and their others,” or “feigned unicity,” which he summarizes as follows: “[B]ecause there is no automatic relationship of correspondence between signifiers and the world, there are a limited number of ways that a speaking subject can both employ a signifier as a referent to the

¹¹⁹ Barbara A. Biesecker, “Rethinking the Rhetorical Situation from Within the Thematic of *Difference*” *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 22, no. 2 (1989): 112.

external world and differentiate it from other signifiers.”¹²⁰ To Biesecker’s tropological “finessing,” Lundberg thus adds a “limited number of ways” by which textual divisions might be finessed. Lundberg’s focus on the rhetorical logic of feigned unicity – as tropology – leads him to metaphor and metonymy, to which Lacan most commonly refers. According to Lundberg, metonymy is “any contingent connection between signs or a series of signs” whereas metaphor is “function whereby certain metonymic connections become particularly significant points of investment, exerting a regulatory role on a chain of signifiers by retroactively organizing the series of metonymic connections.”¹²¹ Parsed in Lundberg’s terminology, the unrealized metonymic connections between the King, Queen, and Minister become concretized as metaphor, fashioning the letter as “a central figure with substantial gravity.”¹²² What I add to this taxonomy is a rigorous account of *repetition*, *caesura*, and *synecdoche*, distinct rhetorical modes of managing the division of the secret. Repetition and caesura, respectively, describe an unrealized recurrence of the structural dynamic and the retroactive coherence of the secret’s gap. By contrast to Lundberg’s account, these tropes refer specifically to the ways that metonymy and metaphor manage *the secret*. Indeed, the central tropological contribution of this essay is a reconsideration of synecdoche, which describes how the division of the secret is *added* to discourse. Traditionally, synecdoche describes representational acts whereby some part of a whole comes to stand in for it. Diane Rubenstein, for instance, explains the traditionalist understanding of synecdoche as “[a] figure of integration suggestive of a qualitative relation. The example ‘He was all heart’ does not designate a part of the body (literally) as much as it

¹²⁰ Christian O. Lundberg, *Lacan in Public*, 3.

¹²¹ Christian O. Lundberg, *Enjoying God’s Death*, 389.

¹²² Christian O. Lundberg, *Enjoying God’s Death*, 389.

designates a quality (empathy, compassion).”¹²³ According to Laclau, however, synecdoche is something more than a substitution of part for whole:

I have asserted that, in a hegemonic relation, one particular difference assumes the representation of a totality that exceeds it. This gives clear centrality to a particular figure within the arsenal of classical rhetoric: synecdoche (the part representing the whole). It also suggests that synecdoche is not simply one more rhetorical device, simply to be taxonomically added to other figures such as metonymy and metaphor, but has a different ontological function.¹²⁴

The key to Laclau’s observation is that synecdoche has a “different ontological function” than metonymy and metaphor. If, as Laclau argues elsewhere, “[r]hetoricity ... is coterminous with the very structure of objectivity,” then synecdoche is ontologically significant because it performs the capacity for change inherent to this objective structure.¹²⁵ Like Biesecker, Laclau argues that these tropes are not merely “the play of the tropological figures operating on [the text’s] surface level,” but are, more broadly, a finessing that determines a social whole into which subjects insert themselves as parts.

Part IV: Synecdoche and the Reagan Presidency

Just as rhetoric does not remove the unknown *from* language but adds the secret *to* it, synecdoche does not substitute part for an unknown whole, but instead makes another w(hole) known by introducing an *additional* part. Again from Laclau: “a part... functions as the very condition of the whole, as its name, leading to that contamination between particularity and totality....”¹²⁶ Synecdoche, in other words, does not substitute part for whole. It is instead a part

¹²³ Diane Rubenstein, *This is Not a President*, 29.

¹²⁴ Ernesto Laclau, *On Populist Reason*, (London: Verso 2005), 72.

¹²⁵ Ernesto Laclau, *Rhetorical Foundations*, 65.

¹²⁶ Ernesto Laclau, *Rhetorical Foundations*, 66.

that *founds* the w(hole). Put in psychoanalytic terms, the *ontological* synecdoche is always registered as uncanny: it is an experience of social reality as simultaneously the same and not the same as it once was.¹²⁷

Rubenstein notes that scholars have often used synecdoche to substitute president Ronald Reagan's persona for an essential feature of a contemporaneous political culture. As Reagan's most critical commentators noted, the president's blurring of historical fact and popular fiction was synecdochal for the whole contemporaneous political culture, making his tenure an era of misrepresentation, lies, and deceit.

Yet, as Rubenstein notes, synecdoche remains an insufficient trope to describe the Reagan presidency. Media outlets did, after all, believe they *could* represent Reagan as a whole by drawing attention to his flaws. In contemporary times, this flawed assumption remains: American political culture often appears *as if* it could be represented as a totality or *as if* we could know the contents of each of its secrets. Joan Copjec describes how news media failed to convey the whole of Reagan's hypocrisies and contradictions:

So absorbed were the news staffs in pinning down the president's lies and errors – his referential failures, let us call them – that they neglected to consider the intersubjective dimension of the whole affair; they forgot to take account of the strength of the American audience's *love* for Reagan. ... Americans didn't love Reagan for what he said, but simply because he was Reagan.¹²⁸

According to Copjec, Reagan is a signifier, like the Purloined Letter. Like the letter, it did not matter what Reagan said or meant. What instead mattered to Americans was how Reagan embodied a uniquely American *je ne sais quois*; an unnamed excess that marked an inalienable

¹²⁷ Sigmund Freud, *The Uncanny*, trans. David McClintock (New York, NY: Penguin, 2003), 147.

¹²⁸ Joan Copjec, *Read My Desire*, 143.

feature of American civic identity. The conventional account of synecdoche, which would hold that some part of his presidency is representative of it “as a whole” fails because no one empirical part could represent Reagan fully. Instead, Reagan is *the secret*, a site of divided investments. Reagan was not, in other words, a part that represented the whole, but just the opposite. For the journalists who sought to critique him, no one part of Reagan’s duplicitous persona could be elevated to the status of the whole. Reagan was instead a w(hole) into which Americans inserted their parts. Synecdoche, understood ontologically, is the way that a part – like Reagan – materializes the impossible but insistent demand for representing the social w(hole).

My concern with synecdoche – and by extension, rhetoric – is not with the way that individuals create discourse with language to effect change. Neither is my present concern with (like Reagan’s critical media audience) the level at which everyone knows where the secret is supposed to be. Rather, like Lacan’s take on “The Purloined Letter,” my view of rhetoric concerns the logic of the story as it plays out in retrospect, and the secret that puts characters in their place. My argument, put succinctly, is that rhetoric negotiates the secret as a condition of its own movement.

Imagine There’s No President

To extend this thinking, this essay turns to the Valerie Plame scandal. What rhetoric offers us in this circumstance is the understanding that, like Reagan, there was *no* part that could represent the George W. Bush presidency as a whole. Rather, Plame consistently *added* absent parts to Bush to show that something was missing. In the following sections, I adopt the tropes of

repetition, *caesura*, and *synecdoche* to illustrate the rhetorical production of the secret during the Bush presidency. I begin by describing *repetition*, which shows how a missing correspondence between discourse and reality recurred and, in so doing, positively demonstrated the hiddenness of the Bush administration's public discourse. Next, I turn to the rhetorical trope of *caesura*, which traditionally refers to the way a break or gap in meter confers meaning to a text. I adopt this trope to describe the way that Plame herself became a discursive marker that was assigned a missing content, and thus became a discursive point of investment that knit together a diverse network of public meanings. Finally, I return to the trope of *synecdoche* to describe how the inflections of George W. Bush's speech mark a change in the discursive w(hole) of his presidency.

The Repetition of Joe Wilson's Missing Link

When George W. Bush delivered his State of the Union address on January 28, 2003, he offered the following rationale for going to war against Iraq: "The British government has learned that Saddam Hussein recently sought significant quantities of uranium from Africa."¹²⁹ Just a week after Bush's speech, Colin Powell appeared before the U.N. to make the case for multilateral war, using the same evidence Bush cited in his speech. But in March, just days before the United States officially declared war, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) declared that the evidence supporting the sixteen words had been a forgery.¹³⁰ By then it was too late. Even as IAEA was delivering its public statement, the American military was "in the early stages of military operations to disarm Iraq"¹³¹ and Americans were decidedly in favor

¹²⁹ "Whitehouse: President Delivers 'State of the Union,'" January 23, 2008. <http://www.georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov>. (accessed November 30, 2012)

¹³⁰ Joby Warrick, "Some Evidence on Iraq Called Fake; U.N. Nuclear Inspector Says Documents on Purchases Were Forged," *The Washington Post*, March 8, 2003. <http://www.lexisnexis.com> (accessed November 30, 2012)

¹³¹ George W. Bush, "Bush Declares War," March 19, 2003. http://www.articles.cnn.com/2003-01-19/us/prj.iq.int.bush.transcript_1_coalition-forces-equipment-in-civilian-areas-iraqi-troops-and-equipment?_s=PM:US (accessed November 30, 2012)

of war.¹³² Bush claimed he had received faulty intelligence from British sources. In the months that followed, journalists critiqued the administration's enthusiasm to go to war, but a serious investigation of the White House would not materialize until September.

When an investigation *did* materialize, it was not because crucial evidence was discovered but, rather, because there was a startling consistency to the information that was missing from the official record. For this reason I take up the trope of *repetition* which marshals *missing links*, the lack of direct correspondence between speech and reality. For there to be a secret, the link between what Bush *said* he knew and what the White House *actually* knew would have to become clear.¹³³ We might ask the following question: if the falsehood of the sixteen words was in the open, or “obviously displayed,” why was it that it went unrecognized, and what was the process by which its “true” meaning was discovered? The answer I provide is that the illocutionary force of the sixteen words was altered through the introduction of a *missing link* between signifier – the words themselves – and signified – how they were materialized for the public.

The missing link between Bush's words and political reality materialized on July 6, 2003 when Joseph Wilson IV published “What I Didn't Find in Africa” in the *New York Times*. Not only did Wilson declare that the sixteen words were factually inaccurate, but he also asserted that the White House had known as much all along. A former diplomat, Wilson had been hired by the CIA in 2002 to determine whether Niger was planning to sell nuclear fissile materials to Iraq. When he returned to the United States, he informed the CIA that such a sale was “highly unlikely.” Wilson's credibility was reinforced by the fact that he had *been* to Iraq and Niger, and

¹³² Dan Belz, “Bush War Ratings May Not Reach 9/11 Levels; Terror Attacks Brought Unity, but President Is a Polarizing Figure in Iraq Conflict,” *The Washington Post*, March 23, 2003. <http://www.lexisnexis.com> (accessed November 30, 2012)

¹³³ Copjec, *Read My Desire*, 141-142.

knew the political climate of both intimately. Famously, after Hussein had threatened to take the American embassy in Baghdad hostage, Wilson had confronted him before news cameras with a noose draped around his neck.¹³⁴ As “the last American diplomat to meet with Saddam Hussein,” Wilson *knew* of that which Iraq was capable.¹³⁵ Demonstrating the inconsistency between Bush’s words and geopolitical reality, Wilson *was* the missing link. Once he entered the picture, it became clear that someone within the Bush administration had actively suppressed intelligence.

As the missing link, Wilson created a situation in which Bush’s speech had to be *reconnected* with political reality. One such effort came five days after Wilson’s editorial, when CIA director George Tenet described Wilson’s trip as unconnected to the intelligence in Bush’s speech and claimed responsibility for the faulty intelligence himself.¹³⁶ On 14 July 2003, *Washington Post* columnist Robert Novak took the war on Wilson a step further by taking aim at the former diplomat’s credibility.¹³⁷ Novak claimed that Wilson had only been sent to Niger because his CIA-agent wife, Valerie Plame, had recommended him.

But these responses served only to make missing links the signature feature of the scandal. Wilson doggedly maintained that the White House’s retraction of the sixteen words indicated that his report had been “overlooked, ignored, or buried.” On 20 July 2003, *The New York Times* described how Tenet’s admission had fallen short of full disclosure by failing to name the “mystery inserter” in the White House, the missing link who quietly had written the

¹³⁴ Evan Thomas and Michael Isikoff, “Secrets and Leaks,” *Newsweek*, October 13, 2003. <http://www.lexisnexis.com> (accessed November 30, 2012)

¹³⁵ Joseph C. Wilson IV, “What I Didn’t Find in Africa,” *The New York Times*, July 6, 2003. <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/07/06/opinion/what-i-didn-t-find-in-africa.html?pagewanted=all&src=pm> (accessed November 30, 2012)

¹³⁶ George Tenet, “Text of CIA Director George Tenet’s Statement,” *CNN.com*, July 11, 2003. <http://www.cnn.com/2003/ALLPOLITICS/07/11/tenet.statement/> (accessed November 30, 2012)

¹³⁷ Robert D. Novak, “Mission to Niger,” *The Washington Post*, July 14, 2003. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/10/20/AR2005102000874.html> (accessed November 30, 2012)

crucial phrase into Bush's speech. Moreover, Novak had generated entirely *new* missing links by anonymously citing "two senior administration officials" who had given away confidential details about Joe Wilson's spouse. Representative John Conyers backed popular accusations against Karl Rove, accusing him and the White House of orchestrating "a campaign to smear and intimidate truth-telling critics."¹³⁸ Senator Charles Schumer publicly demanded that attorney general John Ashcroft recuse himself from the proceedings. Ashcroft's close political ties with conservative strategist Karl Rove, accused of leaking Plame's identity,¹³⁹ and would compromise a "thorough, complete and fearless" investigation.¹⁴⁰

Political secrets emerged as *consistent inconsistencies*, as the disconnect between objective reality and the speech used to describe it. In other words, repeated missing links took on the quality of evidence because they demonstrated that something was *not being disclosed*. Lacan describes this kind of evidence as "the certainty of doubt:" we are only assured that a truth exists when regular inconsistencies in our lived reality suggest that something remains hidden from us. In his reading of Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams*, for instance, Lacan suggests that the objective of analysis is not to discover what a dream "truly" symbolizes, but rather to attend to moments where a dream's meaning is most indecipherable. The most productive moments of the dream are those that cannot be unraveled – in which the subject can only say "I do not know, I am unsure." As Lacan argues, "It is here Freud lays all his stress – doubt is the support of his certainty. He goes on to explain why – this is precisely the sign, he says, that there is something

¹³⁸ Michael Isikoff and Mark Hosenball, "Terror Watch: Criminal or Just Plain Stupid?," *Newsweek*, October 8, 2003. <http://www.lexisnexis.com> (accessed November 30, 2012)

¹³⁹ Journalist Matthew Cooper of TIME Magazine has been cited as the source of this accusation. Donald Lambro, "Shortsighted Tall Tales," *The Washington Times*, July 21, 2005. <http://www.lexisnexis.com> (accessed November 30, 2012)

¹⁴⁰ Carl Hulse and David E. Sanger, "New Criticism on Prewar Use of Intelligence" *The New York Times* September 29, 2003. <http://www.lexisnexis.com> (accessed November 30, 2012)

to preserve. Doubt, then, is a sign of resistance.”¹⁴¹ Doubt marks a point of excess investment in a particular dream-thought, a symbolic re-coding that protects the conscious ego. The tremendous effort to disguise and re-symbolize the sixteen words in the wake of “What I Didn’t Find in Africa” told the public nothing of what might be hidden. Instead, it signaled beyond question that *something was there to protect*.

Caesura, or the Erasure of Valerie Plame

As the FBI investigation of the White House began, this unfound excess was most evident in references to and demands for “the truth.” On 7 October 2003, Bush appeared before the White House press corps, stating: “I want to know the truth. That’s why I’ve instructed this staff of mine to cooperate fully with the investigation. Full disclosure, everything we know, the investigators will find out.” Soon after, Daniel Ellsberg, famously credited with disclosing the Pentagon Papers to the public, urged informants that it was their ethical obligation to come forward with the truth, no matter the professional cost. Between the president’s endorsement of the investigation and the public’s suspicion of Bush insiders, the truth was something that needed to be found but no one possessed.

Secrets endure in the form of the *caesura*, an empty, divided, and interruptive figure that indicates a missing excess.¹⁴² Valerie Plame, I suggest, functions as the *caesura*, a point of symbolic condensation for a missing public truth. Plame is an exemplary instance of this rhetorical figure at work in public discourse for three reasons. First, because *caesuras* are absences, gaps, or holes in a text. Unable to speak openly about her past, Plame’s speech

¹⁴¹ Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan Book XI: The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Norton, 1981), 35.

¹⁴² Mike Allen, “Bush ‘Willing to Cooperate’ With Leak Probe,” *The Washington Post*, June 4, 2004. <http://www.lexisnexis.com> (accessed November 30, 2012); Daniel Ellsberg, “There are Times to Spill Secrets; Advice from a leaker,” *The New York Times*, September 29, 2004. <http://www.lexisnexis.com>; (accessed November 30, 2012)

functioned in this way because she consistently deflected attention to the curious absence of details within her own speech. Second, *caesuras* indicate a break in historical time or continuity. Plame's absent historical record and interruptive identity constituted an unfillable place in a national historical timeline by inviting speculation into the barred portions of her past. Finally, *caesuras* knit together a social whole. Because her professional past remained off the record, Plame's absent identity became a point of collective identification for those skeptical of the Bush administration's interest in preserving national security.

Caesuras are, in the first place, marks of absence or emptiness. In Greek and Latin prose, *caesura* indicates a division of the meter between the syllables of two different words.¹⁴³ In musical language the *caesura* momentarily stops metrical time, often turning the piece in an entirely new direction.¹⁴⁴ *Caesura* is, in other words, a gap that appears to have no content, but which structures the prose, notes, and meter that surround it. Plame is in this regard exemplary because her speech was plainly missing even when she was thrust into the public spotlight.

Her first public appearance was at an award ceremony for Joseph Wilson III at the National Press Club in October 2003, where he received accolades for having bravely exposed the Bush administration's lies. The also-exposed Plame, however, "would not talk to reporters and attended the event only after receiving assurance that she would not be photographed."¹⁴⁵ Refusing to comment, Plame's only mention was her emotional reaction to Wilson's speech: "Wilson was most emotional when addressing his wife's exposure. 'I'm sorry for that,' he said, looking at her and fighting back tears. 'If I could give you back your anonymity ... I would do it

¹⁴³ "caesura, n.". OED Online. December 2012. Oxford University Press. <http://www.oed.com.proxygsu-uga1.galileo.usg.edu/view/Entry/26025?rskey=LlsAdH&result=1&isAdvanced=false> (accessed March 03, 2013).

¹⁴⁴ "A term signifying a momentary interruption of the musical metre by silence, often indicated by a comma or 'V' above the staff." "Caesura." *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*. Oxford University Press, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.proxyremote.galib.uga.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/04537>. (accessed November 23, 2012).

¹⁴⁵ Reilly Capps, "Paying Homage to Truth and its Consequences," *The Washington Post*, October 16, 2003. <http://www.lexisnexus.com>. (accessed November 30, 2012).

in a minute.’ She sat quietly, wiping away a tear.”¹⁴⁶ Plame first spoke to the press in a January 2004 *Vanity Fair* exclusive titled “Double Exposure.” Staging a sequel to the Novak editorial, the article tried to personalize the outed spy. But strangely, Plame was quoted only twice: first, when she briefly welcomed her interviewers at the door of her home and, second, when describing how she evaded public attention in the wake of the scandal. “When in the wake of the leak friends have asked how Plame foiled eager interlocutors, she has told them, ‘You just turn it around. People love to talk about themselves. There’s nothing more exciting than to have someone go Really?’”¹⁴⁷ By describing a communicative transaction in which she refused to exchange information with her interlocutor, Plame effectively exchanged an *absence of discursive goods*, and performed the same technique of deflection that she recounts. With the exception of Plame’s two quotations, the remainder of the ten-page expose was devoted to Wilson, who was strikingly open-handed with personal details about his courtship with Plame.

The second feature of *caesuras* is that they are an interruption or split in the continuity of historical time. By inviting us to imagine the “nothing” against which a social totality forms, Joan Copjec describes historical continuity as the effect of an effacement or erasure.¹⁴⁸ Certainly, Plame’s secret identity was “left behind” in the sense that her confidentiality agreement with the CIA prevents it from being recounted. But Plame’s absent identity stood for *more* than just herself because it symbolized a place in collective public memory to which *no one* could return.

This historical function of *caesura* is nowhere more clearly illustrated than in Plame’s autobiography, *Fair Game*. The book documents her life from the time she became a covert government employee until the trial of I. Scooter Libby, who was held accountable for many of

¹⁴⁶ Capps, “Paying Homage.”

¹⁴⁷ Vicky Ward, “Double Exposure,” *Vanity Fair*, January 2004. <http://www.lexisnexis.com> (accessed November 30, 2012)

¹⁴⁸ Joan Copjec, *Imagine There’s No Woman: Ethics and Sublimation*, (Cambridge, The MIT Press), 23.

White House's unauthorized leaks. But Plame's writing is heavily redacted. The publicly distributed version of the book preserves the CIA's markup of her manuscript, as roughly half of the book--words, sentences, and full pages--are covered by solid black lines. When Plame appeared on *The Daily Show* on 30 October 30 2007, host John Stewart expressed his surprise at the amount of absent content, making the following remark:

They redacted things that I think are shocking. There's one that I had to get to, the most incredible one. I just want to read this to you. This is what [sic] you were talking about your kids. "Switching between breast and syringe feedings when they took only a few ounces at each time and capturing each detail in a notebook soon took its toll. I was exhausted" Redacted! What ... how... is that part, "I was exhausted by spying on..."

I don't understand. What could possibly be there that would be redacted?¹⁴⁹

As Plame underscored in reply to Stewart's question, however, much of what had been redacted in the book was already in the public domain. The book had been redacted because she had avowed her employment with the CIA. The irony was that this was something everyone knew, but which she was forbidden from acknowledging. This missing part of Plame's past did not, in fact, remove a part of the past from the historical record. Instead, it symbolized a prohibition on her speech that broke her history into fragmented and often unreadable sections. Thus, confronting the text's literal black bars, Stewart's mistake was to read what was *behind* the bar.¹⁵⁰ Rather, *these bars themselves* signified a material separation between the known and the unknown. What appears to lie "beyond the bar" is Copjec's "unfillable place": a symbolic point of no return in the historical record.

¹⁴⁹ "Interview with Valerie Plame." *The Daily Show*. Comedy Central. New York, NY: October 30, 2007.

¹⁵⁰ Jean-Luc Nancy and Jacques Lacoue-Labarthes, *The Title of the Letter* trans. Francois Raffoul and David Pettigrew, (New York: State University of New York Press, 1992).

The third and final characteristic of the *caesura* is that it constitutes a social whole around an empty signifier. According to Ernesto Laclau, the empty signifier is crucial for the formation of collective popular identities. In his words:

Let us consider the extreme situation of a radical disorganization of the social fabric. In such conditions, people need *an* order, and the actual content of it becomes a secondary consideration. ‘Order’ as such has no content, because it only exists in the various forms in which it is actually realized, but in a situation of radical disorder ‘order’ is present as that which is absent; it becomes an empty signifier, as the signifier of that absence.¹⁵¹

Plame functions as one such empty signifier. In her testimony before the House Oversight and Reform Committee in 2007, Plame appeared before members of the House of Representatives, offering an official statement that described the consequences of her outing and appealed for a strict separation of powers between national intelligence agencies and our governing political institutions:

The harm that is done when a CIA cover is blown is grave. ... Lives are literally at stake. Every single one of my former CIA colleagues, from my fellow covert officers to analysts to technical operations officers to even the secretaries, understand the vulnerabilities of our officers and recognize that the travesty of what happened to me could happen to them. We in the CIA always know that we might be exposed and threatened by foreign enemies. It was a terrible irony that administration officials were the ones who destroyed my cover.¹⁵²

¹⁵¹ Ernesto Laclau, *Emancipation(s)*, (New York, NY: Verso, 1996), 44.

¹⁵² The House Committee on Oversight and Government Reforms Holds A Hearing On the CIA Leak Investigation, House of Representatives, 110th Congress (March 16, 2007) (Statement of Valerie Plame, Former Employee at the Central Intelligence Agency). <http://www.lexisnexis.com> (accessed November 30, 2012)

As the point suturing together “foreign agents,” “CIA colleagues,” “fellow covert officers,” “analysts,” “technical operations officers,” and “secretaries,” Plame had been a critical node in the national intelligence network. The implication was that by removing her from the network, this series of connections had dissolved into a frayed mess. But at the same time, her speech before Congress also *constituted* a particular social reality, one in which her absent professional identity functioned as a key rationale for a public critique of executive secrecy and subterfuge. This new political reality was one in which the president, a strong proponent of enhanced national security and greater protections for American citizens, had paradoxically weakened the nation’s security infrastructure and impaired its ability to effectively maintain its counter-terrorist network. To function as the empty signifier for a collective investment in a critique of presidential secrecy, Plame’s history *had* to remain unspoken, fragmented, and absent. The collapse of her old network of colleagues, officers, and analysts instituted a new truth: a healthy skepticism of American institutions that compromised its own citizens’ security from within.

As I have argued, the caesura is both a break in historical time and a past that occupies an “empty place” to which we cannot return. But historical time also *begins* at the *caesura*, which functions as a provisional point of origin for the discursive present. Inevitably, this means that in the wake of this scandal the reconstituted social was *different* from the one that came before it.

Synecdoche and the Uncanny Presidency of George W. Bush

Over the course of the Plame affair, there was a dramatic shift in public attitudes toward the Bush White House. During the 2000 election, Bush struck much of the American public as likeable and trustworthy. Someone who was such a “straight-shooter” wasn’t capable of misleading the public because he always seemed to say what he meant. After 2004, however, Bush’s creative diction was murky, obscure, and illegible. Beasley notes that although Bush

began his 2004 term “with an approval rating of 50 percent ... [he] saw his popularity consistently decline over the next four years.”¹⁵³

As I have already stated, the Plame affair did not *cause* this decline, but eerily coincides with it. But this decline does clearly demonstrate how the rhetorical secret leaks into Bush’s speech, limiting the ways that his utterances could be interpreted. As I will argue, Bush’s speech did not change over the course of his presidency. Instead, this change illustrates how a secret, as knowledge in the fact that something is being kept hidden, materialized around the specific, synecdochal object of George W. Bush’s speech. What *did* change, in other words, was the public’s investment in his speech, which came to function as a public reminder that something was missing from it.

When George W. Bush began campaigning in 1999, he spoke with “flip, saucy playfulness,” demonstrating “plenty of confidence” which was “evident in his easy swagger.”¹⁵⁴ His pre-election autobiography, *A Charge to Keep*, had a “simple, not very deep tone that rings true.”¹⁵⁵ His anti-intellectual straight-talk even appeared to be an asset in his campaign against Al Gore. Citing Fred Greenstein, the *New York Times* suggested that voters responded better to “a normal, laid-back, colloquial style.”¹⁵⁶ And upon ascending to the presidency, Bush displayed confidence in developing relationships with other foreign leaders, despite his lack of familiarity with international politics. As the *Washington Post* put it, “he was confident he could ‘look them in the eye’ and win them over with plain talk.”¹⁵⁷

¹⁵³ Vanessa B. Beasley, “The Rhetorical Presidency Meets the Unitary Executive,” 29.

¹⁵⁴ Frank Bruni, “Riding High, Bush Seeks Gravity” *The New York Times* September 14, 1999. <http://www.lexisnexus.com> (accessed November 30, 2012)

¹⁵⁵ Adam Clyner, “George II,” *The New York Times* December 5, 1999. <http://www.lexisnexus.com>

¹⁵⁶ Richard L. Berke, “What a Mind! In Politics, That’s Not What Matters.” *The New York Times* June 25, 2000. <http://www.lexisnexus.com> (accessed November 30, 2012)

¹⁵⁷ Karen DeYoung, “Presidential Diplomacy, Ranch-House Style: Bush’s Personal Touch Gets Mixed Reactions in Winning and Influencing World Leaders.” *The Washington Post* May 23, 2002. <http://www.lexisnexus.com> (accessed November 30, 2012)

Admittedly, Bush's speech was criticized even before he rose to the presidency, although the main focus of this discourse was his simple-minded and blunt approach to politics. In 2000, Christopher Hitchens explained "Why Dubya Can't Read." In this verbal thrashing, Hitchens picked up on creative phrasings like "tacular" (tactical/nuclear) and "terriers" (tariffs/barriers). That same year, Bush delivered a stump speech wherein he famously noted that his opponents had "misunderestimated" him. The gaff earned him a popular neologism ("Bush-isms") that remembered his war on semantics through routinely published and widely circulated "Top 10" lists.¹⁵⁸ But Bush did little to correct his critics. In fact, compared to Al Gore's robotic monotone, Bush-isms were a demonstration of Bush's authenticity. In his first presidential address to a joint session of Congress, Bush outlined a plan for tax cuts in a terse and scripted speech. Critics called it "a self-confident performance by a president often criticized for his inability to communicate clearly."¹⁵⁹ Bush was a real flesh-and-blood person, and his down-to-earth, everyday delivery problems confirmed it.

The first and perhaps the most noteworthy sign that something was different about the president's speech came immediately after his iconic "Mission Accomplished" moment on May 1, 2003. Addressing homeward bound soldiers, Bush's speech declared the end of long-standing hostilities against Iraq. With a large, star-spangled marquis reading "Mission Accomplished" adorning one of carrier's control towers, Bush announced that "the tyrant has fallen, and Iraq is free."¹⁶⁰ But on Memorial Day, approximately three weeks after Bush's announcement, *The*

¹⁵⁸ "Top 10 Bushisms: A fond look back at George W. Bush's Less-than-Articulate Moments in Office," TIME.com <http://www.time.com/time/specials/packages/completelist/0,29569,1870938,00.html> (accessed November 30, 2012), Jacob Weisberg, "W.'s Greatest Hits: The top 25 Bushisms of all time," Slate.com January 21, 2009. http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/bushisms/2009/01/ws_greatest_hits.html (accessed November 30, 2012)

¹⁵⁹ Dan Balz, "President Begins His Toughest Sell," *The Washington Post*, February 28, 2001. <http://www.lexisnexis.com> (accessed November 30, 2012)

¹⁶⁰ "Text of Bush's Speech," CBS NEWS, February 11, 2009. <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2003/05/01/iraq/main551946.shtml> (accessed November 30, 2012)

Washington Post noted an abrupt about-face by the administration.¹⁶¹ On July 14, 2003 – just eight days after Joseph Wilson’s news release – *Newsweek* ironist Andy Borowitz lampooned George W. Bush, suggesting that the “sixteen words” had been an obvious misreading: “...Iraqi strongman Saddam Hussein did not attempt to buy uranium in Africa, as earlier alleged, but merely geraniums.”¹⁶² After the summer of 2003, reporters noticed an absence of bipartisan “good will” toward the president.¹⁶³ Following his re-election victory against Senator John Kerry, *TIME Magazine* dedicated their annual “Person of the Year” issue to George W. Bush. In the issue’s feature article, Bush’s campaign communication director Dan Bartlett described the commander-in-chief’s creative speechwriting process:

Every time we’d have a speech and attempt to scale back the liberty section, he would get mad at us,” Bartlett says. Sometimes the president would simply take his black Sharpie and write the word ‘freedom’ between two paragraphs to prompt himself to go into his extended argument for America’s efforts to plant the seeds of liberty in Iraq and the rest of the Middle East.¹⁶⁴

Offering his own metaphors, Bush framed his discourse around goals his party found unreflective their ideas or attitudes. It was, predictably, met with considerable opposition. By contrast to his immensely popular 2003 State of the Union address, many remarked that Bush’s

¹⁶¹ Alan Cooperman, *In Iraq, U.S. Troops are Still Dying – One Almost Every Day; Death Rate Down, but Families of Victims Face Special Anguish* May 26, 2003. <http://www.lexisnexis.com> (accessed November 30, 2012)

¹⁶² Andy Borowitz, “Bush: Saddam Bought Geraniums, Not Uranium,” *Newsweek* July 14, 2003. <http://www.lexisnexis.com> (accessed November 30, 2012)

¹⁶³ Scott Rosenberg, “Why the N.Y. Times ruins Bush’s Breakfast,” *Salon.com* Monday, September 8, 2003. http://www.salon.com/2003/09/08/krugman_6/ (accessed November 30, 2012); Maureen Down, “Gunsmoke and Mirrors,” *The New York Times* September 14, 2003. <http://www.lexisnexis.com> (accessed November 30, 2012); Anna Quindlen “Free Pass for The President,” *Newsweek* October 6, 2003. <http://www.lexisnexis.com> (accessed November 30, 2012); Molly Ivins, “Call Me a Bush-Hater,” *The Progressive* November 2003. http://www.progressive.org/mag_ivinsbushhater (accessed November 30, 2012); Jennifer Harper, “No holds barred for British press on Bush’s visit,” *The Washington Times* November 20, 2003. <http://www.lexisnexis.com> (accessed November 30, 2012)

¹⁶⁴ Nancy Gibbs and John F. Dickerson, “Person of the Year: George W. Bush” *TIME Magazine* December 19, 2004. www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1009927,00.html (accessed November 30, 2012)

stump speeches rehearsed tired wartime rhetoric. Not only had he failed to make good on the promises of his 2001 campaign, but the war in Iraq was ongoing, domestic policy had been entirely forgotten, and there was no promised change of course.¹⁶⁵ After his first second-term speech to a joint session of Congress,^t *New York Times* reported that his audience members showed serious signs of fatigue. Where listeners had been ready to hear “ambitious sounding proposals on issues like tax-free savings ... the president shelved the big ticket items and instead offered himself to the public as the hero of Baghdad and the scourge of terrorism.”¹⁶⁶ Critics called this speech less popular than that delivered by President Bill Clinton in the wake of the Monica Lewinsky scandal. That year, *The Village Voice* noted that, in spite of his cowboy image, George W. “ain’t no cowboy,” because he “shot first,” and “went back on his word.”¹⁶⁷ In October, *The New York Times* published an article titled “All Those Promises: Do They Really Matter?,” noting how “dirty bombs” and domestic terrorism had led Bush to pursue anything but the humble foreign policy he had promised in his 2004 campaign.¹⁶⁸ Bush’s former folksy appeal had been replaced with an artificial, tinny soapbox.

Bush’s own discourse about his speech even began to reflect an overwhelming suspicion that he was not in control of what he was saying. In 2006, after widespread concerns that Rumsfeld had been mishandling the war had emerged, Bush issued the following statement: “I hear the voices, and I read the front page, and I know the speculation. But I’m the decider, and I decide what is best. And what’s best is for Don Rumsfeld to remain as the Secretary of

¹⁶⁵ Sheryl Gay Stohlberg, “State of the Union: The Chamber; A Celebration with Prickly Undertones,” *The New York Times*, January 21, 2004. <http://www.lexisnexus.com> (accessed November 30, 2012)

¹⁶⁶ James Traub, “The Way We Live Now: Domesticated,” *The New York Times*, February 8, 2004. <http://www.lexisnexus.com> (accessed November 30, 2012)

¹⁶⁷ Erik Baard, “George W. Bush Ain’t No Cowboy,” *The Village Voice*, September 21, 2004. <http://www.lexisnexus.com> (accessed November 30, 2012)

¹⁶⁸ Elizabeth Bumiller, “All Those Promises: Do they Really Matter?” *The New York Times*, October 26, 2004. <http://www.lexisnexus.com> (accessed November 30, 2012)

Defense.”¹⁶⁹ In 2009, Bush released his post-presidential autobiography *Decision Points*.¹⁷⁰

Plame was not mentioned in the book. Bush did, however, describe why he had refused to pardon I. Scooter Libby, who had been convicted of perjury during the Plame trial:

In the closing days of the administration, Dick [Cheney] pressed his case that Scooter should be pardoned. ... Ultimately, I reached the same conclusion I had in 2007 the jury verdict should be respected. In one of our final meetings, I informed Dick that I would not issue a pardon. He stared at me with an intense look. “I can’t believe you’re going to leave a soldier on the battlefield,” he said.¹⁷¹

Paradoxically, in the end Bush could only exercise his judgment by deciding *not* to exercise it. His speech was repeatedly, frequently, and incessantly invested in the question of what decisions he *had* or *had not* made over the course of his role as commander-in-chief. Even the title, *Decision Points*, implicitly defended that he *had* asserted decisions while in office. Near the end of his own presidency, Bush could not even exercise his judgment without explicitly referring to the decision-making power granted to the presidential voice. He explained in words what his speech should have implicitly performed.

Inviting the Unknown

In 2002, when Bush fainted in the Oval Office after choking on a pretzel, news agencies attributed the incident to his vigorous daily exercise routine. Running seven miles each day had left him with an over-healthy heart that was more prone to such spells.¹⁷² But just two years later, this tune had changed. In the summer of 2004, Richard Cohen noted that “Bush’s periodic two-

¹⁶⁹ “Bush: ‘I’m the decider’ on Rumsfeld” *CNN.com*, April 18, 2006.

<http://edition.cnn.com/2006/POLITICS/04/18/rumsfeld/> (accessed November 30, 2012)

¹⁷⁰ George W. Bush, *Decision Points* (Random House: New York, 2010), xii.

¹⁷¹ Bush, *Decision Points*, 104-105.

¹⁷² Bill Sammon, “President Chokes on Pretzel, Faints,” *The Washington Times*, January 14, 2002. <http://www.lexisnexis.com> (accessed November 30, 2012)

hour midday exercise sessions and his disinclination to work nights or weekends” had made it seem that the president was missing in action.¹⁷³ Cohen called Bush’s 2004 reelection campaign a “great farce” because even as the president promoted a vigilant, round-the-clock national security agenda, he only seemed to be working part-time. Instead of addressing the nation’s security problems from Washington, Bush had “brought his work home with him,” retreating to his ranch in Crawford, Texas. In 2005, the *Washington Post* described Bush’s record-setting five week vacation as “the longest presidential retreat in 36 years.”¹⁷⁴ His frequent leaves of absence “symbolize[d] a lackadaisical approach to the world’s most important day job.” Bush had also “spent a month at the ranch shortly before the Sept. 11 2001, attacks, when critics asserted he should have been more attentive to warning signs.” The implication was that if Bush had been home, he might have seen the hijacked planes coming. Like his speech, even Bush’s houses had been re-signified: an empty White House just went to show that he had gone missing.

To imagine that there is no president is not to imagine he or she does not exist. Rather, it is an acknowledgement of how those things we know to be incomplete receive partial explanations, even in the highest offices of government. It is, moreover, an injunction to re-imagine the rhetoricity of secrets. Traditionally equated with techniques of concealment, deception, and subterfuge, secrets are conventionally understood to distort our reality, taken to be screens of mystification. The alternative I have offered here is to consider secrets as a *production* of discourse, a structural dynamic that illustrates the impossibility of knowing the w(hole). Even when the screens that cover our political discourse are demystified, these acts do not awaken the public. Secrets are the *real* “truth,” a rhetorical production of the screen *as* true. The “truth” of

¹⁷³ Richard Cohen, “Bush’s 9/11 Farce,” *The Washington Post*, July 27, 2004. <http://www.lexisnexis.com> (accessed November 30, 2012)

¹⁷⁴ Jim VandeHei and Peter Baker, “Vactioning Bush to Set a Record: With Long Sojourn at Ranch, President on His way to surpassing Reagan’s Total,” *The Washington Post*, August 3, 2005. <http://www.lexisnexis.com>. (accessed November 30, 2012)

the matter was that Bush administration officials were concealing information, and that Bush wasn't doing his job--not because this was *actually the case*, but because the suggestive repetition of these ideas in public made it a political reality.

Consider, for instance, how important it was at the outset of the Plame scandal to discover the true identity of Novak's informant. *That* person would, inevitably, be held responsible for compromising national security. But although he was ultimately held accountable for disclosing classified materials to the members of the press, I. Lewis Libby never divulged Plame's identity to Novak. That role belonged to Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage, who was never reprimanded for his involvement in the scandal. When Armitage came forward in 2007, exasperated *New York Times* columnist David Brooks called the lack of public outrage an outright hypocrisy.¹⁷⁵

Taken together, the purloined letter, rhetoric, the missing link, the absent Plame, and Bush's speech – all point toward the excesses of discourse; the structural dynamics we have not – indeed cannot – yet taken into account. Secrets, in other words, are not *just* concealment; they are not only the discursive double-doors that hide the goings-on of politics. They also remind the public of its own uncertainty, direct critics to attend what they cannot know, and add an always missing element to discourse. Through their paradoxical logic, they indicate that something is missing; and that this missing-ness is not waiting to be discovered, but resides *within* our discourse. Secrets therefore offer us a common non-place, a gap added to discourse that *founds* and *re-founds* it. Naming these non-places is, however, an important task: they are the condition of any discourse to come, rhetorical or otherwise.

¹⁷⁵ David Brooks, "A Guide for the Perplexed," *The New York Times* September 1, 2006. <http://www.lexisnexis.com> (accessed November 30, 2012)

CHAPTER 3

THE CONSERVATIVE LEGACY OF SAUL ALINSKY: IRONY AND THE OPEN SECRET
OF *RULES FOR RADICALS*

Conflict is the essential core of a free and open society. If one were to project the democratic way of life in the form of a musical score, its major theme would be the harmony of dissonance.

-- Saul Alinsky, *Rules for Radicals*, 62

In September 2009, conservative activists James O’Keefe and Hannah Giles enjoyed a brief moment of notoriety for their journalistic exposé on the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN). ACORN had made headlines during the Barack Obama/John McCain presidential contest when Republicans attacked the organization for suspected voter registration fraud. Disguised as a pimp and prostitute, O’Keefe and Giles corroborated Republicans’ suspicions of wrongdoing by capturing video footage of ACORN representatives providing “detailed legal instructions on how to avoid problems with the police and tax authorities.”¹⁷⁶ In subsequent interviews, O’Keefe frequently invoked Saul Alinsky’s 1971 *Rules for Radicals* as inspiration for the sting, particularly his emphasis on “making the

¹⁷⁶ “The sensational Giles and O’Keefe,” *The Washington Times*, September 16, 2009, accessed April 28, 2015. <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2009/sep/16/the-sensational-giles-and-okeefe/>

enemy live up to its own book of rules.”¹⁷⁷ The peculiar twist of this revival was the fact that Alinsky supplied the means by which his politically liberal legacy was to be undone.

Who was Saul Alinsky? From 1930 until 1965, Alinsky’s highly successful populist strategies helped collectivize urban community organizers and political protest groups. Sociologists Donald and Dietrich Reitzes suggest that “Alinsky’s ideas and activities provide professional organizers, activists, local leaders and concerned citizens, as well as social scientists, with penetrating insights into modern life and constructive strategies for change based on a strong commitment to democratic ideals.”¹⁷⁸ Communication scholar and historian Sanford D. Horwitt credits Alinsky with “invent[ing] a new political form” that “came to suggest David and-and-Goliath struggles marked by colorful, confrontational tactics”:

...dumping a mound of garbage in front of a tavern owned by the wife of an alderman, to protest his unresponsiveness to complaints of inadequate garbage pickup, or dispatching black tenants of a run-down tenement to picket the white suburban home of the slumlord who has refused to make necessary repairs. He also pioneered the use of stockholdings by churches and others to help promote socially responsible policies on the part of corporations.¹⁷⁹

Many of the tactics Horwitt describes are laid out in Alinsky’s 1971 *Rules for Radicals*. The book provides philosophical instruction for the radical community organizer, including rules of means and ends, a theory of communication, and practical tactics.

O’Keefe and Giles’s tactics represent only a portion of Alinskysen shift in conservative strategy, however. Since 2011, for instance, Republicans have both embraced and criticized the

¹⁷⁷ Johnson, Eliana. “James O’Keefe’s Rules for Radicals,” National Review Online. June 27, 2013, accessed March 26, 2015, <http://www.nationalreview.com/article/352149/james-okeefes-rules-radicals-eliana-johnson>.

¹⁷⁸ Donald and Dietrich Reitzes, *The Alinsky Legacy: Alive and Kicking* (Greenwich, CT: Jai Press Inc., 1987), 1.

¹⁷⁹ Horwitt, Sanford D. *Let Them Call Me Rebel: Saul Alinsky – His Life and Legacy* (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 1989), 2.

funding opportunities of “dark money,” or anonymous campaign contributions. Dark money emerged as a problem soon after the Supreme Court’s 2010 *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission* decision, when Republican strategist Karl Rove founded independent funding organizations to aid the failing Republican National Committee (RNC). As *Vanity Fair* reported, Rove’s twin Super-Political Action Committees (Super-PACs), *American Crossroads* and *Crossroads GPS* had the sole aim of creating a “permanent Republican majority.”¹⁸⁰ Soliciting “disgruntled millionaires,” Rove’s Super-PACs quickly collected funds exceeding four times what the RNC had “in its coffers,” and gave rise to a flurry of similar organizations like *FreedomWorks* (led by Dick Armey) and *Winning the Future* (led by Newt Gingrich). As Norman Ornstein of the conservative American Enterprise Institute claimed, “We’re back to the Nixon era, the era of undisclosed money, of big cash amounts and huge interests that are small in number dominating American politics.”¹⁸¹ But Super-PACs funded campaign ads *also* attacked Democrats for taking funds from billionaires and Super-PACs.¹⁸² Senator Mitch McConnell’s 2014 Senate campaign, for instance, “leveled a long list [of] money- and ethics-related attacks” against his Democratic opponent.¹⁸³ Not only were “the people” the Right had pledged to represent limited to a small reserve of wealthy donors; Republicans openly criticized their opposition for indulging in the same fundraising practices they had pioneered.

I set this scene because after the George W. Bush presidency, secrets were not exorcised from America’s governing institutions. Instead, Republican commentators cultivated *open secrets*. By contrast to the rhetorical secret, in which everyone says what they cannot know, in

¹⁸⁰ Craig Unger, “Boss Rove,” *The New Yorker*, September 2012, accessed April 28, 2015.

<http://www.vanityfair.com/news/politics/2012/09/karl-rove-gop-craig-unger>.

¹⁸¹ Andy Kroll, “Follow the Dark Money,” *Mother Jones* July/August 2012, accessed April 28, 2015.

<http://www.motherjones.com/politics/2012/06/history-money-american-elections>.

¹⁸² “American Crossroads: ‘Billionaire’ IA,” Internet Video, September 16, 2014, accessed April 28, 2015.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G5XyA2zmGg8>

¹⁸³ Eliza Newlin Carney, “Republicans Join Attacks on Big Money,” *Roll Call*, October 28, 2014, accessed April 28, 2015. <http://blogs.rollcall.com/beltway-insiders/republicans-join-attacks-on-big-money/>

the open secret *everyone knows what they cannot say*. Another way of phrasing this claim: if ‘everyone knows’ that hypocrisy is just a part of politics, then the open secret lies in the fact that no one can ever fully or finally eliminate hypocrisy by explaining just how venomous, violent, or antagonistic our political discourse is. As I will argue, this overt antagonism marks the tacit agreement to disagree between the American political Right and the Left. While the strategy of accusing the Left of the Right’s misdeeds may seem like business-as-usual, my objective in this chapter is to understand why, if it is indeed so obvious, such hypocrisy has returned with renewed force – as well as why Alinsky is the unlikely face of these strategies.

This chapter explains how Saul Alinsky, the “socialist” boogeyman that conservatives likened to Barack Obama between 2008 and 2014, figures this open secret. The first (theoretical) claim I advance in this chapter is that the liberal and conservative split has always already been an open secret – meaning that what keeps this adversarial relationship in tact is a pact of silence and nothing more. My second (critical) argument is that the conservative preoccupation with Saul Alinsky circa 2008 is the contemporary instantiation of this open secret. In the essay that follows, I first explain the open secret – what everyone knows but no one can say – by drawing from Saul Alinsky’s 1971 *Rules for Radicals*. I then explore how the open secret is rhetorical by situating it in relationship to the concepts of antagonism, enjoyment, and irony. Finally, I read the contemporary uptake of Alinsky’s *Rules for Radicals* as a move to preserve the democratic fantasy of the two-party system at a time when “bipartisanship” has placed it under threat.

Alinskyean Experience and the Open Secret

Within *Rules for Radicals*, Alinsky calls on community organizers to understand the concept of “experience,” which carries a very specific connotation.¹⁸⁴ According to Alinsky, experience refers to a core of values and knowledge that are indiscernible to those outside a community.¹⁸⁵ Alinsky suggests that organizers make a habit of mapping experience to draw out a community’s singular features: “Happenings become experiences when they are digested, when they are reflected on, related to general patterns. The organizer, in his constant hunt for patterns, universalities, and meaning, is always building up a body of experience.”¹⁸⁶ He also stresses that organizers *must* have “at least a cursory familiarity” with a community’s experience if they are to successfully achieve the community’s goals.¹⁸⁷ Often, however, Alinsky found that aspiring organizers were unable to find “the point of experience of the other party.”¹⁸⁸ Under such circumstances, Alinsky “construct[ed] experience for [his] students” by immersing them into his own scandalous worldview.¹⁸⁹ At one point in *Rules*, Alinsky argues that the greatest

¹⁸⁴ For further reference, see Saul Alinsky, *Rules for Radicals* (New York, NY: Random House, 1971), 68-87, 127-140.

¹⁸⁵ Alinsky contextualizes the concept of “experience” in the following way: “Since people understand only in terms of their own experience, an organizer must have at least a cursory familiarity with their experience. It not only serves communication but it strengthens the personal identification of the organizer with the others, and facilitates further communication. For example, in one community there was a Greek Orthodox priest, who will be called here the Archimandrite Anastopolis. Every Saturday night, faithfully followed by six of his church members, he would tour the local taverns. After some hours of imbibing he would suddenly stiffen, and become so drunk that he was paralyzed. At this point his faithful six, like pallbearers, would carry him through the streets back to the safety of his church. Over the years it became part of the community’s experience, in fact a living legend. In talking to anyone in that neighborhood you could not communicate the fact that something was out of place, not with it, except to say it was “out like the Archimandrite.” The response would be laughter, nodding of heads, a “Yeah, we know what you mean” – but also an intimacy of sharing a common experience. (84-5)

¹⁸⁶ Saul Alinsky, *Rules for Radicals*, 69-70.

¹⁸⁷ Saul Alinsky, *Rules for Radicals*, 84.

¹⁸⁸ Saul Alinsky, *Rules for Radicals*, 85.

¹⁸⁹ The following is one anecdote Alinsky uses to explain how he created experiences for his organizers: “In a similar situation in Los Angeles four staff members and I were talking in front of the Biltmore Hotel when I demonstrated the same point, saying: “Look, I am holding a ten-dollar bill in my hand. I propose to walk around the Biltmore Hotel, a total of four blocks, and try to give it away. This will certainly be outside of everyone’s experience. You four walk behind me and watch the faces of the people I approach. I am going to go up to them holding out this ten-dollar bill and say, ‘Here, take this.’ My guess is that everyone will back off, look confused, insulted, fearful, and want to get away from this nut fast. From their experience when someone approaches them he

obstacle organizers face is their own experience, or their own limited perception of the social arena as a space where cool reason and good argument prevail. As Alinsky plainly explains, however, these ideals seldom work out in practice:

The greatest barrier to communication between myself and would-be organizers arises when I try to get across the concept that tactics are not the product of careful, cold reason, that they do not follow a table of organization or a plan of attack. Accident, unpredictable reactions to your own actions, necessity, and improvisation dictate the direction and nature of tactics. Then, analytical logic is required to appraise where you are, what you can do next, the risks and hopes that you can look forward to. It is this analysis that protects you from being a blind prisoner of the tactic and the accidents that accompany it. But I cannot overemphasize that the tactic itself comes out of the free flow of action and reception, and requires on the part of the organizer an easy acceptance of apparent disorganization. The organizer goes with the action. His approach must be free, open-ended, curious, sensitive to any opportunities, any handles to grab on to, even though they involve other issues than those he may have in mind at that particular time. The organizer should never feel lost because he has no plot, no timetable or definite points of reference. A great pragmatist, Abraham Lincoln, told his secretary in the month the war

is either out to ask for instructions or to panhandle – particularly the way I’m dressed, no coat or tie.” I walked around, trying to give the ten-dollar bill away. The reactions were all “within the experiences of the people.” About three of them, seeing the ten-dollar bill, spoke first – I’m sorry. I don’t have any change.” Others hurried past saying, “I’m sorry, I don’t have any money on me right now,” as though I had been trying to get money from them instead of trying to give them money. One young woman flared up, almost screaming, “I’m not that kind of a girl and if you don’t get away from here, I’ll call a cop!” Another woman in her thirties snarled, “I don’t come that cheap!” There was this one man who stopped and said, “What kind of a con game is this?” and then walked away. Most of the people responded with shock, confusion, and silence, and they quickened their pace and sort of walked around me. After approximately fourteen people, I found myself back at the front entrance of the Biltmore Hotel, still holding my ten-dollar bill. My four companions had, then, a clearer understanding of the concept that people react strictly on the basis of their own experience.” (86-7)

began: “My policy is to have no policy.” Three years later, in a letter to a Kentucky friend, he confessed plainly: “I have been controlled by events.”¹⁹⁰

Alinsky’s would-be organizers expect tactics to have mathematical accuracy, but as Alinsky informs us, tactics are guided by uncertainty, anticipation, and opportunism. He explains that it was “within” their experience to believe that successful tactics would impose order upon social chaos, but “outside” it to imagine tactics as a style of moment-to moment decision-making. Within Alinsky’s worldview, “experience” thus signified both what individuals collectively valued *and* the limitations of their frame of reference. By explaining “experience” in this way, he also gestures toward the scandals he leveraged to strategically disrupt, establish, or renew a shared and silent experience among a community’s members.

Although he never coins the term, my claim is that certain Alinskyean “experiences” became an *open secret* when a community’s implicit values became an overt justification for ostracism. In other words, Alinsky’s events exposed values that a community ‘knew’ it held, but only voiced when it excluded certain members.¹⁹¹ Alinsky provides one example when he explains how his success with Chicago’s Woodlawn community hinged upon working within the experiences of affluent white racists. In this example, Alinsky didn’t fight against the values of

¹⁹⁰ Saul Alinsky, *Rules for Radicals*, 165-6.

¹⁹¹ The theme of “everyone knows but no one can say” crops up in *Rules for Radicals* as one of the organizer’s keenest of approaching a community’s powerful adversaries. Alinsky uses the example of Moses – the organizer *par excellence* who “moved in on a top value and outmaneuvered God” – to demonstrate this point. (89) “Knowing this, Moses took off on his attack. He began arguing and telling God to cool it. ... At any rate, he began to negotiate, saying, ‘Look, God, you’re God. You’re holding all the cards. Whatever you want to do you can do and nobody can stop you. But you know, God, you can’t scratch that deal you’ve got with these people – you remember, the Covenant – in which you promised them not only to take them out of slavery but that they would practically inherit the earth. Yeah, I know, you’re going to tell me that they broke their end of it all so all bets are off. But it isn’t that easy. You’re in a spot. The news of this deal has leaked out all over the joint. The Egyptians, Philistines, Canaanites, *everybody* knows about it. But, as I said before, you’re God. Go ahead and knock them off. What do you care if people are going to say, ‘There goes God. You can’t believe anything he tells you. You can’t make a deal with him. His word isn’t even worth the stone it’s written on.’ But after all, you’re God and I suppose you can handle it.” (90-1)

the white community. Instead, he used the experience of racism to create an event that encouraged whites to evict one of their own:

In its early history the organized black ghetto in the Woodlawn neighborhood in Chicago engaged in conflict with the slum landlords. It never picketed the local slum tenements or the landlord's office. It selected its blackest blacks and bused them out to the lily-white suburb of their slum landlord's residence. Their picket signs, which said, "Did you know that Jones, your neighbor, is a slum landlord?" were completely irrelevant; the point was that ... Jones would be inundated with phone calls from his [racist] neighbors.¹⁹²

Alinsky's goal was never to convert racists to a more accepting view of their fellow man but, instead, to place Jones, the racist, at the mercy of his also-racist neighbors. Put in Alinsky's hands, racism thus became more than just an experience – it became an *open secret*. Protestors created an event that transformed racism from an unspoken community value into an overt justification for eviction. Hence the 'open' of *open secret*: by revealing the 'experience' that was always already there, Alinsky routinely made a spectacle of silently enforced values.¹⁹³

Alinsky's *Rules for Radicals* describes two important characteristics of the experience that becomes an *open secret*. First, he stresses that experience does not randomly erupt into an *open secret*. Experience remains below the threshold of an *open secret* because a community's experiences typically go unacknowledged due to "self-interest," which describes a general blindness to past experiences and the experiences of others.¹⁹⁴ Moreover, it is a reluctance to

¹⁹² Saul Alinsky, *Rules for Radicals*, 144.

¹⁹³ As Alinsky stated in 1969, "You're in this situation, and here's a guy who's starving. And he is pleading and demanding bread. So I turn to him and say, "Well now wait, let's discuss values for a moment. Do you know that man does not live by bread alone? You know, it's absurd! And yet, there are many of these absurdities that we constantly, particularly today, are doing." ("Saul Alinsky at UCLA," 1969)

¹⁹⁴ Alinsky contextualizes the concept of "self-interest" in the following way: Machiavelli, with whom the idea of self-interest seems to have gained the greatest notoriety, at least among those who are unaware of the tradition, said: "This is to be asserted in general of men, that they are ungrateful, fickle, fake, cowardly covetous, as long as you succeed they are yours entirely; they will offer you their blood, property, life, and children when the need is far

recognize that one's identity as a citizen depends upon the interests one shares with others.¹⁹⁵

Most destructively, self-interest perpetuates a status quo in which American democracy has become less and less egalitarian:

Two examples would be the priest¹⁹⁶ who wants to be a bishop and bootlicks and politicks his way up, justifying it with the rationale, "After I get to be bishop I'll use my office for Christian reformation," or the businessman who reasons, "First I'll make my million and after that I'll go for the real things in life." Unfortunately one changes in many ways on the road to the bishopric or the first million, and then one says, "I'll wait until I'm a cardinal and then I can be more effective," or, "I can do a lot more after I get two million" – and so it goes. In this world laws are written for the lofty aim of "the common good" and then acted out in life on the basis of the common greed."¹⁹⁷

Experience therefore remains below the level of the *open secret* because individuals ritually justify their inaction with deferral, saving social harmony for a time when self-interest is no longer so pressing. And yet, Alinsky's point is that such self-interest *never* ceases to insist. Self-

distant; but when it approaches they turn against you." But Machiavelli makes a mortal mistake when he rules out the "moral" factors of politics and holds purely to self-interest as he defines it. This mistake can only be accounted for on the basis that Machiavelli's experience as an active politician was not too great, for otherwise he could not have overlooked the obvious fluidity of every man's self-interest. The overall case must be of larger dimension than that of self-interest narrowly defined; it must be large enough to include and provide for the shifting dimensions of self-interest. You may appeal to one's self-interest to get me to the battlefield to fight; but once I am there, my prime self-interest becomes to stay alive, and if we are victorious my self-interest may, and usually does, dictate entirely unexpected goals rather than those I had before the war. For example, the United States in World War II fervently allied with Russia against Germany, Japan, and Italy, and shortly after victory fervently allied with its former enemies – Germany, Japan, and Italy – against its former ally, the U.S.S.R. (54-5)

¹⁹⁵ Alinsky summarizes the way self-interest deflects attention from the common interest in the following way:

"Here we are desperately concerned with the vast mass of people who, thwarted through lack of interest or opportunity, or both, do not participate in the endless responsibilities of citizenship and are resigned to lives determined by others. To lose your "identity" as a citizen of democracy is but a step from losing your identity as a person. People react to this frustration by not acting at all. The separation of the people from the routine daily functions of citizenship is heartbreak in a democracy." (xxv-xxvi)

¹⁹⁶ It is worth noting that Alinsky elsewhere expresses special contempt for academics and philosophers, who also allow experiences like racism to carry on in silence by offering false solutions to social problems. In his words, academics are generally "means and ends moralists" that are "passionately committed to a mystical objectivity where passions are suspect." (1971, 25) Academics' major failing is that although they consistently idealize class equality, they consistently forget to theorize realistic means to arrive at these ideal social goals.

¹⁹⁷ Saul Alinsky, *Rules for Radicals*, 12-3.

interest, as the businessman's/bishop's never ending not-yet, illustrates how citizens consistently place more faith in their future potential to do good than in their present ability to help their less-fortunate fellows. They thus adopt the attitude of 'and so it goes,' justifying injustices as the peculiar way of the world. In Alinsky's words, "He who sacrifices the mass good for his personal conscience has a peculiar conception of 'personal salvation'; he doesn't care enough for people to be 'corrupted' for them."¹⁹⁸ It also explains why most experiences don't become an *open secret* – the most common experience of affluent Americans is to insulate one's self from imminent social pressures.¹⁹⁹

Second, Alinsky also allows us to infer that the *open secret*, like his ideal organizer, has no firm ideology or political predisposition. Alinsky, for one, openly encouraged his organizers to adopt an attitude of political relativism, supporting the social goals of the communities they were enlisted to help: "[The organizer] knows that all values are relative, in a world of political relativity."²⁰⁰ Of course, this relativism also resulted in performative contradictions across Alinsky's spectacles, as his campaigns often inadvertently supported values he had previously condemned:

¹⁹⁸ Saul Alinsky, *Rules for Radicals*, 25.

¹⁹⁹ I would like to note the passing resemblance between Alinsky's description of self-interest, Greg Goodale's description of the "ostrich-with-its-head-in-the-sand," and Jacques Lacan's "*la politique de l'autruche*." As Goodale writes, "We have seen this often. In fact, most if not all of us have engaged in it. It is the child who sticks his fingers in his ears and talks loudly over the sister who disagrees with him: 'I CAN'T HEAR YOU.'" This is the anti-audience that tunes out. These are the individuals who turn the channel when politics are discussed, the person who refuses to share his or her opinions about a candidate for office, the man who turns up his portable music player when his friends begin to talk about current events. These people refuse to engage in political conversation because they feel threatened or disempowered or disenfranchised by such talk. They have been trained to avoid such discussions and thus surround themselves in the sounds of comforting conversation or music." For his part, Goodale's account also strongly resembles what Jacques Lacan calls "*la politique de l'autruche*," the position of the dupe of the Purloined Letter who "has its head stuck in the ground, and all the while letting [the Minister/Dupin] pulch its rear." "*Autruicherie*," then, is an implicit denial or rejection in which the individual elects to bury their head in the sand. The difference between Goodale and Lacan, in this regard, is that it does not matter whether the 'autruche' elects to bury their head in the sand or not – this position is produced as an effect of the structural dynamic of the secret. Greg Goodale, "The Sonorous Envelope and Political Deliberation," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 99 (2013):221; Jacques Lacan, "The Seminar on the *Purloined Letter*," in *Ecrits*, trans. Bruce Fink (New York, NY: WM Norton, 2006), 10, 22.

²⁰⁰ Saul Alinsky, *Rules for Radicals*, 79.

When they'll say to me: "Do you know what you're doing? You're organizing the poor, for what? For these decadent, degenerate, bankrupt, bourgeois, materialistic values." And what I say back, "You want to know what the poor of America and the poor of the world want? They want a fatter piece of these decadent, degenerate, bourgeois, bankrupt values."²⁰¹

Alinsky's rebuttal perfectly summarizes the ideology of the *open secret*: There is no ideology, only imperfect (decadent, degenerate, bankrupt, bourgeois, materialistic) values to be organized. Put somewhat differently, the purpose of community organizing was never to reveal the falsity of a community's desires or to explain the wrongness of their experiences. Instead, Alinsky's *Rules for Radicals* used experience to create an *open secret* – a public display of the experiences that were always already there.

Alinsky's *Rules for Radicals* offers a prescient theory of the *open secret* as an expression of *experience* – that which the community shares, but leaves unvoiced – save for in its calculated acts of exclusion. As I have argued, the tactics that Alinsky used to manipulate experience have two core features: first, Alinsky recognizes that experience is frequently passed over in silence because of self-interest, and second, that a successfully orchestrated *open secret* has no ideology – instead, it is a reflection of ideology. And yet, as I will suggest in the following section, Alinsky's theory of the *open secret* suffers from several important limitations. To elaborate on these limitations, I first draw insights from Jacques Lacan's "Seminar on the Purloined Letter," which offers a schematic for the open secret. I then turn to the terms *enjoyment*, *antagonism*, and *irony* to describe *why* the open secret returns, *what* returns in the open secret, and the *rhetorical* form it takes.

²⁰¹ *Saul Alinsky speaking at UCLA 1/17/1969*, Internet Video, UCLA Department of Communication Studies (1969), Film. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oFa7dJCccHQ&list=PL5zrXo0H-GugDtgmIyBUHoUQEmJjJm3A&index=81>

The Ironic Enjoyment of Political Antagonism

Although Alinsky was a skilled community organizer, he does not fully account for why a community's secrets habitually erupt in public, what returns between any two instances of successful organization, or how such situations could be formally recognized. If Alinsky's would-be organizers thought that his tactics could be easily picked up and replicated, they were mistaken.²⁰² Instead, Alinsky insists that his tactics vary with every situation. Alinsky admits that explaining this idea was a challenge:

Among the organizers I trained and failed with, there were some who memorized the words and the related experiences and concepts. Listening to them was like listening to a tape playing back my presentation word for word. Clearly there was little understanding; clearly, they could not do more than elementary organization. *The problem with so many of them was and is their failure to understand that a statement of a specific situation is significant only in its relationship to and its illumination of a general concept.* Instead they see the specific action as a terminal point. They find it difficult to grasp the fact that no situation ever repeats itself, that no tactic can be precisely the same.²⁰³

It would seem as though there is a contradiction in Alinsky's advice. On the one hand, as I noted in the previous section, he claims that his spectacles are *non-ideological*, meaning that there are guiding articles of faith for the community organizer. And yet, on the other, he asks organizers to grasp a community's 'general concept,' guided only by their intuition and a general political relativism.

²⁰² Throughout *Rules for Radicals* and his public interviews, Alinsky frequently mentions his inability to communicate with the organizers he trained. In *Rules*, for instance, he warns would-be organizers not to start "issuing orders and 'explaining'" to the communities they organized, or else risk losing their *ethos*. As he writes, organizers that talk down to the communities they organizer "begin to build up a subconscious resentment, a feeling that the organizer is putting them down, is not respecting their dignity as individuals." (1971, 93)

²⁰³ Saul Alinsky, *Rules for Radicals*, 67. Italics added.

In this section, I elaborate upon Alinsky's *open secret* by drawing from the psychoanalytic formulation of this "general concept." Particularly insightful is Jacques Lacan's "Seminar on *The Purloined Letter*," which depicts the *open secret* as an unspoken agreement between opposed individuals who both "know what they cannot say" for risk of self-endangerment. There, the *open secret* first appears when the Minister D- enters the royal boudoir. In the exchange of glances between the Queen and the Minister, each understands that they must keep quiet.²⁰⁴ What is at stake in the *open secret* is the King's non-knowledge, his non-participation in the secret the other two actors have agreed to conceal. The letter creates an *open secret* not because of what it contains, but rather because both parties recognize that its contents must remain undisclosed – while also communicating with one another *about* it. According to Anne-Lise François, this open display produces an "assent without show of force," it "occupies the space of the blank page from which it can produce a consensus that no actually written document could ever yield."²⁰⁵ The *open secret*, then, is a pact of silence that solidifies in this tension. Speaking the open secret aloud would not only dissipate their conflict, but place their well-being into jeopardy.

The upshot of Lacan's "Seminar" is that it illustrates how the open secret organizes strategic partnerships between characters in conflict. At the beginning of the story, for instance, Poe directs our attention to the way that the tacit agreement over the Queen's letter to keep quiet maintains a pact of silence *and* a scene of vibrant conflict. How so? The subtle glances shared

²⁰⁴ Rhetorical scholar and historian Charles Morris III theorizes such 'meaningful glances' as the "fourth persona," or a double-encoded textual "wink." This wink is a calculated act of mimesis by which an orator "mirrors the dupes" by addressing them in inconspicuous language while also offering a covert meaning: "what is said is nonetheless performative, a speech act that can be read by certain audience, and calls those audience members into being as abettors." (2002, 230) Understood from within the bounds of Lacan's "Seminar," this "mimesis" would consist in the messages transmitted by the Queen and the Minister to the King to disguise their subterfuge. Meanwhile, the glances and shared silence between the Queen and the Minister illustrates the speech acts that can only be read by a select few "abettors."

²⁰⁵ Anne-Lise François, *Open Secrets: The Literature of Uncounted Experience* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2008), 5.

between the Queen and the Minister simultaneously fail to signify anything (for the King) and signify a vibrant intersubjective war (between the interlocutors). The open secret returns with a vengeance, moreover, when Dupin leaves his own false copy of the letter in the Minister's apartment. Doing so seals a new pact of silence between them that, if broken, would leave them at the mercy of their King. Lacan's open secret is therefore not only a latent *and* public conflict, but also the way that this conflict returns, over and over, making its significance greater than the words it contains.

Just as the open secret of the Purloined Letter returns as the conflict between different characters, the *open secret* marks the recurring conflicts of political antagonism. But Lacan prompts us to *why* the open secret returns, *what* returns in it, and *how* its returns are recognized. Even if Alinsky and Lacan agree that the open secret is a shared community asset, Alinsky's relativism prohibits him from elaborating this why, what and how. In the following paragraphs, I address the why, what, and how of the *open secret* – why it returns, what returns in it, and how it returns – through the terms *enjoyment*, *antagonism*, and *irony*.

Part I: Enjoying the Open Secret

The first issue that Alinsky's nascent theory of the *open secret* encounters in *Rules* is that there is no explanation of *why* the open secret persistently returns to the public's attention. As Alinsky informs us, such situations are multiple, insistent, and recurring. "We repeatedly get caught in this conflict between our professed moral principles and the real reasons why we do things – to wit, our self-interest. We are always able to mask those real reasons in words of beneficent goodness – freedom, justice, and so on."²⁰⁶ As I have argued, individuals who ritually justify their actions of self-interest risk always revealing this interest as an *open secret*: as a

²⁰⁶ Saul Alinsky, *Rules for Radicals*, 58.

deceptive mask for conflicted intentions. And yet, Alinsky either cannot or does not explain why each time this mask tears why such self-interest always seems so startlingly new.

To explain *why* the *open secret* returns, I turn to the Lacanian formula for *enjoyment*. At its simplest, enjoyment is a tacit weight ascribed to certain signifiers, lending subjects the assurance of their identity. In this way enjoyment is like *gravitas*; it is the unconscious force given to words by the ritualistic way they are invoked. According to Christian Lundberg, this ritual of enjoyment (or *jouissance*) “names the process of producing a subject” who is made by the way they habitually ascribe weight to certain signifiers.²⁰⁷ Joshua Gunn and Mirko Hall add a second observation: enjoyment is *also* both “appealing and repulsive,” something “represented as both ecstatic and narcissistic, as simultaneously inviting and threatening.”²⁰⁸ As they argue, “this enjoyment is not merely pleasure but something much more ambivalent.” It is this ambivalent enjoyment that Jodi Dean also describes as the driving force of neoliberal capitalism:

Enjoyment (*jouissance*) is the Lacanian term for an overwhelming, even agonizing, affective intensity. It designates something we desire but can never fully get, and something we want to avoid but can never fully shake. It’s that “something extra” for the sake of which we do what might otherwise seem irrational, counterproductive, or even wrong. And it’s that “something extra” we can’t help but suspect accompanies even those actions that we hope are rational, productive, and right.²⁰⁹

Enjoyment is intimately related to capital because it is always in excess of what an individual or community ‘wants’ at a given point in time. Instead, enjoyment accounts for how the ‘thing we

²⁰⁷ Christian Lundberg, “Enjoying God’s Death: *The Passion of the Christ* and the Practices of an Evangelical Public,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 95 (2009): 401.

²⁰⁸ Joshua Gunn and Mirko M. Hall, “Stick it in Your Ear: The Psychodynamics of iPod Enjoyment,” *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 5 (2008): 137.

²⁰⁹ Jodi Dean, *Publicity’s Secret: How Technoculture Capitalizes on Democracy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2002), 50.

want' is indefinitely deferred, and even how once we acquire it, its ineffable, desirous quality retreats to a new object.²¹⁰ In sum, enjoyment is a habitual repetition, a process of subject formation, an ambivalent experience of attraction and repulsion, and the element of 'excess' which haunts desire. What the enjoying subject 'enjoys' is a pleasurable and painful object it can never quite 'get' even once it 'has' it.

Secrets, specifically, are enjoyed because they produce an ineffable sense of identity among members of a community.²¹¹ According to Dean, the strength of this identity is directly linked to the risk this private information might be dragged out for public display.²¹² Indeed, as Dean argues, the idea that a public exists remains plausible only because of the possibility that some secret could come to light for this public to see.²¹³ A community's status as a community therefore hinges upon the risk that their protected values might be brought out for public inspection. Hence the return of the open secret: absent the possibility that one's private secrets might be exposed, the power of a community's shared experience diminishes into nothing.

²¹⁰ My preferred definition of *enjoyment* comes from Parveen Adams: "*Jouissance*, of course, is not something that exists; or rather, it exists as that which is not there, is lost and gone forever. It is the real, that which Lacan announced is impossible. But that does not mean that it is irrelevant. It irrupts and disturbs the life of the symbolic order. That which comes to the symbolic from the real, Lacan calls *objet petit a*. It functions as a hole and the cover for a hole; to describe it is to chart the vicissitudes of the lost object. The lost object constitutes the very connection between the symbolic and the real, and its stake is *jouissance*. The symbolic and real are two heterogeneous orders, and yet the real appears in the symbolic; this means that although there is no direct relation to *jouissance*, we still have to deal with the object which is the remnant of *jouissance*. I shall add that *jouissance* isn't very nice and ... your own [mother] should have warned you about it." (1994, 186)

²¹¹ To this we could even add Diane Rubenstein's further observation that public spectacles of secrecy are rituals of enjoyment: "Daily news is punctuated with public disclosures of governmental "breaches" (a movie recently opened with that name): of secret rendition, warrantless wiretapping, the "outing" of an intelligence officer, Valerie Plame. Both the Iran-Contra affair and the W-Bush presidency share issues of dubious legality, obsessive secrecy, and hypocritical "leaking." They both expose the relative impotence of hermeneutic unmasking gestures." (2008, 20-1) The mere repetition of secrets would seem to be evidence enough that they are frequent if not predictable. Nonetheless, the public enjoys its secrets in repetition, "as attempts to gain *jouissance*—yet with inevitable detours." (20)

²¹² Jodi Dean, *Publicity's Secret*, 22.

²¹³ This is at the heart of what Gunn calls the "inexhaustible secret, which "refers to the formal and relational dimensions of that which brings a public into being. ... The life of a public consequently depends on a never-ending paradox of content to sustain itself. In this way, the inexhaustible secret is the ruse of civic being." (253)" Moreover, as Gunn writes, "The dynamic drama of secrecy dwindles when there are no more secrets to discover; when there are no more threats to their concealment, then there is no longer a common ignorance to share." (2008, 267)

Part II: The Return of Political Antagonism

Yet even with an explanation of *why* the open secret returns, there would appear to be no account of *what* returns in them. This is the second issue Alinsky encounters: the organizer must approach each community's experiences separately, as distinct instances of the same inscrutable phenomenon. *Rules*'s nearest explanation of the 'what' that returns in the open secret is 'conflict,' which is among Alinsky's five key terms for describing how "the passions of mankind have boiled over into all areas of political life."²¹⁴ At various points throughout *Rules*, Alinsky celebrates conflict as the inheritance of "a free and open society,"²¹⁵ and as the source of all "new ideas" that issue "a challenge to the sacred ideas of the past."²¹⁶ Conversely, Alinsky also attacks of theories of social change that omit conflict as a necessary means to an end: "Only in the frictionless vacuum of a nonexistent abstract world can movement or change occur without that abrasive friction of conflict."²¹⁷ Indeed, even Alinsky's definition of the community organizer is structured around encouraging conflict and dissent:

The first step in community organization is community disorganization. The disruption of the present organization is the first step to community organization. Present arrangements are to be disorganized if they are to be displaced by new patterns that provide the opportunities and means for citizen participation. *All change means disorganization of the old and organization of the new.* This is why the organizer is immediately confronted with conflict. The organizer dedicated to changing the life of a particular community must first rub raw the resentments of the people of a community; fan the latent hostilities of many of the people to the point of overt expression. He must search out the

²¹⁴ Saul Alinsky, *Rules for Radicals*, 48; see also Saul Alinsky, *Rules for Radicals* 1972, 61-2.

²¹⁵ Saul Alinsky, *Rules for Radicals*, 59.

²¹⁶ Saul Alinsky, *Rules for Radicals*, 79.

²¹⁷ Saul Alinsky, *Rules for Radicals*, 21.

controversy and issues, rather than avoid them, for unless there is controversy people are not concerned enough to act. ... When there is agreement there is no issue, issues only arise when there is disagreement or controversy. An organizer must stir up dissatisfaction and discontent; provide a channel into which the people can angrily pour their frustrations. He must create a mechanism that can drain off the underlying guilt for having accepted the previous situation for so long a time.²¹⁸

If it is the organizer's job to stimulate conflict, then conflict is what returns in the open secret. It is up to the organizer to ensure that a single set of shared, community values does not become the enemy of democratic pluralism.

To further account for *what* is revealed in the open secret, I turn to Chantal Mouffe's description of *antagonism*,²¹⁹ which describes a site of persistent struggle, exclusion, and community formation within democracies. Like Alinsky, Mouffe contends that "conflict in liberal democratic societies cannot and should not be eradicated."²²⁰ Mouffe, however, also goes further than Alinsky by acknowledging antagonism as "a dimension that is inherent to every human society and that determines our very ontological condition,"²²¹ a dimension "linked to the existence of an element of hostility among human beings."²²² Within democracy, political

²¹⁸ Saul Alinsky, *Rules for Radicals*, 116-7.

²¹⁹ In the 2013 *Agonistics*, Mouffe defines 'antagonism' in the following way: I argue that once we understand that every identity is relational and that the affirmation of a difference is a precondition for the existence of any identity – i.e. the perception of something 'other' that constitutes its 'exterior' – we can understand why politics, which always deals with collective identities, is about the constitution of a 'we' which requires as its very condition of possibility the demarcation of a 'they'. This does not mean, of course, that such a relation is by necessity antagonistic. Indeed, many us/them relations are merely a question of recognizing differences. But it means that there is always the possibility that this 'us/them' relation might become one of friend/enemy. This happens when the others, who up to now were considered as simply different, start to be perceived as putting into question our identity and threatening our existence. From that moment on, as Carl Schmitt has pointed out, any form of us/them relation – be it religious, ethnic or economic – becomes the locus of an antagonism. (2013, 5)

²²⁰ Chantal Mouffe, *Agonistics* (New York, NY: Verso Press, 2013), 7.

²²¹ Chantal Mouffe, *The Return of the Political* (New York, NY: Verso Press, 2005), 3.

²²² Chantal Mouffe, *The Return of the Political*, 2. Mouffe also uses distinction between agonism and antagonism to underscore the fundamental difference between "Politics" and "the political." On the one hand, 'the political' is "understood as the antagonistic dimension which is inherent to all human societies." On the other, 'Politics' "refers

antagonism is “ineradicable,”²²³ “irreducible,”²²⁴ and “ineluctable,”²²⁵ because “any form of social objectivity ... must bear the traces of acts of exclusion that govern its founding.”²²⁶

Because the conflict that accompanies exclusion habitually returns with a vengeance, these “traces” of antagonism signal a ritualistic return to democracy’s violent scene of origin. Whereas Alinsky sees his organized conflicts as a healthy component of a functioning democracy, Mouffe deepens his claim, arguing that the staging and restaging of an impossible ‘we’ is the foundational problematic of democratic governance.²²⁷

As Joan Copjec explains, any secret’s content – the thing that it always hides but can never reveal – is antagonism.²²⁸ The existence of a secret depends upon a fundamental split

to the ensemble of practices, discourses and institutions that seeks to establish a certain order and to organize human coexistence in conditions which are always potentially conflicting, since they are affected by the dimension of ‘the political’. (2013, 2-3) ‘The political’ is, according to Mouffe, the ontological grounding for ‘Politics’ because the ways of making do with the tumult of human coexistence cannot be divorced the permanent situation of antagonism.

²²³ Chantal Mouffe, *The Return of the Political*, vii.

²²⁴ Chantal Mouffe, *The Return of the Political*, 1.

²²⁵ Chantal Mouffe, *The Return of the Political*, 7.

²²⁶ Chantal Mouffe, *Agonistics*, 4; see also Yannis Stavrakakis, *Lacan and the Political* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1999), 71-2.

²²⁷ As if proving Mouffe’s point, Alinsky habitually returns to the conflictual origins of democracy as prime examples of ‘conflict’. In *Reveille for Radicals*, for instance, Alinsky frequently compares the radical organizer to America’s founding fathers: “Where are America’s radicals? They were with Patrick Henry in the Virginia Hall of Burgesses; they were with Sam Adams in Boston; they were with that peer of all American radicals, Tom Paine, from the distribution of *Common Sense* through those dark days of the American Revolution.” (1946, 13) In *Rules*, Alinsky also textures each of his eleven “rules of means and ends” with examples like Declaration of Independence, the Boston Massacre, and Thomas Jefferson. As Alinsky points out, the Declaration importantly omitted “the food the colonies had received from the British Empire during times of famine, medicine during times of disease, soldiers during times of war with the Indians or other foes, or the many other direct and indirect aids to the survival of the colonies.” (1971, 27) In spite of its deliberate omissions, moreover, Alinsky claims that the Declaration had to be “a 100 per cent statement of the justice of the cause of the colonists and a 100 percent denunciation of the role of the British government as evil and unjust. Our cause had to be all shining justice, allied with the angels; theirs had to be all evil, tied to the Devil; in no war has the enemy or the cause ever been gray.” (28) The function of the declaration was to announce a primordial division that extends from the American Revolution to the biblical tradition. Alinsky teaches us that such conflicts are rituals that we remember to forget, the antagonism at the heart of dramatic political change. Mouffe, however, adds the crucial observation that “these are conflicts for which no rational solution could ever exist, hence the dimension of antagonism that characterizes human societies.” (2008, 3) Because historical acts of violence cannot be rationalized except as exceptions to functioning democracy, antagonism continues to ‘return’ in a variety of conflicts.

²²⁸ Copjec, admittedly, does not distinguish between ‘open’ and ‘rhetorical’ secrets, which I believe admits an important difference at the level of what a secret ‘contains’. As I noted at the outset of this essay, the rhetorical secret is “when everyone says what they cannot know” while the open secret is “what everyone knows they cannot say.” In each case, the division of form from content is quite different: in the former, the “form” of the secret is all that there is, there is no content save for the voicing of a lack of knowledge as evidence for political judgment. The

within the self – a split that mirrors the demarcation of a “we” from a “they.”²²⁹ Within Lacanian thought, the subject is always torn between the self it wants to be and a perspective from which he or she judges him- or her-self.²³⁰ The antinomy between *desire* and *value* produces “the very possibility of concealment” as the difference between the ‘want to be’ (*manque-à-être*) and the subject’s prohibitions on who they *can* be.²³¹ What is ‘enjoyed’ in an open secret is nothing less than this dissonance.²³² Like Mouffe’s “antagonism,” which can never be invoked *as such*, my claim is that what the open secret ‘contains’ is similarly ineffable – democracy’s thriving culture of conflict. However, a general concept of antagonism is constitutively prohibited because no single instance of democratic conflict can ever represent or capture antagonism as a whole.²³³ Instead, antagonism arrives as an open secret, secured by a pact of silence and nothing more.

positive content of this secret is, paradoxically, *nothing* – *nothing* is what ‘everyone’ ritually ‘says’. The rhetorical secret, in other words, gives a form to emptiness and nothing more. By contrast, by borrowing from Mouffe, my version of the open secret has an *ineffable* content. It is not just something that must not be said, but something that *cannot* be said. The overwhelming plentitude of the open secret’s content functions as an internal limit to what can be said. Consequently, no ‘general concept’ of it can be drawn apart from its multiple and repeating instances. Typically, I have found that when Copjec refers to ‘secrets,’ it is in this latter sense; as an ineffable, plentiful content birthed of a foundational rift or division.

²²⁹ The specific concept that Copjec draws upon from Lacan to describe this split is ‘extimacy’: “To say that the scientific subject is constructed by the institution of science, Bachelard would reason, is to say that it is always thereby obliged to survey itself, its own thinking, not subjectively, not through a process of introspection to which the subject has privileged access, but *objectively*, from the point of view of the scientific institution. ... The objective relation to the self, Bachelard informs us, necessarily raises the insidious question that Nietzsche formulated thus: ‘To everything which a man allows to become visible, one is able to demand: what does he wish to hide?’” (1994, 27)

²³⁰ An individual harbors a secret, for instance, when they desire a certain sexual partnership but are prevented from acting on their desires by their moral, religious, or popular values. Alinsky’s self-interested subject harbors a similar secret in the tension between their desirous self-interest and the community values with which it comes into conflict.

²³¹ Joan Copjec, *Read My Desire*, 27. Copjec, however, also adds to Alinsky’s formula by arguing that this self-dissonance also models how subjects enjoy the secrets of their governing institutions. (1994, 27-8) In other words, the antagonism that characterizes the individual is always replicated at the level of the collective. The Open Secret is nothing less than the collective recognition of this antagonism, which takes the form a difference that is always the same, but whose effects are always varied.

²³² The continuity between Alinsky’s concept of self-interest and the psychoanalytic description of self-splitting also appears in Slavoj Žižek’s examples of the rituals of symbolic and imaginary identification: “When I am a brutal executive who, deep within myself, feel that this is just a public mask and that my true Self discloses itself in my spiritual meditations (and imagine my friends telling people: “His brutal business efficiency shouldn’t deceive you – he is really a very refined and gentle person ...”), this is not the same as when I am, in real interactions with others, a polite person who, on the internet, gives way to violent fantasies.” (Žižek 2008, 13-4)

²³³ Celeste Condit has recently leveraged a strong critique of psychoanalysis for its fondness for critiquing ‘totalities,’ especially as formulated by Slavoj Žižek and Christian Lundberg. As Condit suggests, the theoretical payoff of psychoanalytic critiques of ideology fall prey to a naïve optimism by addressing ‘Totality’ as something

Part III: Saul Alinsky and the Socratic Eiron

The final issue is that *Rules for Radicals* encounters is that although Alinsky offers varied examples of previously successful tactics, he has little to say about the formal continuities between these different instances of the *open secret*. He instead advises community organizers to imagine themselves as a Socrates, asking “loaded questions” to direct a community’s members toward their own preferred solutions.²³⁴ Elsewhere, Alinsky compares Socrates to a community organizer, and informs us that his purpose was “to raise questions that agitate, that break through the accepted pattern.”²³⁵ Alinsky even maintains that it is because such questions threatened to bleed out into the political life of Athens that Socrates was sentenced to death.

Even if Alinsky does not provide a formal account of what constitutes an open secret, his Socratic analogy offers a rhetorical explanation for how they come to be recognized. A number of scholars have drawn attention to how Socrates’ dialectical strategy is inherited from rhetoric

that must be eliminated for the tautological justification that it is a totality. “One can sum up the most widely circulating theories of social change among “critical social theorists” of the twentieth century in the following, admittedly simplified, statement: ‘There is an (evil) Totality (fill in the blank with one or more: patriarchy, whites, the West, the U.S., neo-liberalism, global capitalism) that must be overturned by a Radical Revolution. We don’t know the shape of what will come after the Revolution, but The Evil is a construction of the Totality, so anything that comes after will be better. All you need is ... (fill in the blank: Love, Courage, Violence, etc.)’.” (2015, 264) Presumably, to Condit’s list of “Love, Courage, Violence, etc.,” we could add “enjoyment,” which widely circulates as the psychoanalytic explanation for why ‘Totality’ is enforced, upheld, and persists. Moreover, Condit encourages us to think of “this fantasy theme” of Totality as something that “arises from an intersection of the structural characteristics of language systems and the nature of human biologies (which readily adopt both tribal social cooperation and inter-tribal competition). (264) In response to these observations I would like to make two claims in passing: first, I believe that Condit is right insofar as it is a mistake to strive for a total revolution of the Totality-of-the-month through a radical revolution of enjoyment. (The idea of the Totality-of-the-month might also illustrate some of the sympathies between Condit’s critique and psychoanalytic enjoyment) What many psychoanalytic theorists fail to recognize is that the goal of psychoanalysis is “interminable.” Psychoanalytic criticism does not (or should not) aim for the total extinction of symptoms or enjoyment, but rather their management and transformation. In other words, my claim is not that “Totality” as such can be eliminated, but that enjoyment is the structure that allows “Totality” to return with such pressing insistence. Thus, I agree that there is limited utility to imagining enjoyment or related concepts as a way to undermine Totality once and for all. Indeed, I believe one of the crucial observations of psychoanalysis is that Totality never ceases to insist, which makes the question of how it is ‘made’ a deeply pragmatic question for rhetorical scholars. My second claim is that the mistaken assumptions of prominent psychoanalytic scholars should not function as an incentive to abandon the project of establishing ontologies of rhetoric. It may indeed be the case that humans are moved by material forces that exceed the subject’s grasp, but that alone does not seem like an intuitive justification for substituting a rhetorical ontology for human behavior with one that finds its explanation for collective human motive in biological drivers.

²³⁴ Saul Alinsky, *Rules for Radicals*, 92.

²³⁵ Saul Alinsky, *Rules for Radicals*, 72.

as a technique of persuasion. According to Northrup Frye, the classical opposition between the *eirōn* and the *alazōn* presents a situation in which the *eirōn* feigns weakness to occupy a position of strength, thereby making a dupe of the *alazōn*.

The concept of irony meets us in Aristotle's *Ethics* where the *eirōn* is the man who deprecates himself, as opposed to the *alazōn*. Such a man makes himself invulnerable, and, though Aristotle disapproves of him, there is no question that he is a pre-destined artist, just as the *alazōn* is one of his pre-destined victims.²³⁶

Socrates similarly confronted self-assured opponents with self-deprecation to gain the upper hand. As Wayne Booth argues in *A Rhetoric of Irony*, “though Socrates may ‘know nothing’ he also has ‘slightly the advantage’ of those who do not know that they know nothing. Which can only mean that he ‘knows something.’”²³⁷ There is always an implied dupe whose hubris evidences the fact that a ‘truth’ has been told. Alinsky’s analogy to the Socratic tradition merely illustrates the necessity of the *eirōn*’s ethos for the aspiring community organizer.

Most rhetorical scholars, however, have abandoned the *eirōn/alazōn* scenario for irony’s preferred use as a *trope*. Irony describes a signifier’s subversive meaning, one that reveals its professed signification to be partial or disingenuous. Kenneth Burke famously describes the characteristic inversions of irony as “A returns as not-A,”²³⁸ while Dana Cloud explains the trope as “a marker of adept double-coding.”²³⁹ James McDaniel offers a novel spin on irony when he argues that it is a suspension of social hierarchy that results in a “subjective destitution.”

Subjective destitution is the “identification of the self with the fantasy that supports it.... To endure destitution in this sense suggests recognizing the dignity of the other’s fantasies and, as a

²³⁶ Northrup Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1957), 40.

²³⁷ Wayne C. Booth, *A Rhetoric of Irony* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1974), 273.

²³⁸ Kenneth Burke, *A Grammar of Motives*. (Berkeley, CA: The University of California Press, 1969), 517.

²³⁹ Dana L. Cloud, “The Irony Bribe and Reality Television: Investment and Detachment in *The Bachelor*,” *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 27 (2010): 415.

consequence, of recognizing the frailty of one's own."²⁴⁰ Irony, in other words, describes a change in the subject that occurs through identification with another's *experience*. Moreover, McDaniel's account uniquely returns the "A" of "A returns as not-A" to the *alazon* – A is the subject that returns transformed, the dupe of his own ideological fantasy. Irony is therefore also a return of "A" as "not-A," an encounter with the *eirōn* in which one risks abandoning one's own political fantasy.

The open secret's *irony* is unique because the '*eirōn*' has ceased to take the form of an embodied individual (like the organizer of *Rules*). Instead, the *eirōn* of the open secret is a semi-autonomous expression²⁴¹ 'spoken' by the very community it indicts. A community, in other words, becomes its own *eirōn* and *alazon* when its discourse creates a performative contradiction, or when the community is shown to embrace values that it publicly disavows. The key irony of the open secret is that it describes the organization of a community's experience *by itself*. The community organizer's function has been assumed by communities themselves, its own history becoming the text upon which their hypocrisy becomes legible.

Rules for Conservative Populism

At least since Jerry Falwell founded the Moral Majority in 1979, Christian and Conservative values have occupied a shared space in the public imaginary. Dubbed "the New Christian Right" by the mainstream media, this emergent populism articulated Christian and Conservative principles to attack abortion laws, gay rights bills, and Equal Rights Amendment efforts.²⁴² Although its membership was frequently divided on the positions it took publicly, at

²⁴⁰ James McDaniel, "Liberal Irony: A Program for Rhetoric," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 35 (2002): 314.

²⁴¹ As Jacques Lacan writes, "It is clear that the Other cannot be confused with the subject who speaks in the locus of the Other, were it only through his voice. The Other, if it is what I say it is – that is, the locus where *it speaks* – can pose only one sort of question, that of the subject *before the question*." (2005, 73)

²⁴² Robert C. Liebman and Robert Wuthnow, *The New Christian Right* (Hawthorne, NY: Adline Publishing Company, 1983), 2.

its peak Falwell's organization raised \$11 million dollars and successfully enlisted 6.5 million members. Generally concerned that the State encroached upon the financial freedoms of their religious institutions, this populism took aim at the "secular humanism" of the left, describing it as "anti-God, Anti-American, and anti-family." Although the Moral Majority officially closed its doors in 1989, Cindy Patton informs us that it left a lasting impact upon future generations of conservative voters:

By the mid-1980s ... the new right understood the linkage of Civil rights and minority as an ethical balkanization which resulted in the loss of a unifying sensibility for "Americans." By the end of the 1980s, a mainstreamed new right (now "cultural conservatives") finally embraced civil rights by arguing that the pluralization of space which had underwritten the notion of civil rights as expressed in the 1960s had decreased "true" civil rights. This reinterpretation of the spaces of minorities was accomplished through asserting the primacy of "culture" (by definition, Western and just barely crypto-Christian) *regardless* of race. ... "Civil rights" ceased to mean the inclusion of groups excluded by an evolving hegemony and became instead the erasure of marks of difference through which those exclusions had been publicized.²⁴³

As conservatives drew their core principles from quasi-Christian values, they also expropriated strategies from 1960s civil rights radicals to advance their platform. Using the growth of racial, ethnic, and sexual diversity to prove that Christian culture was on the decline, the Moral Majority successfully wrenched the claim for equality from America's minorities – and gave them to Anglo Saxon whites. Calling for a more moral America, conservatives bolstered their strategy by simultaneously adopting – and attacking – the rhetoric of 1960s radicals.

²⁴³ Cindy Patton, "Refiguring Social Space" in *Social Postmodernism: Beyond Identity Politics* eds. Linda Nicholson and Steven Seidman (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 217.

Between 2008 and 2014, a new conservative populism emerged as prominent opposition to the presidential campaigns of Barack Obama, which drew voters with the promise of returning America to the core values of its founding documents. Yet unlike its previous iteration, a number of conservatives made vivid comparisons between President Obama and Saul Alinsky. My argument, however, is that Saul Alinsky's *Rules for Radicals* figures an open secret, one that the political Right regularly enjoys and which expresses a latent political antagonism. Finally, I claim that this open secret is recognizable in retrospect as *irony*, or as the performative contradiction of the Right's discourse with itself.

The Right Enjoys Rules for Radicals

With the election of President Barack Obama in 2008, Saul Alinsky suddenly gripped the American public's attention. The president and Saul, conservative journalists claimed, maintained strong intellectual ties. Standing before the Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC) in 2012, Andrew Breitbart stated that "Barack Obama is a Saul Alinsky radical."²⁴⁴ Conservative radio host Michael Savage echoed Breitbart in 2013: "Saul Alinsky is the ideological father of Barack Obama."²⁴⁵ Not only had Obama (like Alinsky before him) risen to prominence as a Chicago community organizer; he also contributed a chapter to a 1990 edited volume entitled *After Alinsky: Community Organizing in Illinois*.²⁴⁶ Even more direct were the ties between Saul Alinsky and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, who had written her undergraduate thesis on Alinsky and shared an extended written correspondence with the

²⁴⁴ Andrew Breitbart, "Our Warrior Andrew Breitbart: 'Barack Obama is a Saul Alinsky Radical,'" Internet Video, February 2012, accessed May 3, 2015. <https://www.youtube.com/>.

²⁴⁵ Michael Savage, "Michael Savage: Saul Alinsky is the ideological father of Barack Obama (aired 04/29/2013)" Internet Video, April 29, 2013, accessed May 3, 2015. <https://www.youtube.com/>.

²⁴⁶ Barack Obama, "Why organize? Problems and promise in the inner city," *Illinois Issues* 14 (8–9): 40–2, reprinted in *After Alinsky: community organizing in Illinois*, ed. Ed. Peg Knoepfle (Springfield, IL: Sangamon State University Press, 1990), 35–40.

organizer in 1971.²⁴⁷ A 2009 article from the *National Review* draws further parallels between Obama and Alinsky, arguing that although “Barack Obama never met Saul Alinsky,” “three of his mentors from his Chicago days studied at a school Alinsky founded,” thereby indoctrinating Obama – and his own duped followers – into Alinsky’s perverse worldview.²⁴⁸ According to Glenn Beck, the president was committed only to spreading the Alinskyan gospel:

The average American – are they with Saul Alinsky? The ends justify the means? Should the American people blow all these things off as unrelated coincidence? That the government is training radicals instead of educating children? The original idea for public schools was to train people to be Americans, to bring us all together and teach our ideals. Wow. The ends justify the means? Are these American ideals? ... Our children are not being trained to be responsible citizens, but campaign workers for a political icon and ideology.²⁴⁹

Invoking Alinsky was especially popular in the lead-up to the 2012 election. Speaking before the first American Tea Party convention in 2010, former Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich (R-GA) habitually compared Barack Obama to Saul Alinsky. As John Cassidy of the *New Yorker* reported:

Until Newt started banging on about the Chicago radical and writer, who died in 1972, I hadn’t realized what an influential figure he was. Part of Newt’s motivation, of course, was to portray President Obama, like Alinsky, a former community activist, as a left-wing extremist. “Saul Alinsky radicalism is at the heart of Obama,” he told CNN in

²⁴⁷ Stanley Kurtz, “Why Hillary’s Alinsky Letters Matter,” *National Review Online*, September 22, 2014. <http://www.nationalreview.com/>.

²⁴⁸ Jim Geraghty, “The Alinsky Administration,” *National Review Online*, May 14, 2009. <http://www.nationalreview.com/>.

²⁴⁹ Glenn Beck, “Glenn Beck – Obama Schools and Saul Alinsky 6 Rules for Rad,” Internet Video, February 9, 2010, accessed May 3, 2015. <https://www.youtube.com/>

January. But Newt, as an author and self-styled radical himself, clearly had some respect for Alinsky and his efforts to turn a left-wing insurgency into a lasting political force.²⁵⁰

Echoing Gingrich, Vice-Presidential candidate Sarah Palin proclaimed that the Obama administration was “all Alinsky, all the time.”²⁵¹ For conservative activists and commentators, Alinsky continued to symbolize the Left’s alienation from America’s morals. As pundit and comedian Bill Maher noted: “Somehow it turns out that this guy [Alinsky], who was never a communist, or even a socialist, has become the right-wing’s all-encompassing figure of evil, a radical activist that controls Barack Obama from the grave.”²⁵²

Alinsky’s pejorative reception by political conservatives is made strange, however, by the many conservative volumes that pay explicit homage to Alinsky’s precedent.²⁵³ Even when Alinsky is not invoked in the title of conservative political manuals, he makes frequent cameos in the form of ‘rules’ for organizing Tea Party Republicans. Horowitz, for instance, outlines nine ‘principles’ for defeating the Democrats in 2016, including “Politics is a War of Position” and “Fear is a Political Weapon.”²⁵⁴ O’Hara titles the last chapter of his book “Rules for Counterradicals,” which outlines “a variety of means to correct the drastic path our country has gone down.”²⁵⁵ Describing the emerging Tea Party rallies in 2009, Michael Sokolove notes that members of Arney’s *Freedomworks* religiously studied Alinsky’s 1971 *Rules for Radicals* with

²⁵⁰ John Cassidy, “Ten Things I’ll Miss About Newt When He’s Gone,” *The New Yorker*, April 26, 2012, accessed May 3, 2015. <http://www.newyorker.com/>.

²⁵¹ Ed Morrissey, “Video: Palin’s speech at the Boston Tea Party,” *HotAir*, April 14, 2010, accessed April 28, 2014. <http://hotair.com/archives/2010/04/14/video-palins-speech-at-the-boston-tea-party/>

²⁵² “Bill Maher: Who is Saul Alinsky? And Why do Republicans Make Obama into a President He is Not?,” Internet Video, January 28, 2012, accessed April 28, 2015. <https://www.youtube.com/>

²⁵³ A cursory list might include the following publications: *Leftist Tactics*, *Conservative Solution: A Conservative Analysis of Alinsky’s Rules and Other Tactics* (2010), *Rules for Radical Conservatives: Beating the Left at its Own Game to Take Back America* (2010), *Rules for Radicals Defeated: A Practical Guide for Defeating Obama/Alinsky Tactics* (2012), *Rules for Conservatives: A Response to Rules for Radicals* by Saul Alinsky (2014) and *Rules for Patriots: How Conservatives can Win Again* (2014).

²⁵⁴ David Horowitz, *Take No Prisoners: The Battle Plan for Defeating the Left* (Washington D.C.: Regenery Publishing, 2014), 144-5.

²⁵⁵ John M. O’Hara, *A New American Tea Party: The Counterrevolution Against Bailouts, Handouts, Reckless Spending, and More Taxes* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2010), 237.

the intent of taking more “direct action – like that undertaken by antiwar protestors in the ‘60s.”²⁵⁶ In *Give Us Liberty: A Tea Party Manifesto*, which bears a dedication to Samuel Adams, former House Majority Leader Dick Armey goes so far as to argue that Adams was among the “community organizers” who “carefully choreographed” the Boston Tea Party as America’s original act of “grassroots activism.”²⁵⁷ As Armey noted in the *Financial Times*:

What’s sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander. What I think of Alinsky is that he was very good at what he did but what he did was not good. We don’t organize people to turn up at these town-hall meetings – we don’t provide buses to get there. But we tell them about meetings and we suggest good questions they could ask.²⁵⁸

Armey acknowledges in full that conservative populism owes a debt to the community organizer. Even as conservatives took issue with Alinsky’s political worldview, they could not help but adopt his style of political theater. For conservatives, Alinsky’s message was one that could not be heard in the moment it was uttered. It is instead “so transmuted it’s taken for granted – absorbed into the ground of the ordinary – before being perceived as such, buried as part of its reception.”²⁵⁹

As conservative personality William F. Buckley pontificated in 1967, Alinsky appealed to conservatives and liberals alike. This strange alliance was owed, in Buckley’s thinking, to both political parties’ mutual recognition of the “problem of the poor.”²⁶⁰ Although partisans strongly disagreed on the best means of solving this problem, Alinsky struck a common chord by arguing that the poor could change their own economic destiny when properly organized:

²⁵⁶ Michael Sokolove, “The Outside’s Insider” *New York Times*, November 8, 2009. <http://www.lexisnexis.com>

²⁵⁷ Dick Armey and Matt Kibbe, *Give Us Liberty: A Tea Party Manifesto* (New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, 2014), 32.

²⁵⁸ Edward Luce and Alexandra Ulmer, “Obama foes turn to 60’s radical for tactical tips,” *Financial Times*, August 17, 2009, accessed April 28, 2015. <http://www.ft.com>

²⁵⁹ Anne-Lise François, *Open Secrets*, 10.

²⁶⁰ “William F. Buckley Jr. & Saul Alinsky – Mobilizing the Poor,” 1967 Internet Video, March 8, 2013, accessed April 28, 2015. <https://www.youtube.com/>

You appeal to some of them because you have this design for welfare-ism as suggested by that ultimatum of yours, that you would rather steal than receive welfare. Now this appeals to a lot of people who are sort of conservative minded, who are against welfare because they do believe that there is going on in this country a sort of an institutionalization of welfare, that we ought to get out of it, and that to be essentially human, you've got to make your own way. ... On the other you appeal to liberals and radicals, because yours is a highly non-rhetorical approach.²⁶¹

Buckley's comments illustrate that both were less concerned with empty political discourse than with the concrete means by which individuals could elevate themselves from their squalor. What Buckley could not have predicted, however, was the appeal that Alinsky was to gain four decades later as a warrant for divorcing political strategy from party principles. Reflecting on the 2008 election, Senator Paul Ryan (R-MN), for instance, claimed that the Left had "used our rhetoric ... the rhetoric of freedom and choice and opportunity to sell an inherently statist agenda; to sell an agenda that was completely the opposite of its rhetoric."²⁶² If Alinsky could be enjoyed in many ways by conservatives, this was one. Adopting the attitude that "what's sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander," politicians on the Right repurposed Alinsky's *Rules* for conservative political ends.

The Return of Conservative Gridlock

After George W. Bush vacated the White House in 2008, President Barack Obama announced bold plans to change the antagonistic political culture of Washington D.C.²⁶³

Following Obama's election by a strong majority and a Democrat-led Congress in 2008, it was

²⁶¹ William F. Buckley Jr., "Mobilizing the Poor."

²⁶² Paul Ryan, *Young Guns: A New Generation of Conservative Leaders* (New York, NY: Threshold Editions, 2010), 7-8.

²⁶³ Jeff Zeleny, "Initial Steps by Obama Suggest a Bipartisan Flair," *New York Times*, November 23, 2008, accessed April 28, 2015. <http://www.nyt.com>.

predicted that Obama would easily pass his promised reforms.²⁶⁴ Yet with many conservative “Blue Dog” democrats in both the House and Senate, gridlock prevailed.²⁶⁵ In 2010, the prospects of bipartisan cooperation worsened when the Republican Party gained a House majority by winning 63 elections, marking the largest Congressional turn-over since 1948. That year also saw the release of Republicans’ “The Pledge to America,” which drew “fellow citizens and patriots” to the voting booth by promising to “realign our country’s compass with its founding principles” by making “government more transparent in its actions, careful in its stewardship, and honorable in its dealings.”²⁶⁶ To distance themselves from the present administration, many on the Right labeled Obama an “Alinskyean” to indicate the president’s lack of authentic American values.²⁶⁷ Whereas the president’s hero was a mid-sixties “socialist” radical, the Right prized the fathers of the American Revolution, whose vision of democracy was one of limited government and unfettered individual freedom. It was soon clear that Obama’s goal of bringing a culture of cooperation to Washington was not to materialize. As Peter Baker of the *New York Times* suggested in late 2010, “this is what bipartisanship looks like in the new

²⁶⁴ According to the *Washington Post*, “The paradox is that sharp shifts in partisan identification often presage periods of bipartisanship. If Obama were to win because of the country’s Democratic tilt, moderate Republicans in Congress could move toward him to protect themselves against a Democratic tide. ... Even in the fractious Congress, such defections have already created bipartisan majorities for Democratic measures. In yesterday’s House vote to extend unemployment benefits by 13 weeks, 49 Republicans broke with President Bush to support the measure and give it a veto-proof majority” E.J. Dionne Jr, “Democratic Tide on the Rise,” *Washington Post*, June 13, 2008, accessed April 29, 2015, <http://www.wapo.com>. See also Alan Ehrenhalt, “Will Obama’s Congress Be Too Friendly?” *New York Times*, November 10, 2008, accessed April 29, 2015. <http://www.nyt.com>;

²⁶⁵ Robert Pear and David M. Herszenhorn, “Democrats’ Divide Fuels Turmoil on Health Care,” *New York Times*, July 25, 2009, accessed April 29, 2015. <http://www.nyt.com>; Gail Collins, “August is the Cruellest Month,” *New York Times*, August 8, 2009, accessed April 29, 2015; Frank Rich, “Is Obama Punking Us?” *New York Times*, August 9, 2009, accessed April 29, 2015 <http://www.nyt.com>; David Brooks, “Liberal Suicide March,” *New York Times*, July 21, 2009, accessed April 29, 2015 <http://www.nyt.com>.

²⁶⁶ John Boehner, “Pledge to America Preamble,” Internet Video, September 22, 2010, accessed April 29, 2015, <http://www.youtube.com>.

²⁶⁷ “Obama’s Marxist Axis of Friends,” *Investor’s Business Daily*, May 6, 2008, accessed April 29, 2015 <http://news.investors.com/>; Serge Kovaleski, “Obama’s Organizing Years, Guiding Others and Finding Himself,” *New York Times*, July 7, 2008, accessed April 29, 2015 <http://www.nyt.com>; “Barack Obama’s Stealth Socialism,” *Investor’s Business Daily*, July 29, 2015, accessed April 29, 2015 <http://news.investors.com/>; Noam Cohen, “Know Thine Enemy,” *New York Times*, August 23, 2009, accessed April 29, 2015 <http://www.nyt.com>; Scott Shane, “Conservatives Draw Blood From Acorn, Favored Foe,” *New York Times*, September 16, 2009, accessed April 29, 2015, <http://www.nyt.com>.

era: messy, combustible, and painful, brought on under the threat of even more unpalatable consequences and yet still deferring the ultimate resolution for another day.”²⁶⁸

In 2011, Congress broke with tradition at the State of the Union Address by instituting a new policy: seats would be first-come, first-serve. Showing bipartisan solidarity against gun violence in the wake of the recent Gabriel Giffords shooting, Congress would show solidarity by, for the first time ever, allowing the Right to migrate Left, and vice-versa.²⁶⁹ Obama’s speech that year cited bipartisanship twice, encouraging members of Congress to reach across the aisle to pass needed legislation.²⁷⁰ Every year since, Obama cites “bipartisanship” with increasing frequency as opportunities for job creation,²⁷¹ as well as tax,²⁷² health care,²⁷³ climate change,²⁷⁴

²⁶⁸ Peter Baker, “In Deal with GOP, a Portent for the Next 2 Years,” December 7, 2010, accessed April 29, 2015, <http://www.nyt.com>.

²⁶⁹ Frank James, “Bipartisan State of Union Seating Urged By Sen. Mark Udall,” *npr.org* January 13, 2011, <http://www.npr.org/>.

²⁷⁰ “Now, most of the cuts and savings I’ve proposed only address annual domestic spending, which represents a little more than 12 percent of our budget. To make further progress, we have to stop pretending that cutting this kind of spending alone will be enough. It won’t. (Applause.) The *bipartisan* fiscal commission I created last year made this crystal clear. ... This means further reducing health care costs, including programs like Medicare and Medicaid, which are the single biggest contributor to our long-term deficit. The health insurance law we passed last year will slow these rising costs, which is part of the reason that nonpartisan economists have said that repealing the health care law would add a quarter of a trillion dollars to our deficit. Still, I’m willing to look at other ideas to bring down costs, including one that Republicans suggested last year -- medical malpractice reform to rein in frivolous lawsuits. (Applause.) To put us on solid ground, we should also find a *bipartisan* solution to strengthen Social Security for future generations. (Applause.) We must do it without putting at risk current retirees, the most vulnerable, or people with disabilities; without slashing benefits for future generations; and without subjecting Americans’ guaranteed retirement income to the whims of the stock market. (Applause.)

Barack H. Obama, State of the Union Address, January 25, 2011, The White House, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/>.

²⁷¹ “We also have the chance, right now, to beat other countries in the race for the next wave of high-tech manufacturing jobs. ... *Bipartisan* bills in both houses could double the number of these hubs and the jobs they create. So get those bills to my desk and put more Americans back to work. ... And when ninety-eight percent of our exporters are small businesses, new trade partnerships with Europe and the Asia-Pacific will help them create more jobs. We need to work together on tools like *bipartisan* trade promotion authority to protect our workers, protect our environment, and open new markets to new goods stamped ‘Made in the USA.’ China and Europe aren’t standing on the sidelines. Neither should we.”

Barack H. Obama, State of the Union Address, January 28, 2014, The White House, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/>; “Twenty-first century businesses need 21st century infrastructure -- modern ports, and stronger bridges, faster trains and the fastest Internet. Democrats and Republicans used to agree on this. So let’s set our sights higher than a single oil pipeline. Let’s pass a *bipartisan* infrastructure plan that could create more than 30 times as many jobs per year, and make this country stronger for decades to come. (Applause.) Let’s do it. Let’s get it done. Let’s get it done.” Barack H. Obama, State of the Union Address, January 20, 2015, The White House, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/>.

and cybersecurity reform.²⁷⁵ It is cited twice as evidence of a successful legislative consensus.²⁷⁶ And yet, many of the major platforms that Obama advanced in 2008 never made it past the floor. In 2011 and 2013, Congress narrowly avoided two government shutdowns prolonged by partisan bickering.

Making good on the Pledge’s pledge to show unity, Congressional conservatives proceeded to establish a firm policy gridlock in Washington. According to the Pew Foundation, lasting from 2011 until 2014, the 112th and 113th Sessions of Congress marked the two least productive in American history.²⁷⁷ Not only did congressmen and women pass fewer measures into law than any before them; they also very nearly evaded two separate government shutdowns – both over proper measures to raise the budget deficit ceiling. Michael Steel, spokesperson for House Speaker John Boehner, noted that “the only folks talking about a government shutdown

²⁷² “Now is our best chance for *bipartisan*, comprehensive tax reform that encourages job creation and helps bring down the deficit. (Applause.) We can get this done.” Barack H. Obama, State of the Union Address, February 12, 2013, The White House, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/>.

²⁷³ “On Medicare, I’m prepared to enact reforms that will achieve the same amount of health care savings by the beginning of the next decade as the reforms proposed by the bipartisan Simpson-Bowles commission.” Barack H. Obama, State of the Union Address, February 12, 2013, The White House, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/>.

²⁷⁴ “Now, the good news is we can make meaningful progress on this issue while driving strong economic growth. I urge this Congress to get together, pursue a *bipartisan*, market-based solution to climate change, like the one John McCain and Joe Lieberman worked on together a few years ago. But if Congress won’t act soon to protect future generations, I will.” Barack H. Obama, State of the Union Address, February 12, 2013, The White House, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/>.

²⁷⁵ “And tonight, I urge this Congress to finally pass the legislation we need to better meet the evolving threat of cyberattacks, combat identity theft, and protect our children’s information. That should be a *bipartisan* effort. (Applause.) If we don’t act, we’ll leave our nation and our economy vulnerable. If we do, we can continue to protect the technologies that have unleashed untold opportunities for people around the globe.” Barack H. Obama, State of the Union Address, January 20, 2015, The White House, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/>.

²⁷⁶ “Let’s limit any elected official from owning stocks in industries they impact. Let’s make sure people who bundle campaign contributions for Congress can’t lobby Congress, and vice versa -- an idea that has *bipartisan* support, at least outside of Washington.” Barack H. Obama, State of the Union Address, January 24, 2012, The White House, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/>; “Citizenship means standing up for everyone’s right to vote. Last year, part of the Voting Rights Act was weakened. But conservative Republicans and liberal Democrats are working together to strengthen it; and the *bipartisan* commission I appointed last year has offered reforms so that no one has to wait more than a half hour to vote. Let’s support these efforts. It should be the power of our vote, not the size of our bank account, that drives our democracy.” Barack H. Obama, State of the Union Address, January 28, 2014, The White House, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/>.

²⁷⁷ Drew Desilver, “Congress ends least-productive in recent history,” Pew Research Center, December 23, 2013, accessed April 29, 2015, <http://www.pewresearch.org/>.

are Washington Democrats intent on defending an indefensible status quo.”²⁷⁸ By 2014, however, it was clear that inaction and stagnation *were* status quo for the Obama presidency. According to Ben McGrath of the *New Yorker*, the Tea Party candidates who most opposed Obama invoked a 1960s radicalism that had arrived decades late to the Greatest Generation:

One historical comparison that some Tea Party champions have made is to the civil-rights movement, and, to the extent that the analogy holds, it may reflect the fact that the Tea Party seems to derive much of its energy from the members of that generation who did not participate in the cultural revolution of the sixties, and are only belatedly coming to terms with social and demographic trends set into motion set into motion fifty years ago.²⁷⁹

A key aspect of this revival of Alinskyean radicalism was a renewed disdain for the President’s “rhetoric.” It is no secret that Alinsky was fond of disparaging rhetoric on paper and in person. Speaking to Pulitzer Prize winner Studs Terkel, for instance, Alinsky makes the following connection to the rhetorical tradition:

I always used to say that if any smart organizer had come up before the Oracle of Delphi and the Oracle always sounded off with her usual, proverbial business “know thyself,” you know, well my organizer would look at her and say ‘Okay Oracle, now how the hell do I go about doing it? Don’t tell me what I have to get, tell me how I can get it. Because unless I know the how, the what is just rhetoric!’²⁸⁰

²⁷⁸ Ben Pershing, “Even if government shuts down, most of Congress won’t,” *Washington Post*, March 8, 2011, accessed April 29, 2015, <http://www.wapo.com>

²⁷⁹ Ben McGrath, “The Movement: The Rise of Tea Party Activism,” *New Yorker*, February 1, 2010, accessed April 29, 2015, <http://www.newyorker.com/>.

²⁸⁰ Saul Alinsky, “Studs Terkel Interviews Saul Alinsky,” Internet Video, Originally Aired 1958, January 31, 2012, accessed April 29, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/>.

Throughout *Rules*, Alinsky regularly compares rhetoric to empty words and unbacked promises. A similar understanding of rhetoric is at work in David Freddoso's the 2008 *The Case Against Barack Obama*, which warns that "hidden in Obama's shapeless rhetoric of 'Change' and 'Hope' is a dangerous agenda that will take on real substance if he is given power."²⁸¹ Hope and Change were without substance, or to put it in Alinsky's terms, disingenuous ideals. As Sarah Palin asked Obama's supporters in 2010, "How's that hopey-changey stuff working out for ya?"²⁸² Conservatives' Alinskyean resistance came to symbolize the natural failure of Obama's ideals.

Better Call Saul, or the Open Secret of American Politics

On January 8th, 2011, Arizona resident Jared Loughner opened fire on a public gathering in Tuscon for newly elected congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords, injuring twelve attendees and killing six others.²⁸³ Hours after the event transpired, mainstream media outlets identified uncivil Tea Party rhetoric as the chief culprit. Latching on to a 2010 campaign poster, bloggers and pundits accused Tea Party spokesperson Sarah Palin of instigating Loughner's violent act.²⁸⁴ At issue was the fact that the poster's "surveyor's markings" strongly resembled crosshairs – one of which explicitly made Giffords a political 'target' of the upcoming congressional elections. Conservatives quickly replied, suggesting that liberals were only too happy to have found another opportunity to condemn Palin.²⁸⁵ At the memorial service for the victims, Barack Obama

²⁸¹ David Freddoso, *The Case against Barack Obama: The Unlikely Rise and Unexamined Agenda of the Media's Favorite Candidate*. (Washington D.C.: Regency Publishing, 2008), xiv.

²⁸² Sarah Palin, "Sarah Palin: How's that Hopey-Changey Stuff Working Out For Ya?," February 22, 2010, <https://www.youtube.com/>.

²⁸³ Marc Lacy and David M. Herszenhorn, "In Attack's Wake, Political Repercussions," *The New York Times*, January 8, 2011, <http://www.nyt.com>; Jack Gillum, "Timeline shows Loughner's actions hours before arrest," *USAToday*, January 16, 2011, <http://usatoday.com> ;

²⁸⁴ Carl Hulse and Kate Zernike, "Bloodshed Puts New Focus on Vitriol in Politics," *The New York Times*, January 8, 2011, <http://www.nyt.com>.

²⁸⁵ Heidi Przybyla, "Giffords Shooting in Arizona May Soften U.S. Political Rhetoric," *Bloomberg*, January 10, 2011, <http://www.bloomberg.com/>.

expressed hope that the act of violence would encourage citizens to temper their discourse with a healthy dose of civility.²⁸⁶

However, as I have argued in this chapter, a certain discursive violence – what Chantal Mouffe calls antagonism and Alinsky, conflict – cannot be excised from political discourse. This conflict, moreover, is visible as irony, which is a rhetorical effect of the *open secret*. Alinsky is a symptom of this open secret. He gives a name to the violence performed in disavowal, which is figured as the *irony* of political discourse. It is, of course, ironic that conservatives' political strategy was so deeply informed by Alinsky, who they critiqued. But more ironic yet is the way Alinsky surfaced as the signifier of this strategy and its disavowal.

By and large, rhetorical critics responded to the Giffords shooting by suggesting that political discourse had become deeply dysfunctional.²⁸⁷ David Frank criticized Obama for failing to “asses blame” by calling for impotent “contemplation and dialogue.”²⁸⁸ Clark Roundtree suggested that Palin's ‘crosshairs’ were only one example of the way that American political discourse had become “venomous,” reaching an unprecedented intensity. In 2013, *The Quarterly Journal of Speech* dedicated a forum to “the violence of rhetoric,” seeking to discipline rhetoric's violence in the service of a democratic ideal:

To study the violence of rhetoric is to work at the boundary between objective and subjective violence. It is also to engage a stasis at the heart of democratic politics. Indeed,

²⁸⁶ Barack H. Obama, “Obama's Tucson Speech Transcript: Full Text,” *Washington Post*, January 13, 2011, <http://www.wapo.com>.

²⁸⁷ See also, Thomas Goodnight, “Gabrielle Giffords: A Study in Courage,” *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 17 (2014): 679-710. Jeremy Engels, “The Rhetoric of Violence: Sarah Palin's Response to the Tucson Shooting,” *symplōke* 20 (2012), 121-138.

²⁸⁸ David A. Frank, “Facing Moloch: Barack Obama's National Eulogies and Gun Violence,” *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 17 (2014): 653.

at its best democracy is a government of words, and thus we cannot properly theorize democracy without having first grappled with the violence of our talk.²⁸⁹

To describe political violence in terms of the open secret, however, would mean abandoning purgative goals with respect to democracy, as a purification or exorcism of political violence.

Although diagnosing American rhetoric's aggressive tendencies would ideally constitute a kind of civic therapy, too often, identifying discursive violence becomes an end in itself. The insight that psychoanalysis offers is that violence, even if inextinguishable, attaches itself to the signifier.²⁹⁰ As Alinsky teaches, the first step in grappling with political conflict is to give a name to the open secret so as to reveal that there is no singular experience of democracy, only a management of its tensions.

²⁸⁹ Jeremy Engels, "Forum: The Violence of Rhetoric," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 99 (2013): 180.

²⁹⁰ As Elizabeth Roudinesco writes, "Psychoanalysis testifies to an advance of civilization over barbarism. It restores the idea that human speech is free and that human destiny is not confined to biological being. Thus in the future it should occupy its full place, next to the other sciences, to contest the obscurantist claims seeking to reduce thought to a neuron or to equate desire with a chemical secretion." (2001, xi)

CHAPTER 4

CHELSEA MANNING'S TURING TEST: THE DIRTY SECRET AND THE
PORNOGRAPHY OF NUMBER

Exhibiting, denuding, undressing, unveiling: the familiar acrobatics of the metaphor of the truth. And one just as well could say the metaphor of metaphor, the truth of truth, the truth of metaphor. When Freud intends to denude the original *Stoff* beneath the disguises of secondary fabrication, he is anticipating the truth of the text. The latter, from its original contention, would be coordinated with its naked truth, but also with truth as nakedness.

-- Jacques Derrida "The Purveyor of Truth," 175

Since the emergence of WikiLeaks in 2006, Julian Assange's program of popular activism has made him an appealing target for rhetorical and cultural critics. His early manifesto, "State and Terrorist Conspiracies," argued that democratic states are ultimately façades for authoritarian regimes that promote the niche interests of political elites.²⁹¹ Assange also suggests that 'the people' could break through governing institutions' shroud of secrecy if they could just expose the concealed networks of influence that keep ruling elites in power. Eva Horn summarizes his second manifesto, "Conspiracy as Governance," as follows:

²⁹¹ As Assange writes, "Authoritarian regimes give rise to forces which oppose them by pushing against the individual and collective will to freedom, truth, and self-realization. Plans which assist authoritarian rule, once discovered, induce resistance. Hence these plans are concealed by successful authoritarian powers. This is enough to define their behavior as conspiratorial." (2006, 2)

[Assange's] suggestion for undermining and destroying these conspiratorial structures is to disrupt the secret networks of 'authoritarian governments' by destroying or disturbing their modes of communication. Which is exactly what leaking does: it disrupts communication channels by intercepting secret information and leaking it to a global audience. Leaking is a way of disrupting what is believed to be a ubiquitous and immense body of (criminal) secrecy present in virtually all governments today. This attitude reduces the intrinsic ambivalence of secrecy to one lurid picture of crime, corruption and repression.²⁹²

From 2006 until 2010, WikiLeaks solicited a popular base of anonymous civilian whistleblowers to publicly expose governmental misdeeds. According to Assange, anonymous "citizen-journalists" would shift popular consciousness out of "the mire of politically distorted language and into a position of clarity."²⁹³ Given the faculty of exposing the conspiratorial relationships of state rule, WikiLeaks would mobilize "the people" against oppressive government institutions.

And yet, these goals never materialized in the way Assange anticipated. The media firestorm WikiLeaks attracted in the wake of its major disclosures drew critics from the Right and Left alike. The massive "Afghan" and "Iraq War Logs" of 2010, for instance, prompted many in Congress to take a hard stance against Assange and his organization.²⁹⁴ WikiLeaks even drew criticism from pop-philosopher Slavoj Žižek, who admitted that the organization's disclosures had done little more than reinforce a ruling liberal-democratic ideology. WikiLeaks did not combat the State – it was complicit with it. Not only did the State's allowance "of what

²⁹² Eva Horn, "Logics of Political Secrecy," *Theory, Culture, Society* 28 (2011): 119.

²⁹³ me@iq.org, *State and Terrorist Conspiracies*, (2006), 4. <http://cryptome.org/0002/ja-conspiracies.pdf>

²⁹⁴ Lawrence Quill elaborates, "WikiLeaks represented a threat to 'national security,' upsetting the 'balance between security and liberty.' Some prominent officials in the United States claimed that Julian Assange, the mercurial personality in charge of the organization, should be charged under the 1917 Espionage Act (Diane Feinstein), that he ran a terrorist organization (Newt Gingrich), should be 'hunted down' in a manner similar to Al Qaeda (Sarah Palin), or executed (Mike Huckabee). (2014, 124)

appears to be powerful criticism” demonstrate the State’s *strength*; it did so because WikiLeaks published State secrets that were already out in the open:

The only surprising thing about the WikiLeaks revelations is that they contain no surprises. Didn’t we learn exactly what we expected to learn? The real disturbance was at the level of appearances: we can no longer pretend we don’t know what everyone knows we know. This is the paradox of public space: even if everyone knows an unpleasant fact, saying it in public changes everything.²⁹⁵

And yet, although “we” found with WikiLeaks what “we” always expected to find, WikiLeaks also rescued the power of hegemonic institutions by demonstrating how their acts of violence continued even after blatantly exposed.²⁹⁶ As the *Guardian* reported in 2011, after WikiLeaks “everything has changed and nothing has changed.”²⁹⁷ To confront this ‘nothing’ means understanding why even when the global public knows its own darkest secrets, it still cannot bring itself to act differently. As I account for it here, *disclosure* is a kind of pornography – the making graphic of unassimilable difference – which describes the way that the *dirty secret* enjoys, prolongs, and defers the public’s not-knowing.²⁹⁸

In this chapter, I conceive of the dirty secret as what Parveen Adams calls “the emptying of the object,”²⁹⁹ or an exhaustion of the field of representation.³⁰⁰ To say that the dirty secret

²⁹⁵ Slavoj Žižek, “WikiLeaks, or, When it is our duty to disturb appearances,” *GLOBAL POLICY FORUM YAROSLAVL*, December 9, 2010. <http://www.regnum.ru/english/1362839.html>.

²⁹⁶ As Žižek also noted “The ultimate triumph of the ruling ideology is that it can afford what appears as its ruthless self-critique. (2010)

²⁹⁷ John Kampfner, “WikiLeaks turned the tables on governments, but the power relationship has not changed,” *The Guardian*, January 17, 2011, accessed April 28, 2015 <http://www.theguardian.com/media/2011/jan/17/wikileaks-governments-journalism>

²⁹⁸ This essay, admittedly, capitalizes on an esoteric understanding of ‘pornography’. I define it here as the ‘making graphic of unassimilable sexual difference’. The prefix “porno” is the inheritance of the ancient Greek “πόρνο,” carrying connotations of prostitution, exportation, and slavery. (OED 2015) The suffix *graphie*, as Jacques Derrida explains, describes as “the medium,” “irreducible atom,” or “unassimilable unit of discourse;” it is the site of inscription from which meaning emerges – and which meaning also effaces. (1997, 9)

²⁹⁹ Parveen Adams, *The Emptiness of the Image* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1996), 156.

exhausts the field of representation does not signal that it is *meaningless*, however. Rather, the dirty secret means *everything, too much*, and thereby opens an “unfillable gap.” Pornography therefore describes the opening of this gap as a failure of representation. The WikiLeaks disclosures demonstrate one such instance of pornography because public not-knowing was enjoyed as *excess*, or as a quantity the significance of which could not be comprehended. In turn, the public made sense of the disclosures by diverting attention to a different non-sense, that of Chelsea (formerly Bradley) Manning’s dysfunctional sex. Manning’s ‘dirty secret,’ in other words, was the cleanest one of all: number.³⁰¹

In this chapter, I describe this numerical excess as the *pornographic effect* of the *dirty secret*. Contra arguments that WikiLeaks was a moment of reckoning for the global public, I focus attention on the exposure of the leaker Chelsea (formerly Bradley) Manning, and the continuity of this event with commemorations of Alan Matheson Turing. Bradley – now Chelsea – Manning, is the serviceman who supplied the WikiLeaks organization with the biggest leak of covert military data since the 1971 Pentagon Papers. Turing and Manning are separated by over seventy years of national security policy, technological advancement, and social change. Together, Manning and Turing show how the drive for truth is always satisfied without the truth ever being revealed. Like Turing before him, Manning’s non-normative sex functions as a potential and actual threat to information insecurity. Although Manning’s speech was severely

³⁰⁰ Adams articulates a similar position when describing Orlan’s *Omnipresence*, in which the artist undergoes facial plastic surgery while still conscious, reading to her viewers. This is what she calls “the emptying out of the place of the object ... which means that the structure of representation has collapsed.” (1996, 156) The ‘emptying of the object,’ in other words, is the exhaustion of representation, the realization that comes with knowing that Orlan’s face *does not represent anything at all*: “The emptying out of the object produces that lack that was described earlier as not manifestly belonging to either the inside or the outside. What is shown is a face as an appearance without essence, an appearance which borrows from famous models. An unfillable gap opens at the moment the face is lifted.” (158)

³⁰¹ I owe Barbara Biesecker dearly for helping me to coin this term. The Dirty Secret came out of a conversation we shared in April 2015.

restricted during the time leading up to his trial, a recurring focal point of public discourse is his identification first as a gay man, and then as trans-gender.

In the following sections, I first summarize WikiLeaks's ambivalent reception by academics and how number was a symptom of the problems WikiLeaks faced. I then offer a theoretical description of the *dirty secret* and its pornographic effects. Finally, I offer a reading of the dirty secret through Alan Turing's 1951 "Test for Machine Intelligence" and Chelsea Manning's public exposure in 2011.

The WikiLeaks Effect

Scholarly critics have been strongly divided on the significance of the WikiLeaks disclosures. After reviewing how the WikiLeaks was ambivalently received by a number of critics and commentators, I provide a detailed explanation of two opposing, though related, academic criticisms of the organization's disclosures. These criticisms come from Russ Castronovo and Dana Cloud, both of whom account for WikiLeaks's disclosures as a double-edged strategy for challenging power. Both accounts recuperate two different theoretical projects and serve distinct theoretical agendas. They come to opposite conclusions, but as I argue, they disagree only insofar as they negotiate a similar tension.

In his "Case Against WikiLeaks," Lee Lacy informs us that Assange's program for radical transparency was "misguided" and exhibited "anarchist qualities ... bent on destroying or crippling governments like the U.S. and its institutions, namely the Intelligence Community."³⁰² According to Lacy, not only did WikiLeaks fail to establish that "a clear and present danger" warranted its disclosures; it generated threats of violence and panic by placing military and

³⁰² Lee O. Lacy, "The Case Against WikiLeaks: The Pentagon Papers Reconsidered" *American Intelligence Journal* 30 (2011): 129.

diplomatic personnel in harm's way.³⁰³ Rahul Sagar summarizes several challenges to anti-WikiLeaks case.³⁰⁴ First, legal precedent suggests that not *every* unauthorized release of classified information poses a threat to national security.³⁰⁵ In fact, clandestine disclosures may be a corrective to the "rampant overclassification" of information by "officials and bureaucrats who ... use it to hide embarrassing information."³⁰⁶ A second argument for the release of classified data regards *when* information that threatens national security should legitimately be brought to the public's attention.³⁰⁷

The issue is not *whether* unauthorized disclosures threaten national security; rather it is about *when* such disclosures should be condoned *in spite* of the threat they pose to national security. ... As such a conservative stance threatens to leave citizens entirely in the dark on matters of deep moral and political significance (e.g. the use of torture in counter-terrorism operations), unauthorized disclosures should be condoned, the argument goes, when the public's interest in the information revealed by such disclosures threatens national security.³⁰⁸

Torn between state-centric indictments of "citizen-journalism" and renewed optimism for public disclosure and accountability, critics and commentators nonetheless share one common conviction: WikiLeaks's disclosures were acts of communicative sabotage.³⁰⁹ The question now

³⁰³ Lee O. Lacy, "The Case Against WikiLeaks," 130.

³⁰⁴ Rahul Sagar, *Secrets and Leaks* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013), 109-110.

³⁰⁵ Sagar refers specifically to Kitrosser, "Classified Information leaks," 896; Cheh, "Judicial Supervision of Executive Secrecy," 731; Ballou and McSlarrow, "Plugging the Leak," 885.

³⁰⁶ Rahul Sagar, *Secrets and Leaks*, 110-1.

³⁰⁷ Sagar refers specifically to Stone, "Free Speech and National Security," 961; Coliver, "Commentary on the Johannesburg Principles," 63-8.

³⁰⁸ Rahul Sagar, *Secrets and Leaks*, 111.

³⁰⁹ I would like to note here that I have chosen to call WikiLeaks an act of *sabotage* quite purposefully. As an alternative, I could also have addressed the way critics described WikiLeaks as a Debordian "*detournement*," which directly and dialectically conflicts with capitalism. By contrast to sabotage, which grinds the system to a halt, *detournement* reabsorbs resistant practices and utilizes the momentum of capitalism's symbolic structures. This is, after all, consonant with the way that Žižek describes WikiLeaks complicity with and resistance to liberal-

was whether this sabotage could be justified. As Lawrence Quill writes, although WikiLeaks “pushed the boundaries of what was acceptable misbehaviour for a non-government actor,” it did so “with a view to empowering individual citizens.”³¹⁰ Advocates of WikiLeaks believed the organization heralded a new way of thinking about liberal-democratic participation;³¹¹ its critics took aim at the violence it created and how it amplified the non-democratic exercise of power.³¹² The effect of WikiLeaks’s communicative sabotage was a certain discursive tension, contradiction, or paradox. While on the one hand, some critics attempted to refigure the relationship between the citizen and the state from one of passive observation to active citizen-journalism, on the other hand, critics also suggested that a stronger state apparatus for maintaining informational security was necessary to ensure that leaks did not cause harm to American citizens.

One attempt to account for the self-defeating character of the WikiLeaks disclosures comes from Russ Castronovo, who takes issue with the organization for “recuperat[ing a] heroic and celebrity version of subjectivity.” In its place, he advances the theory that liberal subjects are “most revolutionary when they cease to be identified or act as subjects at all.”³¹³ Touting the propagandists of the American Revolution as exemplars of this kind of strategic self-effacement,

democratic ideology. I have chosen “sabotage” instead because critics who would draw attention to WikiLeaks’s reabsorptive practices typically tender optimism for the disruptions that WikiLeaks inaugurated.

³¹⁰ Lawrence Quill, *Secrets and Democracy: From Arcana Imperii to WikiLeaks*, (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 125.

³¹¹ Claire Birchall is a prime representative of this theoretical optimism, arguing that “the liberal democratic notion of transparency it at once seeks to enact, but it also suggests a more nuanced notion of being-in common than other calls to political action presume.” (2011, 73) Moreover, WikiLeaks is also “an embodiment of a post-communion community. It allows people to connect without compromising their singularity.” (76) Although her formulation of secrecy as an ideal liberal-democratic commons beyond actually-existing democracy is appealing, I resist the temptation to reduce secrecy to an ideal, preferring instead to understand it in terms of its non-totalizeable discrete practices.

³¹² Representatives of this position cited in this essay might also include Rahul Sahar, Lee Lacy, and Michael Colaresi. As Colaresi notes, “Organizations like WikiLeaks, which attempted to publicize previously secret information and mass leaks from Edward Snowden, do not alter the secrecy dilemma; they reveal it.” (2014, 4) Consistent across these accounts is the neutral or negative effect that WikiLeaks is asserted to have had upon national security discourse.

³¹³ Russ Castronovo, “State Secrets: Ben Franklin and WikiLeaks,” *Critical Inquiry* 39 (2013): 426-7.

Castronovo indicts Julian Assange for making himself a featured character of the controversy. By putting himself in the spotlight, Assange “consolidated an image of politics as simultaneously expanded and limited to the power of the individual.”³¹⁴ WikiLeaks’s network of anonymous routers, servers, and hacktivists asserted their decentered agency only to have it re-centered by Assange, who took center stage.³¹⁵ Moreover, if Assange was the “villain” of the WikiLeaks affair, Chelsea Manning was its “victim,” showered by the media in “relentless ... background profiles” and “therapeutic narrative.”³¹⁶ According to Castronovo, placing these characters on display robbed them of their anonymity, and hence, their capacity to act. This fall from anonymity marks a renewed fetishism of “the liberal subject of American democracy.”³¹⁷ Even though the demand for disclosure is often touted as a potent, democratizing weapon for the organizations and institutions who wield it, Castronovo reminds us that WikiLeaks’s utopian fantasy of complete disclosure re-centers the neoliberal subject (in this case, Assange).

Dana Cloud also takes issue with the self-contradicting effects of the disclosures by placing her focus on the *kinds* of knowledge that Chelsea Manning disclosed. Offering her critique as a renewal of the disruptive and democratic strategies of disclosure, Cloud maintains that Manning “disclosed two sets of knowledge, one about the nation-state as a repressive apparatus and another about the complexity of gender identity and expression.”³¹⁸ The first of these corresponds with a *juridical* knowledge that classifies Manning as a *whistleblower* who

³¹⁴ Russ Castronovo, “State Secrets,” 432.

³¹⁵ Disclosing Assange/Manning’s identity effectively negated the possibility for the exercise of agency: “The network produces WikiLeaks as a recognizable digital actor with Assange as its ultimate embodiment. In an ironic twist, this entity alarms commentators who are usually the first to defend individual agency as a cornerstone of neoliberal freedom. Thomas Friedman worries that WikiLeaksers are “super-empowered individuals” whose emergence the US should monitor as closely as it keeps tabs on superpowers like China. In other words, it is fine to promote individuality unless those who embody it agitate for causes that the US opposes. Media exposés focusing on a single networked agent dominate to the point that newspapers are mining Assange’s internet dating profile from 2006 for clues because, as the Guardian put it, “it is impossible to write this story”—a story of how networks shred government secrecy to bits—“without telling the story of Julian Assange himself.” (433)

³¹⁶ Russ Castronovo, “State Secrets,” 429.

³¹⁷ Russ Castronovo, “State Secrets,” 428.

³¹⁸ Dana L. Cloud, “Private Manning and the Chamber of Secrets,” *QED* 1 (2014): 82.

disclosed state secrets; the second with a *biopolitical* knowledge that classifies her as a sexed subject – one who discloses her secret identity by “‘coming out’ as gender-queer.”³¹⁹ The clash of these secret knowledges culminates in Manning’s total voiceless-ness, his significance as a leaker nullifying his significance as a transgender man. The effects of Manning’s disclosure were self-defeating because, as Cloud writes, “Attention to each set of secrets as separate matters negated the power of their combined force.”³²⁰

In summary, the key effect of WikiLeaks was that it *failed*, or more specifically, that it produced effects that contradicted its aims. Admittedly, Castronovo and Cloud disagree about the precise reasons why WikiLeaks ‘fails’: the former attributes this outcome to subject-centered acts of disclosure, the latter celebrates disclosure as a means of “exposing the complexity of discipline itself.”³²¹ In both cases, however, disclosure describes the way that a certain liberal-democratic ideology coopted the subject to amplify the reach of its own power. What none of the aforementioned critics account for, however, is how the obsessive enjoyment of the WikiLeaks disclosures contributed to their failure, namely, how *number* has consistently marked WikiLeaks’s inability to accomplish its aims.

The Infomania of Julian Assange

Nowhere is an excessive investment in truth more obvious than in the public accounts of the WikiLeaks disclosures of 2010 and 2011. There, Assange’s discovery of treasure troves of leaked data assumed a strictly numerical form, the excess of information representing something more than the sum of the documents.³²² The argument of this section is that WikiLeaks’s excess

³¹⁹ Dana L. Cloud, “Private Manning and the Chamber of Secrets,” 99.

³²⁰ Dana L. Cloud, “Private Manning and the Chamber of Secrets,” 99.

³²¹ Dana L. Cloud, “Private Manning and the Chamber of Secrets,” 82.

³²² To this we could also add many accounts of Assange’s ego-mania, which certainly informs the title of this section and was of particular public importance after Assange was arraigned on charges of rape in 2011. See in particular the documentary *We Steal Secrets*, the biopic film *The Fourth Estate*, David Domsheite-Berg’s *Inside WikiLeaks*, and David Leigh and Luke Harding’s *WikiLeaks: Inside Julian Assange’s War on Secrecy*.

of information represented the ‘truth’ that it was impossible to represent the truth. Many scholars, for instance, have accounted for WikiLeaks’s self-orchestrated failure through *numerical* representations. Michael Colaresi, for instance, describes the impotence of contemporary leaking efforts by comparing the number of secrets Chelsea Manning disclosed to the number generated by the United States *per annum*. In 2012, he explains, “the United States government made over 95 million classification decisions,” at which pace “it took the government less than two and a half days to generate more secrets than contained in the three quantitatively largest leaks in US history combined.”³²³ The *Boston Globe* places the quantity of secrets created each year by the federal government into dollar amounts.

Steven Aftergood, of the Project on Government Secrecy, tells us that tens of thousands of new secrets are created every day and that the financial cost of secrecy grew by a billion dollars to an “unprecedented” \$7.5 billion in a single year. That, he says, is equivalent to the budget of a cabinet-level government agency: “It’s as if we have a department of government secrecy.” Where does he get that number? Why is it so high? And how do you even quantify such a thing?³²⁴

The problem of government secrecy extends into its own unquantifiability – as the *Globe* asks, where do such numbers come from, and what is its limit? Even the tools to determine the extent of the State’s programs of secrecy are inscrutable. As Colaresi informs us, even the most accurate projection is almost certainly incorrect:

In the United States, the estimated cost of information classification was over \$8.6 billion in 2008 alone and cannot be accurately bounded from above because the expense of

³²³ Michael Colaresi, *Democracy Declassified: The Secrecy Dilemma in National Security* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2014), 4.

³²⁴ Wesley Morris, “Where does necessary secrecy end?” *Boston Globe* September 19, 2008. http://www.boston.com/ae/movies/articles/2008/09/19/where_does_necessary_secrecy_end/

keeping national security secrets within the Central Intelligence Agency, the Defense Intelligence Agency, the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency, the National Reconnaissance Office, and the National Security Agency is classified and not included in that figure. Even the lower bound of \$8.6 billion is 40% higher than government spending on the National Science Foundation and 14% higher than federal spending on the Environmental Protection Agency in the same year.³²⁵

This section addresses the rhetorical force carried by the numbers illustrating how WikiLeaks's true impact is a drop-in-the-bucket by comparison to the State's obsessive classification procedures. In other words, number proved that no matter how much information was disclosed, it could not possibly 'reveal' the whole truth to the public.

Between 2006 and 2008, the WikiLeaks organization made approximately nine major 'releases,' including the publication of Guantanamo Bay 'handbooks,' official documents from the church of Scientology, e-mails from Sarah Palin, and political killings carried out by the Kenyan police. The following year saw as many releases as the previous two combined. In November of 2009, WikiLeaks released an archive of 500,000 pager messages from the morning of 9/11. In 2010, WikiLeaks made its most significant disclosures to date with "The Afghan War Logs," a selected release of 92,000 classified military reports, and "The Iraq War Logs," a collection of 391,832 documents that definitively proved American soldiers had killed a large number of Iraqi civilians. The disclosure was also accompanied by a short documentary entitled "Collateral Murder."³²⁶ The video depicted American soldiers launching an aerial attack in the streets of Baghdad, leaving twelve civilians and three Reuter's journalists dead. In December of

³²⁵ Michael Colaresi, *Democracy, Declassified*, 68.

³²⁶ Noam Cohen and Brian Stelter, "[Airstrike Video Brings Attention to Whistle-Blower Site](#)," *The New York Times*, April 7, 2010.

2010, WikiLeaks released a holiday wish-list of secrets it ‘knew’ existed after the State Department flagged specific information as ‘worthy of classification.’³²⁷ By July of 2012, WikiLeaks had released a quantity of data that dwarfed any previous disclosure. Over seven million documents had been exposed, ranging from leaked corporate intelligence data to confidential e-mails exchanged between prominent members of the Syrian government.

Julian Assange was a key figure in orchestrating this public presentation of excess, as he was also always holding on to more data than WikiLeaks disclosed. As WikiLeaks’s self-appointed leak-archivist, Assange consistently documented the number of information leaks he received to illustrate WikiLeaks’s growing popularity. David Leigh and Luke Harding of the *Guardian* speculate that even as early as 2007 Assange was flush with data because he and his co-conspirators illegally ‘eavesdropped’ on servers used for transferring sensitive government information. They quote one of Assange’s e-mails at length:

Hackers monitor Chinese and other intel as they burrow into their targets, when they pull, so do we. Inexhaustible supply of material. Near 100,000 documents/emails a day. We’re going to crack the world open and let it flower into something new... We have all of pre 2005 afghanistan. Almost all of india fed. Half a dozen foreign ministries. Dozens of political parties and consulates, worldbank, opec, UN sections, tradegroups, Tibet and falun dafa associations and ... Russian phishing mafia who pull data everywhere. We’re drowning. We don’t even know a tenth of what we have or who it belongs to. We stopped storing it at 1Tb.³²⁸

³²⁷ Mark Clayton, “WikiLeaks List of ‘Critical’ Sites: Is it a ‘Menu for Terrorists’?,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, December 10, 2010.

³²⁸ David Leigh and Luke Harding, *WikiLeaks: Inside Julian Assange’s War on Secrecy* (New York, NY: Guardian Books, 2011), 55.

In late 2010, Assange came under pressure from the State Department to hand over all of its leaked military information, his data backlog having become a cyberterrorist threat. After news outlets released the Iraq War Logs that October, rumors emerged that Assange had created an encrypted “insurance file” that had been widely circulated to whistleblowers around the world³²⁹ The doomsday document was subsequently leaked – without Assange’s authorization – to news organizations. The leaker had been leaked upon. It became the “Cablegate” exposé of 2011, consisting of approximately 250,000 US embassy correspondences:

Its sheer bulk was overwhelming. If the tiny memory stick containing the cables had been a set of printed texts, it would have made up a library containing more than 2,000 sizeable books. No human diplomats would have attempted to write so much down before the coming of the digital age: if written down, no human spy would have been able to purloin copies of that much paper without using a lorry, and no human mind would have been able subsequently to analyse it without spending half a lifetime at the task.³³⁰

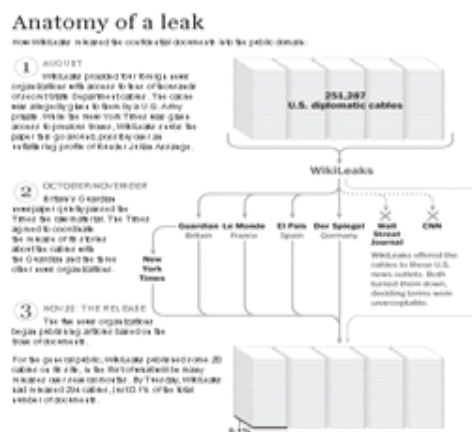


Figure 1: “Anatomy of a Leak”

Leigh and Harding called it “the biggest leak in history,”³³¹ a quantity of information so large that the full exposé spanned eight months. To explain why it had taken so long to publish, the

³²⁹ “[WikiLeaks posts huge encrypted file](#)” The New Zealand Herald, August 1, 2010; James Bone, “[WikiLeaks posts 'insurance' file on web](#),” *The Times*, August 2, 2010.

³³⁰ David Leigh and Luke Harding, *WikiLeaks*, 140.

³³¹ David Leigh and Luke Harding, *WikiLeaks*, 2.

Washington Post even devoted one of its webpages to “The Anatomy³³² of a Leak,” using a graphic to show how the newspaper translated WikiLeaks’ raw data into articles. Comparing the amount of information it had used to the amount it had obtained, the *Post* indicated that even when the public had been ‘informed’ only 0.1% of the raw data had been released.

These excesses of information posed a practical problem, however: there was no way to adequately summarize the leaks for popular publication. After WikiLeaks encountered difficulties with the independent release of “Collateral Murder,” for instance, news agencies criticized the video for pairing human tragedy with a heavy-handed political message. Their solution was to outsource this labor to journalists, who offered multiple and competing interpretations of WikiLeaks’ documents. Bill Keller of The New York Times notes, for instance, that during the three-pronged release of “The Afghan War Logs” by the *New York Times*, *Das Spiegel*, and the *Guardian*, each outlet’s posts “made it clear we followed our separate muses.”³³³ Each newspaper outlet provided a unique interpretation of the heretofore unreported military violence.³³⁴ Gesturing to a cumulative ‘disappointment’ represented in miniature by the WikiLeaks disclosures, each interpretation of Manning’s ‘data’ that simultaneously captured and failed to capture the full significance of the war for Americans and Afghans alike.

The sheer quantity of WikiLeaks’ disclosures and its attendant problems illustrate a simple point: WikiLeaks provided *number* as proof of truth’s existence. Commentators picked up

³³² We could make much of the fact that the *New York Times* described their breakdown of Assange’s excess information as an “anatomy,” desexualizing the body of data by reducing it to its component parts.

³³³ Bill Keller, “Dealing With Assange and the WikiLeaks Secrets,” *New York Times Magazine*, January 26, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/01/30/magazine/30Wikileaks-t.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0

³³⁴ Bill Keller notes the following: “There was much in that first round of articles worth reading, but my favorite single piece was one of the simplest. Chivers gathered all of the dispatches related to a single, remote, beleaguered American military outpost and stitched them together into a heartbreaking narrative. The dispatches from this outpost represent in miniature the audacious ambitions, gradual disillusionment and ultimate disappointment that Afghanistan has dealt to occupiers over the centuries.” Bill Keller, “The Boy Who Kicked the Hornet’s Nest,” *New York Times Magazine*, January 30, 2011.

on a quantity that could not be qualitatively distilled to prove that a substantial truth remained to be disclosed. The difficulty with this truth was that it was impossible (if not also illegal) to represent; its sheer excess prohibited its ‘full’ intelligibility. The threat of Assange’s information bomb³³⁵ also illustrates this incomprehensible excess: a spread of data the full impact of which cannot be ascertained. But as each subsequent revelation failed to deliver the goods, WikiLeaks consistently increased the stakes of their subsequent release by promising more data, more information, and a final, full disclosure. Number, in other words, describes what, if not the ‘truth,’ haunted the public at every turn. Number is what the subject ‘gets,’ if not truth.

The Pornography of Number

What, then, about *sex*? Where was sex amid all these numbers? We might, on the one hand be tempted to examine how Assange, after becoming a target of the State Department, was sexualized as a cross-dresser and accused of raping two women in Sweden.³³⁶ Beyond these *representations* of sex, I would like to argue that the *sexual* dimension of pornography comes of sex’s unrepresentability – the fact that sex opens up onto a knowledge-domain that cannot be fully or totally accounted for. Thus, on the other hand, the repetition of ever-greater quantities of information displays a kind of sexual enjoyment, a search for an object which the subject can

³³⁵ Credit for this phrase goes to Roger Stahl, who has a forthcoming article of the same name.

³³⁶ Indeed, the charge of rape is the ostensible reason for Assange’s current captivity. After British courts decided that Assange should be extradited to Sweden for criminal proceedings, Assange took refuge in the Ecuadorean Embassy in London, where he remains to this day. Sex has since been a recurrent feature of discourse on Assange. *New York Times* journalists Bill Keller and Eric Schmitt often draw significant attention to Assange’s appearance, describing him as a “bag lady.” The transgender allusions are even more pronounced with Luke Harding and David Leigh, who open their book with an account of Assange in drag, “swapping genders” to evade public attention. The most egregious focus on Assange’s physicality occurred in the context of his ongoing extradition trial, when he was accused of raping two women in Sweden. During that time, Assange’s private documents were leaked to the public, including an image of a used condom which was reported to have been torn. Thus, when secret documents were released with regard to Assange’s trial, it fit a pattern that was already well under way: neither Assange nor WikiLeaks was ‘in control’ of the information that it distributed, even when it came to information about the organization or its founder. Powerless to control the flow of information, it seemed, even to Assange, that secretive institutional actors were responsible for his having been ‘leaked upon.’ Even if the evidence was not damning, the performance of having been leaked upon sent a clear message. Although Assange was similarly subjected to the pornographic effect of the dirty secret, I hesitate to address him further for the sake of space and his lesser importance.

never ‘get.’ The lack of a limit to the leaks demonstrated a limit to what could be comprehended in a single act of revelation. As I will argue, WikiLeaks’s failure can be described as the pornographic effect of the *dirty secret*, which satisfies the demand for the naked truth without ever disclosing it.

Although it might seem strange to describe the way that WikiLeaks failed to reach its goals as ‘pornography,’ my use of the term departs from the way that it has been used by other rhetorical critics.³³⁷ As given here, pornography refers to *the graphic representation of an unassimilable difference*. In other words, if the representation of sex is always incomplete, then pornography describes how number, by giving a form to this failure, satisfies an unconscious impulse.³³⁸ Pornography, then, explains how the dirty secret keeps the subject in the dark by alternating between graphic, numerical representations and sexual excess.

³³⁷ The version of “pornography” I present in this chapter departs significantly from the way that psychoanalytically-inflected have addressed this subject because I shy away from the generic conventions of film and narrative for my account. For Christian Lundberg, what is “pornographic” about *The Passion of the Christ* is the way that it makes Christ’s flagellation into a “money shot” by splattering gore across the camera lens. (2009, 395) For Joshua Gunn, the stakes of labeling *The Passion* as pornography are greater, defining “norms of porn” to explain how “the pornographic feature-film [is] sacrifice and substitution all the way down.” (2012, 16) As I argue in this chapter, however, the vision of pornography I have in mind here describes the sexual investment in the numerical signifier. Admittedly, doing so vastly widens the scope of what counts as “pornography,” a problem that I address in the conclusion of this dissertation.

³³⁸ This ‘impulse’ is the *partial drive*. The term “drive” has multiple possible meanings within the psychoanalytic tradition. In Freud’s writings, drive appears as *Trieb* (or instinct) which “made it possible to understand the physical transcription of the major somatic forces.” (Cassin 2004, 230) In French, drive is often translated as *pulsion*, which means to “impel violently.” (231) In Freud’s work, drive combines a biological dimension that references the body’s major needs, a romantic dimension that described a “natural internal force acting on the mind and body,” and a psychophysical dimension describing neural electrical current patterns. (232) Within Lacan’s writing, however, drive sheds its physiological and romantic dimensions, and is granted an *ontological* status. In *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, for instance, Lacan formulates the question of the drive as follows:

All those here who are psycho-analysts must now feel to what extent I am introducing here the most essential level of accommodation. It is clear that those with whom we deal, the patients, are not satisfied, as one says, with what they are. And yet, we know that everything they are, everything they experience, even their symptoms, involves satisfaction. They something that no doubt runs counter to that with which they might be satisfied, or rather, perhaps, they give satisfaction to something. They are not content with their state, but all the same, being in a state that gives so little content, they are content. The whole question boils down to the following—what is contented here? (1998, 166)

According to Bruce Fink, Lacan later theorized “the transformation the drive undergoes in the course of analysis.” (1997, 39) As he writes, “Subjugated first by the Other’s demands and then by the Other’s desire, the drive is finally freed to pursue object *a*.” (39) Joan Copjec and Jacques Alain Miller capitalize on Lacan’s explanation of the

Joan Copjec elaborates on the relationship between sex and number when she describes “the actuarial origins of detective fiction” as a nineteenth century marriage between insurance statistics bureaus and police departments. With this union, the truth of number leaked into popular *doxa*, giving rise to the “fictional belief in the solvability of a crime [as] specifically a *mathematical expectation*.”³³⁹ Moreover, Copjec claims that the certainty of ‘detection’ was figured as a secret, a fantasy that one could conceal oneself from the state’s surveillance:

For this power to function properly, it must make itself invisible; it must conceal its own operation. The function of detection, then, is not only to construct character *as* quirky, *as* resistant to categorization, to construct the self, finally, *as* private. In this way, the knowledge in which he is held is concealed from the subject. Secrecy is here conceived as a necessary ruse of modern power, simply that; for there can in fact be no secret that keeps itself from power, no self that is not always already known.³⁴⁰

The secret of detective fiction is that there are no more secrets. Instead, number makes the subject discoverable because she becomes *enumerable*. By transforming the fantasy of the private, libidinal self into a near-mathematical certainty, detective fiction becomes a spectacle of the closeted self and a cold, numerical logic that makes her fantasy of concealment visible.

relationship between sublimation and drive to explain that there are only *partial-drives*, that what ‘succeeds in failure’ is not the drive *itself* (which is satisfied only by *death*), but the partial drive (appropriately, a *petit mort*).

Freud first conceived the partial drives – or, “component instincts” – as fragmentary and fragmenting. They produced a dispersed body and polymorphous and perverse pleasure that were later susceptible to the secondary operations of Oedipus and castration, which supposedly bundled the component instincts together and subordinated them to the primacy of the genital function. In the scenario proposed, then, there are two stages: the first concerns the child’s libidinal attachments to its scattered body parts; the second involves the supercession of the first via the threat of castration, which severs the child from its autoerotic relations and directs the libido outward – “altruistically,” Freud says here – toward another. (2002, 53)

However, Copjec also notes that this scene demands to be revised: the drive is a part of the unconscious; it describes “a split within the unconscious itself, between the objects of the drive and something that exceeds them.” (54) Jacques Alain Miller confirms Copjec’s thesis when he writes that “access [to the Other of the opposite sex] is only possible through this path of partial drives.” (1996, 16) By describing ‘drive’ as the consistent revisiting of the split that makes a mythical sexual attachment *impossible*, the concept of *drive* assumes responsibility for representing primal sexuality *and* its unbinding, or dissolution.

³³⁹ Joan Copjec, *Read My Desire*, 167.

³⁴⁰ Joan Copjec, *Read My Desire*, 169.

Pornography, as I account for it, has three key features. First, pornography is *rhetorical* because it figures sex as a numerical *catachresis*, where number deviates or diverts from the signifier's sexual 'signification'.³⁴¹ As Ernesto Laclau explains, catachresis allows speaking beings to name "something *essentially* unnameable as a condition of language functioning."³⁴² If, as Laclau maintains, language is always naming something that is outside its reach, then catachresis would be the master trope of this naming.³⁴³ Within psychoanalytic thought, sexuality occupies the "unnameable" that catachresis figures. According to Joan Copjec, sexuality names "a stumbling block of sense."³⁴⁴ It cannot be explained, Parveen Adams tells us, "in biological or sociological terms," but is instead "a drive which inhabits and determines the space of a psychical reality."³⁴⁵ Catachresis, in other words, cannot be captured by biological or sociological description because it takes the form of an insistence upon another division, divide, or split in the signifier which results in its "failure of signification"³⁴⁶

Second, catachresis figures sexuality as *excess*. Sex doesn't fail to signify because a signifier is *meaningless*. Rather, the signifier's failure to signify results from the fact that it *means too much*. In analytic practice, for instance, the subject's enjoyment is defined by their recurring signifiers. The recurrence of the signifier carries an *excess of meaning*, or a signification beyond the signifier's literal denotation. As Jacques Alain Miller explains,

³⁴¹ I put signification in scare quote here because sexuality does not signify – sexuality is the *failure of signification*, the untenable 'original meaning' for which no substitute will ever possibly do. See also Joan Copjec, *Read My Desire*, 201-236.

³⁴² Ernesto Laclau, *On Populist Reason* (New York, NY: Verso, 2007), 71.

³⁴³ Laclau wagers a "generalized" or ontological definition of *catachresis* against its more traditional definition: "In classical rhetoric, a figural term which cannot be substituted by a literal one was called a catachresis (for instance, when we talk about 'the leg of a chair'). This argument can be generalized if we face the fact that any distortion of meaning has, at its root, the need to express something that the literal term would simply not transmit. In that sense, catachresis is more than a particular figure: it is the common denominator of rhetoricity as such."

³⁴⁴ Joan Copjec, *Read My Desire*, 204.

³⁴⁵ Parveen Adams, *The Emptiness of the Image: Psychoanalysis and Sexual Differences* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1996), 27.

³⁴⁶ Joan Copjec, *Read My Desire*, 204.

In the analytic experience – because all that I have said refers to an analytic experience – you have no idea of what the patient means by what he or she says. And even if you have some idea, it is better to forget it, better not to understand or believe you understand a single word. You have no idea of what your patient is aiming at, and he comes to see you because he does not know what he is aiming at in behavior that could be strange even to himself, in the strange things that happen to him with some participation from himself.³⁴⁷

Sexuality erupts, in other words, as the figural excess of a literal term, as a ‘meaning’ which is hidden from the subject who uses it. As Lacan writes, “everything implied by the analytic engagement with human behavior indicates not that meaning reflects the sexual, but that it makes up for it.”³⁴⁸ Sexuality, in other words, always remains a limit because it is “the stumbling block of sense.”³⁴⁹ Pornography therefore employs catachresis, by which number comes to signify “something more than can be said through a literal term.”³⁵⁰ Number, in other words, betrays an excessive, sexual investment in ‘truth’.

Finally, as a feature of the dirty secret, pornography describes *the limit of disclosure’s enjoyment*. Enjoyment (as I claimed earlier in this dissertation) is both a habit and an excess; it is a kind of repetition that knows no limit, or that never ‘gets’ what it seeks. That secrecy and transparency are publicly *enjoyed* is a position that has been well-rehearsed by a number of scholars. As Jack Bratich argues, for instance, “revelations do not eliminate the secret, but preserve and extend it.”³⁵¹ Peter Knight describes this kind of enjoyment an obsessional tendency of conspiratorial plots that inspire “an infinite regress of suspicion” in which “the location of the

³⁴⁷ Jacques Alain Miller, “Language: Much Ado About What?” in *Lacan and the Subject of Language*, eds. Ellie Ragland-Sullivan and Mark Bracher (New York, NY: Routledge, 1991), 22.

³⁴⁸ Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan XXI: Les Dupes Non-Errrent* (1973), 9.

³⁴⁹ Joan Copjec, *Read My Desire*, 204.

³⁵⁰ Ernesto Laclau, *The Rhetorical Foundations of Society* (Brooklyn, NY: Verso, 2014), 64.

³⁵¹ Jack Bratich, “Popular Secrecy and Occultural Studies,” *Cultural Studies* 21 (2007): 46.

ultimate foundation of power is endlessly deferred.”³⁵² Jodi Dean articulates this enjoyment to the ambivalent relationship between democracy and capitalism, arguing that secrecy and publicity are two sides of the same coin. As she argues, publicity *demand*s secrecy; “the suspicion that something has been withheld, that the information needed for judging properly is hidden and needs to be exposed, sustains this system. Nothing can or should escape its gaze.”³⁵³ Clare Birchall links just such a circular relationship between secrecy and transparency to WikiLeaks:

In other words, transparency, though certainly the most discussed aspect of the WikiLeaks project – the half of the story most applauded by the Left – is arguably the least radical, while the way in which the force of this transparency demands a level of secrecy equivalent to that practised by the state might be the most. This is the difference between the treatment of secrets per se as commons (which is tantamount to transparency) and of secrecy as commons.³⁵⁴

WikiLeaks, paradoxically, was *limited* because if its enjoyment: it could not see past the cycle of secrecy and transparency it perpetuated. Thus, the third feature of pornography is that it posits enjoyment’s lack of a limit *as* a limit, a tunnel vision that is effect of the dirty secret’s excess.³⁵⁵

³⁵² Peter Knight, “Outrageous Conspiracy Theories: Popular and Official Responses to 9/11 in Germany and the United States,” *New German Critique* 35 (2008): 193.

³⁵³ Jodi Dean, *Publicity’s Secret: How Technoculture Capitalizes on Publicity*, 22.

³⁵⁴ Clare Birchall, “Transparency, Interrupted: Secrets of the Left,” *Theory, Culture, and Society* 28 (2011): 73.

³⁵⁵ Excess posed a similar problem, according to Michel Foucault, to the 16th century episteme. As he notes, Scholastics produced a knowledge that was “plethoric yet absolutely poverty stricken”: “Plethoric because it is limitless. ... It is therefore a knowledge that can, and must, proceed by the infinite accumulation of confirmations all dependent on one another. And for this reason, from its very foundations, this knowledge will be a thing of sand. The only possible form of link between the elements of knowledge is addition. Hence those immense columns of compilation, hence their monotony. By positing resemblance as the link between signs and what they indicate, sixteenth century knowledge condemned itself to never knowing anything but the same thing, and to knowing that thing only at the unattainable end of an endless journey.” (1970, 30) Foucault makes a claim that strongly resembles Lacan’s formulation of the feminine limit, explicating a scholastic logic of indefinite addition, incorporation, and expansion. More importantly, he explains that this glut of knowledge enforced an internal limit to what those embedded in the scholastic episteme – one that recurs today in the form of a ‘glut’ of secrets about the indefinite expansion of military authority.

In the following sections, I elaborate on the *sex* of pornography, why it is unrepresentable, and how this unrepresentability was manifested in the capture of Chelsea Manning. To get ‘at’ Manning’s sex, I first take a brief detour though the dirty secret of Alan Matheson Turing, whose public commemoration is contemporaneous with Manning’s arrest. As I will argue, Turing’s secrets, like Manning are similarly embedded within the logic of numerical, sexual failure.

Alan Turing’s Test for Machine Intelligence

Alan Matheson Turing has enjoyed renewed prominence in public discourse for a number of different reasons. Turing’s most long-lasting fame is owed to his “Test for Machine Intelligence,” which was accompanied by his contested³⁵⁶ invention of the “universal Turing machine,” the first reprogrammable computer. For these discoveries, Turing has also enjoyed prominence in mathematics, linguistics, and critical philosophy.³⁵⁷ The second reason for

³⁵⁶ Contested, because according to Turing biographer Andrew Hodges, Turing was not the sole inventor of the ‘universal machine’: “There was one person, one of those few who were professionally interested in mathematical logic, who read the paper with a very considerable personal interest. This was Emil Post, a Polish-American mathematician teaching at the City College of New York, who since the early 1920s had anticipated some of Gödel and Turing [sic] ideas in unpublished form. In October 1936 he had submitted to Church’s *Journal of Symbolic Logic* a paper which proposed a way of making precise what was meant by ‘solving a general problem’. It referred specifically to Church’s paper, the one which solved the Hilbert decision problem but required an assertion that any definite method could be expressed as a formula in his lambda-calculus. Post proposed that a definite method would be one which could be written in the form of instructions to a mindless ‘worker’ operating on an infinite line of ‘boxes’, who would be capable only of reading the instructions ... So even if Alan Turing had never been, his idea would soon have come to light in one form or another. It had to. It was the necessary bridge between the world of logic and the world in which people did things.” Although the concluding remarks strike me as naïve (Turing’s contributions were ‘inevitable’) I do believe that the concurrent ‘discovery’ and the corresponding public fascination with Alan Turing illustrates a key attribute of the dirty secret’s pornographic effect. The very public, “putting on display” of Alan Turing’s contributions of sex and number has taken shape as a persisting inquiry into his ‘secrets’: the person he was, the person he concealed from others, and the person capable of thinking infinity in mathematics. Andrew Hodges, *Alan Turing: The Enigma* (London: Vintage, Random House, 2012), 125.

³⁵⁷ Although I will not (indeed cannot) recite Turing’s full significance to computational logic or mathematics, his critical uptake among philosophers and rhetorical critics is noteworthy for the creative ways that they too have blended Turing’s sexual circumstances with his intellectual achievements. According to Friedrich Kittler, Turing’s “crucial innovation” was his substitution of human invention for mathematical permutation, displacing the subject-centered notion of human agency with an “infinitely manipulable” technological reason. (1999, 247) By contrast, John Peters, Kathryn Hayles, and Megan Foley take up Turing as example of the body’s effacement (and in Foley’s case, supplementarity). Peters, for instance, notes that Turing’s persecution for his homosexuality might justify his theoretical erasure of corporeality, he argues that Turing cannot be forgiven for doing away with “the desire for the other that Hegel though raised us out of animality and into the homeland of consciousness.” (1999, 237) Foley takes an opposing tack, suggesting that embodiment is preserved in the haptic programming which is Turing’s computational inheritance. As Foley argues, the fact that we cannot tell the difference between a computer and a

Turing's fame is his key role in deciphering the ENIGMA code, the cypher used by Axis forces used to encrypt their communications during World War II. Finally, Turing has enjoyed the most prominence recently as a GLBTQ historical icon, who in spite of his many contributions to the British Government, was chemically castrated for the crime of his homosexuality, leading to his subsequent suicide. In 2012, Turing received a posthumous pardon from Queen Elizabeth II.³⁵⁸ He is most recently commemorated by the 2014 biopic, *The Imitation Game*.³⁵⁹ Most crucially, however, Turing performs two attributes of the dirty secret: first, his "Test for Machine Intelligence" illustrates how the illusion of the private, sexual self is made possible by closeting its enumeration. Second, drawing on Turing's representation within *The Imitation Game*, I argue that even if sex cannot be 'known,' it is figured as a 'solution' to a problem of excess number.

The first of Turing's accomplishments, the "Test for Machine Intelligence," was originally formulated as a solution to one of David Hilbert's 1928 'unsolvable' mathematical problems. The tenth problem, the *Entscheidungsproblem* (or 'decision problem'), issued a challenge to mathematicians to define formal rules by which *any* arithmetic formula might be parsed. In 1936, Alan Turing proposed a solution to Hilbert's problem in the form of a hypothetical 'thinking machine' – the precursor to the modern computer. More than a decade later, Turing offered the following reflection on his newly-built prototype:

One can imagine that after the machine had been operating for some time, the instructions would have altered out of all recognition.... It would be like a pupil who had

human testifies to an ideological obsession with the corporeal, a "pervasive desire to recover the lost guarantee of a corporeally present human subject on the other side of the computer screen." (2015, 372)

³⁵⁸ "Royal Pardon for Codebreaker Alan Turing," *BBC*, December 24, 2013. <http://www.bbc.com/news/technology-25495315>

³⁵⁹ *The Imitation Game*, Internet Video, directed by Morton Tyldum (2014; United Kingdom: The Weinstein Company, 2015.), Film.

learnt much from his master, but had added much more by his own work. When this happens I feel that one is obliged to regard the machine as showing intelligence.³⁶⁰

Turing's test for machine intelligence used the analogy of an "imitation game," modeled after a parlor game with three players: a man (A) a woman (B), and a judge of indeterminate sex (C). Concealed from one another, the objective of the game was for the interrogator to tell the man and woman apart.

In his 1950 essay, Turing alludes to this 'test' as a "parlor" or "imitation game" played amongst friends, foregrounding the role of sex in it.³⁶¹ In the game, much like the setup for Turing's test, partygoers are made to guess the sex of two concealed individuals, who communicate through a neutral writing medium. The key is sex because partygoers must be able to correctly judge which of the two hidden interlocutors is male and female. Thus, when Turing moves from the first stage of the game to the second, he places a machine in the place of the female typist, for whom the computer substitutes.³⁶² It is on the basis of this substitution that he replaces the original question ("Can machines think?") with its logical equivalent: "What will

³⁶⁰ Alan Matheson Turing, "Computing Machinery and Intelligence," *Mind* 59 (1950), 433-460.

³⁶¹ The motif of the 'game' is deserving of its own inquiry, if only because of the many ways that it intersects with Hodge's dominant retelling of Turing's life-narrative. Interestingly, Turing's source for the parlor game is downplayed in Hodges's account of Turing's test for machine intelligence – Hodges merely calls it a "sexual guessing game." The signifier of the game recurs among Turing's leadership figures (his 'school games master'), as a cultural motif (the 'parlor games' he played as part of polite society), and mathematical theory (the emergent 'theory of games'). Hodges suggests that Turing's attraction to games was tied to his early childhood romance with Christopher Morcom. (2012, 56) In fact, the actual 'parlor game' that most nearly approximates the cause for the test for machine intelligence bears only passing resemblance to that suggested in the 'test': "Alan and Robin and Nick devised a new game called Presents. The idea was that one person went out of the room and the others made up a list of imaginary presents that they believed he would like to have. Then he came back and could ask questions about the presents before choosing them, and here the game of bluff and double bluff came in, for one of the presents would secretly be designated 'Tommy' and once Tommy was chosen, the turn was finished. The imaginary presents moved after a while into a more probing realm. Alan tentatively dropped 'Tea in Knightsbridge Barracks' into the game at one point, perhaps reflecting fantasies of twenty years before. The Manchester computer had, in its unexpected and backhanded way, realized one of the products of his imagination. There still remained other dreams; no less hard to fulfil; no less liable to go awry. (500)

³⁶² Even when Friedrich Kittler posits an alternative origin for Turing's game, he stresses the intuitive connection between sex and the computer closet in which he hides his interlocutors. Sex matters in the computer closet, Kittler argues, because the precedent for the machine-operator was the female typist or stenographer, who since the beginning of the 19th century had become a fixture of the modern workplace. Friedrich A. Kittler, *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999), 246.

happen when a machine takes the part of A in the game ... the part of B being taken by a man?” Just as the man ‘wins’ by passing as a woman, in this second iteration of the imitation game, the machine can only ‘win’ if it successfully dissimulates its *sex*. Megan Foley explains this elegantly: “Just as Turing troubles sexual difference – a man simulates the gender performance of a woman in the imitation game – he also troubles ontological difference – Turing’s Test puts the computer in drag as a man.”³⁶³

For Turing, in other words, mathematics was a kind of queer pornography; it was a way of displaying sex without showing too much skin. For there to be machine intelligence, Turing tells us, sex had to *become* number, and number, sex. For this to be possible, however, number first had to be closeted to produce the illusion of a private, sexual self, inviting the presumption a private ‘someone’ was hiding within. Sex was thereby made both the cause and the effect of the test for machine intelligence. It was the literal cause of Turing’s Test, as he substituted his ‘parlor game’ for a dialogue between a computer and a human. Sex was also the effect of number, however, because mistaking the computer for a man attributed sex where there was none. The first of Turing’s discoveries highlighted here, then, is that the illusion of the private self is made possible by closeting its enumeration, or by placing its literal mechanism of thought out of view.

The second of Turing’s accomplishments, his ‘cracking’ of the ENIGMA code, is highlighted in the 2014 *Imitation Game*, which portrays a young Alan Turing (played by Benedict Cumberbatch) bewildering his colleagues into building a mysterious machine he promised would decipher encoded Nazi transmissions. In the film, Turing admits that the

³⁶³ Megan Foley, “‘Prove You’re Human’: Fetishizing Material Embodiment and Immaterial Labor in Information Networks,” *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 31 (2014): 367.

brilliance of the Nazi code is that it lingers in plain sight, broadcasting a signal so widely that anyone can ‘find’ it:

The game was quite a simple one. Every single German message, every surprise attack, every bombing run, every imminent U-Boat assault – they were all floating through the air. Radio signals that well, any schoolboy with an AM kit could intercept. The trick was they were encrypted. One hundred and fifty-nine million million million possible ENIGMA settings, all we had to do was try each one. But if we had ten men checking one setting a minute for twenty-four hours every day, seven days every week, how many days do you think it would take to check each of the settings? It’s not days, it’s years. It’s twenty million years. To stop the coming attack, we would have to check twenty million years’ worth of settings in twenty minutes.³⁶⁴

Even after laboriously constructing his machine, Turing is unable to crack the code because of the impossibly numerous permutations it can take. Yet at the crucial moment, Turing discovers the ‘key’ to the code in the fictional relationship between a female typist and her German counterpart, whose messages she intercepts. She imagines the intercepts as love-letters, she says, because they consistently bore the pattern C-I-L-L-Y. From this anecdote, Turing deduces a new set of rules for his computer, guided by the insight that German dispatches would *always* contain certain letter patterns (H-I-T-L-E-R).

In this case, sex resolves the impossible plentitude of number because the hidden interiority of German officer, his sexual secret, held the ‘key’ to the ENIGMA cypher. Of course, it is also revealed that the female typist only interacted with German weather dispatches – not love letters at all. Nonetheless, what remains is sex, which is posited as unrepresentable and hidden – as well as that which enabled Turing to make his crucial contribution. Turing therefore

³⁶⁴ *The Imitation Game*, 2014.

illustrates two key principles of pornography. First, that like Turing's closeted machine, sex is the illusion of hidden interiority made possible by enumeration. Second, that sex is figured both as a numerical excess and as the "part" that resolves or transforms this whole. It is this same impossibility of representing sex that surfaced to explain Manning's motives.

Chelsea Manning's Turing Test

Finally, we come to the private life of Private Manning, the ostensible subject of WikiLeaks's pornographic display. Manning's sex became the way that some sense was made out of the overwhelming quantity of data, serving as a sufficient substitute 'truth'. It served as a way to explain the cause for an undeterminable field of effects. Sex, however, was also its own effect. The public's fascination with the Private's parts shifted the flow of public conversation away from the leak's consequences, and toward the leaker's problems of self-definition. Like Turing's "Test for Machine Intelligence," the illusion of Manning's private self was made possible by an impossible-to-decipher numerical system; likewise also his sex functioned as the mysterious 'part' that resolved the 'whole' of the WikiLeaks debacle.

Like Turing, on the one hand, the illusion of a private, sexual interiority was created through a closeted system of enumeration; namely, WikiLeaks anonymizing submission format. Part of WikiLeaks's original ingenuity was that it had engineered a way to transmit information to the site without capturing any digital record of the whistleblower's identity. Originally, WikiLeaks had thought to solve this problem by employing a wiki-website format, meaning that anonymous informants would be able to edit disclosures at will.³⁶⁵ Hypothetically, the site would accept any whistleblower's anonymous submissions, which would then be authenticated or revised by an open, international audience of 'citizen-journalists'. This idealistic vision was quickly dismissed. Instead, WikiLeaks devised a way of anonymizing their submissions through

³⁶⁵ David Leigh and Luke Harding, *WikiLeaks*, 52.

an “onion router” (or Tor) which encrypted whistleblower submissions beyond decipherability.³⁶⁶ In other words, WikiLeaks’s cache of documents was only as good as its encryption mechanism, which Assange claimed would ensure that defenders of free speech would have their identity protected.³⁶⁷

The first Wiki-Leaker to have their identity compromised was Private Chelsea (then Bradley) Manning, whose identity was publicly revealed three months after his leak. His identity was not discovered because of a weakness of the Tor system, but because he disclosed his information to another hacker and self-proclaimed independent journalist, Adrian Lamo. Manning’s communications with Lamo suggested that he was unhappy: he described himself as “isolated,” surrounded by “a bunch of hyper-masculine trigger-happy ignorant rednecks.”³⁶⁸ Under screen-name pseudonym “BradAss87,” Manning also disclosed that he had been the source of many of the major WikiLeaks disclosures of the previous year. In his words:

BradAss87: Hypothetical question: if you had free reign over classified networks and you saw incredible things ... awful things ... things that belonged in the public domain, what would you do?

Adrian Lamo: What are the particulars?

³⁶⁶ In an interview with Jacob Appelbaum, a developer for TOR, Virginia Heffernan explains the complexity of the encryption system and the way that it ensured anonymity on the WikiLeaks site: “As Appelbaum explained, “If it’s only the military using the Tor network” -- say -- “it’s not anonymous.” A Tor transmission these days might start in Addis Ababa, hop to Dallas, then to Stockholm and finally Johannesburg. (There are some 2,000 Tor relay nodes at any one time across the globe.) The only thing the Johannesburg recipient can discover is that the data came from Tor, and Tor has successfully identified itself with no person or group, only with ideological incoherence. For the person trying to get a message out through Tor, this means he communicates exactly as much as he chooses and no more. With Tor, you “only reveal the information that you type,” Appelbaum says. “As opposed to all the other information that comes along when you use your computer.” (“Granting Anonymity,” *New York Times* 2010)

³⁶⁷ As Leigh and Harding explain, Assange was a strong advocate for Tor: “Tor’s importance to WikiLeaks cannot be overstated,” Assange told *Rolling Stone*, when they profiled Appelbaum, his west coast US hacker associate. But Tor has an interesting weakness. If a message isn’t specially encrypted from the outset, then its actual contents can sometimes be read by other people. This may sound like an obscure technical point. But there is evidence that it explains the true reason for the launch of WikiLeaks at the end of 2006 – not as a traditional journalistic enterprise, but as a piece of opportunistic underground computer hacking. In other words: eavesdropping.” (2011, 54)

³⁶⁸ Alex Gibney, *We Steal Secrets: The Story of WikiLeaks*, Internet Video, directed by Alex Gibney (2013; Germany: FOCUSWORLD, 2012), Film.

BradAss87: Things that would have an impact on 6.7 billion people. A database of half a million events during the Iraq War. 260,000 State Department Cables. Let's just say *someone* I know well, has been penetrating US classified networks, mining data, and uploading to a crazy white haired aussie who can't stay in one country very long. (crazy white haired dude = Julian Assange)³⁶⁹

Even before this conversation, Manning was in the process of being discharged for psychological duress.³⁷⁰ But just five days after initiating this correspondence, Manning was quickly arrested and relocated to a detention facility in Kuwait.³⁷¹ Lamo was branded a turncoat by WikiLeaks supporters.³⁷² By the end of July, Manning had been transferred to a maximum security facility in Quantico, Virginia, and was placed under suicide watch.³⁷³ Since that time, he has not appeared publicly, save for closed-door military hearings.

Publicly, however, Manning was deeply stigmatized because of his decision to pursue sexual reassignment surgery. Manning's fellow servicemen and women acknowledged that "We knew right away that he was gay. It was, like, so obvious."³⁷⁴ In spite of the copious attention devoted to Manning's sexual reassignment, his former supervisor, Jihreah Showman, claimed Manning's sexual transition went ignored.³⁷⁵ The public response to Manning's announced transition was, however, profound, stirring debate over the military's unabated tradition of

³⁶⁹ Alex Gibney, *We Steal Secrets: The Story of WikiLeaks*, 2012.

³⁷⁰ Rafael Sanchez, "Bradley Manning 'attacked female soldier and sent picture of himself as a woman,' *The Telegraph*, December 18, 2011, accessed April 28, 2015. www.telegraph.co.uk

³⁷¹ Kim Zetter and Kevin Poulsen, "3 Weeks After Arrest, Still No Charges in WikiLeaks Probe," *WIRED*, June 16, 2010, accessed April 28, 2015. <http://www.wired.com/2010/06/manning-detainment/>

³⁷² Ed Pilkington, "Hacker who betrayed Bradley Manning expresses regret over possible jail term," *Guardian*, December 15, 2011, accessed April 28, 2015. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/dec/15/hacker-adrian-lamo-bradley-manning-wikileaks>

³⁷³ "Bradley Manning: pre-trial hearing ends as case goes to military judge," *Guardian*, December 11, 2012, accessed April 28, 2015. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/dec/11/bradley-manning-military-suicide-watch>

³⁷⁴ "Nick", *We Steal Secrets: The Story of WikiLeaks*, Internet Video, directed by Alex Gibney (2013; Germany: FOCUSWORLD, 2012.), Film.

³⁷⁵ Jirleah Showman, *We Steal Secrets: The Story of WikiLeaks*, 2012.

subjugating queer servicepersons.³⁷⁶ Even more pronounced was the public outcry to ensure that Manning's reassignment was properly respected by public news and research outlets. In 2013, the popular Wikipedia website fell into the controversy after editors publicly expressed transphobic opinions about whether to refer to Manning as a "she" or a "he":

Two [editors] were indefinitely banned from editing "all pages relating to any transgender topic or individual" over discriminatory speech. One, Hitmonchan, had written that "only when his testicles are ripped out of his scrotum ... will I call Manning a 'she'", and the second, IFreedom1212, wrote, among other comments that "he is clearly mentally unstable and his ... desire to be called Chelsea should not be regarded with any merit."³⁷⁷

In February 2015, the military finally approved Manning to be administered hormone therapy during his prison term.³⁷⁸ Manning's sexual game of pretend was, in short, to blame – and in the end, he got what he wanted.³⁷⁹ Pretending to be a soldier (or to be a man/woman) was the ultimate reason for the devastating leak. Sex resolved the issue, relegating Manning's act of leaking to an inexplicable psychological condition. The travesty was that the military had been unable to see through the ruse, even though all the telltale signs were already there.

Telling Dirty Secrets

The opening montage of the 2012 BBC detective series *The Bletchley Circle* features clicking machines, numerical code, and cyphered messages in quick succession, foregrounding

³⁷⁶ Margaret Talbot, "Chelsea Manning's Prison," *The New Yorker*, August 29, 2013, accessed April 28, 2015. <http://www.newyorker.com/news/daily-comment/chelsea-mannings-prison>

³⁷⁷ Alex Hern, "Chelsea Manning name row: Wikipedia editors banned from trans pages," *Guardian*, October 24, 2013, accessed April 28, 2014, <http://www.theguardian.com/technology/2013/oct/24/chelsea-manning-name-row-wikipedia-editors-banned-from-trans-pages>

³⁷⁸ Kukil Bora, "US Military Approves Hormone Therapy For Chelsea Manning To Transition To A Woman," *International Business Times*, February 15, 2015, accessed April 28, 2015. <http://www.ibtimes.com/us-military-approves-hormone-therapy-chelsea-manning-transition-woman-1815230>

³⁷⁹ "Bradley Manning wanted attention for spilling to WikiLeaks, prosecutors say," *Associated Press*, July 25, 2013. <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/bradley-manning-wanted-attention-for-spilling-to-wikileaks-prosecutors-say/>

the excess birthed of the World War II battle over encrypted intelligence. The program features five women detectives, each of whom has unique mathematical prowess, and who are consistently underestimated by their male counterparts. What the women show is their sex, but their true genius lies in the way that they make sense of the messy numerical data they use to solve their crimes. Sex and number are, in other words, coincident; put on display as the resources of truth. Similarly, in the 2014 *Imitation Game*, Turing lovingly names his machine ‘Christopher,’ addressing his contraption by the name of his first true love. We need not look to such recent discourses to find the way Turing today blurs sex and number, however. In 1952, Turing was charged with gross indecency after confessing to a same-sex relationship with another man. As a consequence, Turing’s security clearances were revoked and he was forced to choose between female hormone injections or prison. Turing chose the former. Before pleading guilty, Turing wrote a letter to colleague and mathematician Norman Routledge, ending it with the following syllogism:

Turing believes machines can think

Turing lies with men

Therefore machines cannot think³⁸⁰

The double meaning of the minor premise, “Turing lies with men,” gives the syllogism its force. The statement at once conveys the idea that Turing *tells* lies and avows his sexuality. He cannot be both – but is. What Manning and Turing have in common is the way that their ‘truth’ has been told for them as a display of sex and number: a number too nebulous to grasp, and a sex whose surplus has publicly functioned as a justification for Manning’s acts.

³⁸⁰ Andrew Hodges, *Alan Turing: The Enigma* (London: Vintage, Random House, 2012), xxviii.

THE SECRET IS THERE IS NO SECRET

CHAPTER 5

To everything which a man allows to become visible, one is able to demand:

What does he wish to hide?

-- Friedrich Nietzsche *The Gay Science*, 35

The introduction to 2014 The Senate Intelligence Committee Report on Torture opens with twenty separate accusations reprimanding the CIA for the invention and management of its secret torture facilities from 2002 onward. The report suggested that the methods the CIA had employed were “ineffective” (3), “harsh” (6), “brutal” (5), “unsustainable” (20) and “damaging” (22). CIA authorities had reported “inaccurate” (4) data, covered up the organization’s “deeply flawed” (14) lack of preparedness, and had deliberately impeded “a proper legal analysis” (7). And yet, these ‘revelations’ were hardly secret – they had been widely publicized. In 2003, when the Abu Ghraib scandal became public, Americans had been thoroughly familiarized with the euphemism of “enhanced interrogation techniques.” Although the Report asserted that the Legislative Branch had a responsibility to condemn the CIA’s crimes, the document’s notable and frequent redactions also reveal residual protections on state-sponsored torture. Throughout the document, redactions erase dates, the names of countries, and the identities of those who testified to or were complicit with the spread of secret torture facilities around the world. The

secret is that there isn't a secret: Even America's public apology for torture continues to perpetuate the very state of secrecy it critiques.

This dissertation project can be summarized in that simple formula: *the secret is there is no secret*. Everything that is a so-called secret (concealed or undisclosed information) must begin with a discourse already available to the public that materializes it. To say 'there is no secret' does not mean that there is nothing left for the subject to know. To say 'there is no secret' means that the subject materializes the nothing they cannot know using an available, rhetorical means. The centrality of rhetoric to this formulation cannot be overstated. A rhetorical theory of the secret does not demand that secrets be demystified or found out. Its objective is not to disclose the 'truth' once and for all. Rather, the rhetorical secret describes how the act of exposure is tropological, enjoyable, and finally, in need of a name – one that I have grounded in sex and number. If, as I have argued, subject-centered acts of exposure and revelation are impotent, the rhetorical secret instead draws attention to forms of prohibited speech.

Must the Secret be Rhetorical?

Throughout this dissertation, I have drawn from a number of different theoretical resources to theorize the secret as a *rhetorical* object of inquiry. If *the secret is there is no secret*, then to make this argument I have relied upon psychoanalytic, ideological, linguistic, and sociological insights. In retrospect, this begs the question of whether rhetoric is just a supplement to these other theoretical programs. To that end, I answer the question 'must the secret be rhetorical?' by describing three perspectives I have embraced throughout this project. I elaborate on the *linguistic*, *ideological*, and *rhetorical* dimensions of the secret to admit my own theoretical debts and to mark my points of departure. Ultimately, as I claimed at the outset of this dissertation, my claim is that a key advantage of rhetorical theory is its critique of truth.

A first theoretical insight I have drawn upon throughout this dissertation is that the secret is *linguistic*. Indeed, Jacques Lacan's formulation of the unconscious as a linguistic structure would suggest that the secret is nothing more than language's structural effect.³⁸¹ Language, in other words, habituates the subject to transform familiar objects into *signifiers*, or as Christian Lundberg puts it, into sites of potent, public affiliation and *affect*.³⁸² The secret would be one such object: a signifier for what cannot be known.³⁸³ The *linguistic* secret would be that there is no secret, but only the signifier.

If Jacques Lacan entreats us to imagine the unconscious as structured like a language, then one way of phrasing the psychoanalytic counterclaim wagered by this dissertation is that the unconscious is structured like *rhetoric*. Put into rhetoric's language of trope, the synecdochal speech of George W. Bush signaled something had been hidden, regardless of what he meant to say. It carried with it an excess of meaning that was *also* a limit to what could be known. This excess-that-is-a-limit is what I call rhetoric. In this dissertation, where I have discussed the forms

³⁸¹ Christian Lundberg interprets Lacan's maxim to mean that the *Real* describes what is unassimilable within discourse/rhetoric. "If the Real is independent of or, more accurately, beyond the rhetoric [sic], it follows that the Real exists outside of the symbolic and imaginary operations that relate a subject to its world. Although the Real can be effected by the movements of the Symbolic and Imaginary orders, the symbolic and Imaginary cannot internalize it." (2012, 99) The secret, then, would be the extra-discursive *Real* that is language's structural effect. My twist on Lundberg's formulation lies in my claim that the extra-discursive Real is a structural effect of rhetoric, which describes how language materializes its own persisting state of incompleteness.

³⁸² As Lundberg writes, "A subject is not the cause of, nor is it reducible to an effect of, discourse's formal properties. Rather, a subject is an individual node in an economy of tropes sustained by a conception of affective investment as a practice of metaphorical condensation. If the subject is a result of tropological functions, it is but one node in the economy of tropological exchanges. This view implies that agency is distributed across the whole economy of discourse and present not only in the subject's affective investments but also in the movement of the tropes themselves." (2012, 87)

³⁸³ Another way of phrasing this same claim is that the *linguistic* theory of the secret turns the 'known known' into the 'known unknown.' Drawing from Donald Rumsfeld's famous distinction between these terms, Slavoj Žižek explains that the *known known* is "what we know we know" while the *known unknown* describes "things we know we don't know." (2007, 52) In other words, the linguistic theory of the secret turns our everyday objects into signifiers of what cannot be apprehended by consciousness. The transformation of the known known into the unknown known, however, does not require the tools of psychoanalysis. As Georg Simmel noted in 1906, "No psychological knowledge is a mere mechanical echo of its object. It is, rather, like knowledge of external nature, dependent upon the forms that the knowing mind brings to it, and in which it takes up the data." (445) Simmel's point is simple, and harmonizes more easily than Žižek with a central commonplace of rhetorical theory: the secret must rely on a certain available cache of experience and knowledge. It is only by contorting what one already knows can one manifest what one knows they do *not* know.

of *repetition, caesura, synecdoche, irony, and catachresis*, I have gestured toward a Rhetoric that figures the secret as knowledge that cannot be had. Conceived linguistically, the *rhetorical* secret is that *there is no whole of language*. Language has no natural closure until rhetoric intervenes.³⁸⁴

A second theoretical supplement to this project has come from critics who have argued that the secret is an *ideological* phenomenon. If, as I have argued, the secret is a public spectacle of enjoyment, then the ideological theory of the secret would describe the many ways that a public unconsciously enjoys this spectacle.³⁸⁵ Slavoj Žižek extends this thesis, cautioning against the temptation to read liberal-democratic capitalism's public spectacles for the hidden, ideological meaning it conceals.

[There] is a fundamental homology between the interpretive procedure of Marx and Freud – more precisely, between their analysis of commodity and of dreams. In both cases the point is to avoid the properly fetishistic fascination of the ‘content’ supposedly hidden behind the form: the ‘secret’ to be unveiled through analysis is not kept hidden by the form (the form of commodities, the form of dreams) but, on the contrary, *the ‘secret’ of this form itself*.³⁸⁶

From Žižek's perspective, the secret is that there is no content of the secret. The secret meaning (of a dream, of the commodity form, of ideology) lies instead in the formal organization of

³⁸⁴ In many ways, this argument harmonizes with what Lundberg's own claims about ‘failed unicity’ and the persisting instability of rhetoric. This is the position that Lundberg wagers over and against the dominant scholarly attitude that “what Aristotle had discovered is the first robust and systematic theory of discourse-in-context.” (2013, 248) As Lundberg writes, “Rhetoric is consigned to a nomadic existence, one every bit as itinerant as the first Sicilians who sought work in Athens as teachers of speech. De Man's nomadic formulation of rhetoricity and Aristotle's subtle conditional definition maintain a kind of pristine theoretical purity available only to undecidable aporias and conditional definitions, wandering ceaselessly between trope and persuasion and by necessity always provisionally defining without authoritatively demarcating.” (253)

³⁸⁵ Gilles DeBord, for instance, describes how the secret has become a spectacle that demands the public's attention. There, he acknowledges that public revelation has been placed into the service of capital, making docile citizens of spectators commanded by a public injunction to always be watching.

³⁸⁶

certain elements rather than in what those elements signify. Describing the forms like *cynicism* or *disavowal*, Žižek claims that the ‘secret’ of ideology is that it is structured to keep the subject self-interested. The secret would be that there is no secret, but only an unconscious structure of motivation that lures subjects toward ideological complacency.

And yet, one need not turn to *ideology* to describe the secret structure of liberal-democratic fantasy. Alinsky’s co-option by conservatives proves this point, as values-driven Republican partisans came to embrace Alinsky’s ideological ambivalence as a core community experience. As Alinsky’s inheritors, conservatives managed the contradiction between their value-driven ideology and their value-free political strategy by demonizing Alinsky, drawing public attention to their complicity with an ideology they despised. My extension of Alinsky’s insight that there is no ideology, is that the rhetorical secret defines the ‘nothing’ at the heart of ideology as *antagonism*. Whereas the ideological secret describes an unconscious structure of motive, the rhetorical secret describes the ‘nothing’ of ideology as *irony*, as the irresolvable contradiction of any ideological exclusion.

Finally, we come to the secret as it has emerged as an object of inquiry at the intersection of rhetorical and psychoanalytic criticism. At various points throughout this dissertation, I have drawn from Barbara Biesecker, Joshua Gunn, Christian Lundberg, and James McDaniel, each of whom marks a unique intersection between psychoanalytic theory and rhetorical criticism.³⁸⁷ This project is, however, equally indebted to the observations of Joan Copjec, Parveen Adams, and Diane Rubenstein, who formulate the secret through a psychoanalytic vocabulary that very

³⁸⁷ I should also mention Nathan Stormer, Thomas Goodnight, Edwin Black, and Douglas Hofstadter as rhetorical precedents for this project, as each of these scholars also place their focus on the secret as an object of rhetorical inquiry.

closely mirrors the tropological conceits of rhetorical scholars.³⁸⁸ If the argument of this dissertation is that the secret is there is no secret, then the articulation of psychoanalysis and rhetoric adds the insight that the secret is a rhetorically-structured libidinal investment. This phrase means that rhetoric orients us toward a knowledge that cannot be had, and consequently, possesses the ineffable character of a truth.

Rhetoric, Truth, and Ontology

Rhetoric has traditionally been made subservient to the Truth (or the Idea) following from Plato's critique in the *Phaedrus*. According to Plato, rhetoric is the art of deception, strategy, and masked appearances. Only certain individuals knowledgeable in the correct disciplines with rigorous mental self-training can hope to employ rhetoric properly. As Richard Weaver reminds us, only under strict conditions can "rhetoric at its truest" move and improve the soul by means of speech.

So rhetoric at its truest seeks to perfect men by showing them better versions of themselves, links in that chain extending up toward the idea, which only the intellect can apprehend and only the soul have affection for. This is the justified affection of which no one can be ashamed, and he who feels no influence of it is truly outside the communion of minds. Rhetoric, appears, finally, as the means by which the impulse of the soul to be ever moving is redeemed.³⁸⁹

Even as Weaver's interpretation relieves rhetoric of its shame, it also reminds us of the secret shame it must carry with it. A justified Rhetoric, as he says, redeems our unconscious impulses. But by giving priority to the idea of Rhetoric, scholars share a fantasy in which rhetoric is unworthy of the Truth. As even Michel Foucault notes, the Attic term for truth-telling

³⁸⁸ I refer specifically to Copjec's formulation of the part-object, (2002, 48-80) Adams' description of the "emptiness of the image," (1996, 141-159) and Rubenstein's account of "hermetic reading." (2008, 50-72)

³⁸⁹ Richard Weaver, *The Ethics of Rhetoric* (Chicago, IL: Henry Regnery Company, 1953), 52.

(*parrhēsia*) and rhetoric were antonyms in antiquity, standing “in strong opposition” to one another. Whereas *parrhēsia* is a “logos which speaks the truth,” rhetoric is “the logos which is not capable of such truth-telling.”³⁹⁰ Rhetoric is not only shame-worthy. Tethered to the world of appearances, rhetoric aspires to become pure *logos* without any hope of becoming as much.

The strategies that Plato uses to theorize the concepts of rhetoric and truth, however, would seem to condemn him to follow the sophistic tradition he critiqued. There are, for instance, many points at which Plato’s discourse becomes indistinguishable from that of the expert sophist who masters his opponents through a strategic mental grappling-match. Even as Plato purports to advance a singular ideal of reason, the dialectic demands he adopt a rhetorical strategy of dodge-and-weave to make the case for Truth.³⁹¹ Jacques Derrida even notes that Plato describes the logos (the word or speech) as an animal, one that he carefully tames with cunning intelligence and opportunistic speech:

By describing logos as a *zōon*, Plato is following certain rhetors and sophists before him who, as a contrast to the cadaverous rigidity of writing, had held up the living spoken word, which infallibly conforms to the necessities of the situation at hand, to the expectations and demands of the interlocutors present, and which sniffs out the spots where it ought to produce itself, feigning to bend and adapt at the moment it is actually achieving maximum persuasiveness and control.³⁹²

The fact that Plato plays the part of the Sophist par excellence invites two ways of rethinking rhetoric’s relationship to philosophical ‘truth.’ On the one hand, Derrida enables rhetorical scholars to reclaim philosophy for rhetoric. Philosophy would be, at its root, rhetorical in its

³⁹⁰ Michel Foucault, *Fearless Speech*, ed. Joseph Pearson (Los Angeles, CA: Semiotext(e), 2001), 20.

³⁹¹ See also chapter 3, “Saul Alinsky’s Conservative Legacy: Irony and the Open Secret of *Rules for Radicals*,” a number of scholars have described how Socrates’ dialectical strategy is inherited from rhetoric as a technique of persuasion.

³⁹² Jacques Derrida, “The Purveyor of Truth,” *Yale French Studies* 52 (1975): 71.

construction and historical origin. On the other hand, scholars have also critiqued the implicit phallogocentrism of his thought as a patriarchal privilege borne by truth, the idea, the word, speech, and reason in Western philosophy.

For Derrida, however, it is evident that neither of these critiques of Platonic truth poses a sufficiently strong challenge to the philosophical tradition. Reiterating the claims of philosophy for rhetoric hardly changes the foundations of either discipline. Nor can phallogocentrism as such be extinguished just by drawing attention to the ways subjects are unconsciously ‘driven’ by phallic signifiers like truth and reason. It is on this basis that Derrida critiques the re-emerging tradition of psychoanalysis, which critiques the subject’s fetishistic investment in the signifier by disavowing its own theoretical phallogocentrism.

Freud, like those who follow him here, does nothing else but describe the necessity of phallogocentrism, explain its effects, which are as obvious as they are massive.

Phallogocentrism is neither an accident nor a theoretical mistake which may be imputed to this or that theoretician. It is an enormous and old root which must also be accounted for. It may then be described, as an object or a course are described, without this description taking part in what it operates the recognition of.³⁹³

According to Derrida, the contradiction that haunts psychoanalytic thought is the fact that even as psychoanalysis remains squarely focused on the oppressive logos which haunts and constrains the subject’s agency, it must itself be transmissible in the form of a doctrine, dogma, or logos.³⁹⁴

The attachment to the signifier is much like Plato’s ‘truth’ because it is both the symptom to be

³⁹³ Jacques Derrida, “The Purveyor of Truth,” 96-7.

³⁹⁴ See also Ellie Ragland, who argues “Derrida views the Lacanian phallus, not as a part of the body which is, in turn, re-presented in perception, but as a privileged signifier whose function would be transcendental; a nondetermined metaphysical element among heterogeneous elements. For Derrida, the phallic function would be that of ending the eternal sliding of the phonemic signifier.” Ellie Ragland, *The Logic of Sexuation: From Aristotle to Lacan* (Albany, NY: State University Press of New York Press, 2004), 11.

exorcised from the patient's discourse and the concept that cannot be extinguished from psychoanalytic interpretation. As Derrida says elsewhere, "Freud always maintained that that resistance could not be removed by the simple discovery of the truth or by the simple revelation to the patient of the true meaning of the symptom."³⁹⁵ Psychoanalysis instead strives for "an unbinding dissolution."³⁹⁶ And yet, psychoanalysis must violate this principle of 'unbinding' because "if there was no unity of the concept of analysis, there would be no tradition – from philosophy to psychoanalysis."³⁹⁷ Put much more succinctly, the signifier or symptom is its own kernel of phallogocentric 'truth'. It is the thing that psychoanalysis must repeat so as to provide itself with a discernable identity.

The Limits of the Rhetorical Secret

Derrida's critique of Plato's phallogocentrism continues to have force for rhetorical critics because he offers the means of theorizing "a very strictly determinable limit" to Rhetoric's disciplinary identity.³⁹⁸ To effect a "true" deconstruction of phallogocentrism would mean coming to grips with rhetoric's own phallogocentric limit, or the unconscious priority still given to philosophical truth within rhetoricians' scholarly discourse. As Calvin Schrag explains, the deconstruction of rhetoric and philosophy entails an encounter that would dramatically transform both disciplines:

If one is to speak of the "end of philosophy" so as to effect a deconstruction of sedimented methodologies, foundationalist epistemologies, and metaphysical constructs in the philosophical enterprise, then one may also need to speak of the "end of rhetoric" for basically similar reasons. ... Derrida ... delineates two strategies of deconstruction –

³⁹⁵ Jacques Derrida, "Resistances" in *Resistances of Psychoanalysis*, trans. Peggy Kamuf, Pascale-Anne Brault, and Michael Naas (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998), 17.

³⁹⁶ Derrida, "Resistances," 17.

³⁹⁷ Derrida, "Resistances," 19.

³⁹⁸ Derrida, "Purveyor of Truth," 97.

one that stays with the tradition it purports to deconstruct and one that proposes to leave it. The former is “a deconstruction without changing terrain,” remaining within the “founding concepts” and the “original problematic”; the latter projects a change of terrain “in a discontinuous and irruptive fashion, by brutally placing oneself outside.”³⁹⁹

Echoing Derrida’s warning about psychoanalysis, Schrag cautions rhetorical scholars that in seeking to critique the discipline of philosophy, they mustn’t merely reiterate the same idea in different form, or tread over the same “terrain” without departing from it. Planting a rhetorical flag in philosophical discourse would be no more than a changing of the guard, or a substitution of one set of principles with another – without addressing the phallic kernel of truth that theory preserves and disseminates. A radical reformulation of rhetoric, philosophy, or even psychoanalysis would require an “irruptive” reconfiguration of each.

As I have begun to suggest in Chapter 4, however, rhetoric’s phallogocentric limit might be more productively conceptualized as a libidinal (or sexual) investment – one that I have elaborated in the present project as the “truth” of number. If rhetorical critics can renew the critique of phallogocentrism, they must attend more to the unjustified true beliefs of scholarly discourse that reside just outside of our critical field of vision. Put another way, if the critique of phallogocentrism cannot aim to unseat ‘truth’ once and for all, then what it can do is elaborate how this limit continues to structure what is held to be self-evident, stable, and true. Moreover, what psychoanalysis has right is the way that this limit is held in place by the phallic signifier, the unconsciously repeated word that, as Jane Gallop tells us, always “has *unreasonable privilege*” (italics added):

It is difficult not to want to dismiss and bury something so unreasonable, not at least to demand from the phallus a reason for its rule. One asks for ‘the reason’, the idea, the

³⁹⁹ Calvin O. Schrag, “Rhetoric Resituated at the End of Philosophy,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 71 (1985): 169.

cause behind the signifier, but what one gets is ‘la raison’, a specific signifier in a given language....’Raison’ besides carrying the various senses of its cognate ‘reason’ has a particular mathematical and musical sense: it means ‘proportion’. Through the contingencies of a specific signifier – ‘raison’ – one can ask for a reason and get a proportion.⁴⁰⁰

By drawing attention to the catachresis of ‘la raison,’ Gallop illustrates how the signifier, truth, and number simultaneously demands obeisance and fades into a meaningless numerical phrase. And yet, this observation also points scholars to the fact that number, like so many other signifiers, retains an “unreasonable privilege” in discourse. It is not self-evidently true, as Bruce Fink says, “because we’ll all be better off that way or for some other such rationale,” but rather because number “says so,” intuitively demanding our acquiescence.⁴⁰¹

Is the Rhetorical Secret Epistemic or Not?

These last remarks might lead us to the conclusion that the kind of *rhetoric* that this dissertation has sought to describe has, paradoxically, the character of a truth insofar as it “demands our acquiescence.” Put another way, each chapter of this dissertation has argued for an *ontological* rhetoric insofar as it has sought to capture our political ‘being’ through a language of trope. And yet, at the outset of this project, I equated the rhetoric of the secret with an epistemology of non-knowledge, or a way of knowing what cannot be known. So, is the rhetorical secret epistemic, or not?

As I have argued, the central conceit of epistemic rhetoric was a dilemma over rhetoric’s proper relationship to truth: whether rhetoric *preceded* truth, or vice-versa. The dilemma posed

⁴⁰⁰ Jane Gallop, *The Daughter’s Seduction: Feminism and Psychoanalysis* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1982), 21.

⁴⁰¹ Bruce Fink, *The Lacanian Subject: Between Language and Jouissance* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), 131.

by a rhetoric that could describe “how we know what we know” was that it denuded or unmasked the known and implicitly questioned its status as ‘truth’. From this perspective, the rhetorical secret might well be considered epistemic. It is, after all, *how we know* what we cannot know, taking an enjoyable, tropological structure that commits the subject to their epistemic search for the truth. It is, however, equally the case that the rhetorical secret is *ontological*, insofar as the tropes I have described commit the subject to a partial view of reality that occupies his or her ‘whole’ frame of reference. Moreover, the *non-knowledge* that the subject seeks has the character of a truth. As in the psychoanalytic encounter, the subject is set on a hunt to find a truth *about themselves*, one that they can discover only in their own signifiers. If the psychoanalytic epistemology, like that of the rhetorical secret, is invested in preserving, extending, and deferring the hidden ‘truth’ of one’s being, it may make sense to instead position the rhetorical secret *between* epistemology and ontology. The better way of asserting rhetoric’s role might be to say that it troubles the distinction between epistemology and ontology. Hence *an epistemology of non-knowledge*: the rhetorical secret is a mode of coming to know what cannot be known, and which, solely because it cannot be known, bears a signifying excess of *truth*.

The End of the Rhetorical Secret

In *The Ends of Rhetoric*, John Bender and David Wellbery describe the modern epochal shift from rhetoric to “rhetorality” as a turn away from a culture that increasingly denied the epistemological value of rhetoric and toward one which prizes “a generalized rhetoric that penetrates to the deepest levels of human experience.”

The classical tradition rarified speech and fixed it within a gridwork of limitations: it was a rule-governed domain whose procedures were delimited by the institutions that organized interaction and domination in traditional European society. Rhetorality, by

contrast, is bound to no specific set of institutions. It manifests the groundless, infinitely ramifying character of discourse in the modern world. For this reason, it allows for no explanatory meta-discourse that is not already itself rhetorical. Rhetoric is no longer the title of a doctrine and a practice, nor a form of cultural memory; it becomes instead something like the condition of our existence.⁴⁰²

The shift from the classical tradition to the modern era marks a temporal “end of rhetoric,” only to begin another era. In the age of rhetoricality, the critic is obliged to interrogate the ethical “ends of rhetoric,” or the dilemmas that Rhetoric raises because of its role as a mode of public apprehension, recollection, and identity.

I am not so convinced that we have entered a ‘new era’ of rhetoricality, making contact with the deep and foundationally rhetorical underpinnings of philosophical, objectivist, or historicist thought. For many, rhetoric remains within the word, embedded in the page, a textual feature of written speech. I have advanced a version of rhetoric as a means of orienting us toward rhetorical history as a series of unknowns made discoverable through their rhetorical *trope*. In that regard, we remain stuck in the Classical episteme, making sense of the unknown through the available, but never complete, discursive means.

This dissertation opened with a discussion of classical rhetoric’s tradition of deception, hinting at the way that the secret has haunted rhetoric since the beginning of its history. As I have argued at various places throughout this dissertation, this tradition encourages us to look back at Plato and Socrates not as the first *opponents* of rhetoric, but its most prominent inheritors – inheritors who, as their first act of business, set to the task of divorcing their available means of persuasion from that which had preceded it.

⁴⁰² John Bender and David E. Wellbery, “*Rhetoricality: On the Modernist Return of Rhetoric*,” in *The Ends of Rhetoric* ed. John Bender and David E. Wellbery (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999), 25.

The clinical profile of the bad other has hardly altered: tyranny and irrationalism are the effects of “self-deceptive rhetoric,” the *apatē*, or deception, about which Gorgias said, conversely, that “someone who proffers it is more just than one who does not, and someone who suffers it is wiser than one who does not.” ... What authorizes Plato’s Socrates ... to eschew true dialogue is that his constantly proclaimed goal is not the love of conversation or of words themselves but rather the search for the true and the good – the things themselves.⁴⁰³

In this dissertation, we have only just moved past the point of recognizing that “the true and the good – the things themselves,” are *secrets*, or rhetorical manifestations of a non-knowledge that has the character of a truth. Rhetoric’s strength lies in its critique of truth, displaying our own desirous investment as the only firm basis for its persisting grip.

As for the ends of the rhetorical secret, it is perhaps appropriate to meditate on the ‘end’ as both an *aim* and a *limit*, which conveys two very distinct ideas. On the one hand, the *aim* of the rhetorical secret is to relieve some burden by materializing something in discourse which is no longer – or was never – there. By falling into the rhetorical secret’s circuit, however, the subject never gets what he wants – always instead deferring this end-goal for another object, and another day. Thus the ‘end’ of the rhetorical secret, as an ‘aim,’ is that there is no aim: there is only an always-unfinished process of manufacturing the secret, namely, where knowledge fails to get the job done. On the other hand, the *limit* of the rhetorical secret (as I claimed in Chapter 4) is that there is no limit: and it is precisely this feature that makes it impossible to speak of an ‘archive’ or ‘collection’ of secrets. The secret, as I said at the outset of this chapter, is that there is no secret. There is no content to the secret, no authentic truth, aim, or limit. Instead, the ‘end’

⁴⁰³ Barbara Cassin, *Sophistical Practice: Toward a Consistent Relativism* (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2014), 55.

of the rhetorical secret is its surplus, hinging the possibility of future 'knowing' on the prior existence of an unknown that must – but cannot be proven – to exist.

REFERENCES

- Alinsky, Saul D. *Reveille for Radicals* (New York, NY: Random House, 1989)
- Alinsky, Saul D. *Rules for Radicals: A Practical Primer for Realistic Radicals* (New York, NY: Random House, 1989)
- Ambuel, David. *Image and Paradigm in Plato's Sophist* (Las Vegas, NV: Parmenides Publishing, 2007), 45.
- Armey, Dick and Matt Kibbe. *Give Us Liberty: A Tea Party Manifesto* (New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, 2014), 32.
- Armstrong, Aurelia. "Beyond Resistance: A Response to Zizek's Critique of Foucault's Subject of Freedom," *Parrhesia* 5 (2008): 19.
- Ayotte, Kevin, John Poulakos, and Steve Whitson. "Mistaking Nietzsche: Rhetoric and the Epistemic Pest," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 88 (2002): 121-127.
- Ballif, Michelle. *Seduction, Sophistry and the Woman with the Rhetorical Figure* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 2001), 37.
- Bender, John, and David E. Wellbery. "Rhetorality: On the Modernist Return of Rhetoric" in *The Ends of Rhetoric: History, Theory, Practice* ed. John Bender and David E. Wellbery (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999), 3-39.
- Biesecker, Barbara A. "Remembering World War II: The Rhetoric and Politics of National Commemoration at the Turn of the 21st Century," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 88 (2002): 394.
- Black, Edwin. "Secrecy and Disclosure as Rhetorical Forms," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 74 (1988): 149.
- Blair, Carole. "Nietzsche's Lecture Notes on Rhetoric: a Translation," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 16 (1983): 94-129.
- Booth, Wayne C. *A Rhetoric of Irony* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1974), 273.
- Bratich, Jack. "Public Secrecy and Immanent Security: A Strategic Analysis," *Cultural Studies* 20 (2006): 493.

Brummett, Barry. "Some Implications of 'Process' or 'Intersubjectivity': Postmodern Rhetoric," *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 9 (1976): 34.

_____. "A Defense of Ethical Relativism as Rhetorically Grounded," *The Western Journal of Speech Communication* 45 (1981): 286-298.

_____. "On to Rhetorical Relativism," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 68 (1982): 425-437.

_____. "A Eulogy for Epistemic Rhetoric," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 76 (1990): 69-72.

Burke, Kenneth. *A Grammar of Motives*. (Berkeley, CA: The University of California Press, 1969), 514, 517.

Campbell, John A. "Darwin and *The Origin of Species*: The Rhetorical Ancestry of an Idea," *Speech Monographs* 37 (1970): 1-14.

Carleton, Walter M. "What is Rhetorical Knowledge? A Response to Farrell — and More," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 64 (1978): 313-328.

Cassidy, John. "Ten Things I'll Miss About Newt When He's Gone," *New Yorker*. April 26, 2012, accessed March 26, 2015. <http://www.newyorker.com>.

Cherwitz, Richard A. and James W. Hikins. "Rhetorical Perspectivism," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 69 (1983): 249-266.

_____. *Communication and Knowledge: An Investigation in Rhetorical Epistemology* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1986)

Cherwitz, Richard A. and Charles W. Kneupper. "An Interview with Richard Cherwitz," *Pre/Text* 5 (1984): 197-235.

Condit Railsback, Celeste M. "Beyond Rhetorical Relativism: A Structural- Material Model of Truth and Objective Reality," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 69 (1983): 353, 357.

_____. "Multi-Layered Trajectories for Academic Contributions to Social Change," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 101 (2015): 264.

_____. "Pathos in Criticism: Edwin Black's Communism-As-Cancer Metaphor," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 99 (2013): 5.

Copjec, Joan. *Read My Desire: Lacan against the Historicists*. (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1994), 7, 190.

_____. *Imagine There's No Woman: Ethics and Sublimation* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2002), 8, 30.

Consigny, Scott. *Gorgias: Sophist and Artist* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2001), 58-59.

Crivelli, Paolo. *Plato's Account of Falsehood: A Study of the Sophist* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 22.

Croasman, Earl and Richard A. Cherwitz. "Beyond Rhetorical Relativism" *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 68 (1982): 8.

Crary, Jonathan. *Suspensions of Perception: Attention, Spectacle, and Modern Culture* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1999), 9.

Dean, Jodi. *Democracy and Other Neoliberal Fantasies: Communicative Capitalism & Left Politics* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009), 50.

_____. *Publicity's Secret: How Technoculture Capitalizes on Democracy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2002), 22.

Debord, Guy. *Comments on the Society of the Spectacle* (New York, NY: Verso, 1988)

Derrida, Jacques. "Resistances" in *Resistances of Psychoanalysis*, trans. Peggy Kamuf, Pascale-Anne Brault, and Michael Naas (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998), 4, 9, 36.

_____. "The Purveyor of Truth" in *The Purloined Poe: Lacan, Derrida, and Psychoanalytic Reading* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988), 173-212.

Derrida, Jacques and Maurizio Ferraris. "Secrétaire," in *A Taste for the Secret*, Jacques Derrida and Maurizio Ferraris, ed. Giacomo Donis and David Webb, trans. Giacomo Donis (Cambridge, MA: Polity Press, 2001), vii-viii.

Engels, Jeremy. *Enemyship: Democracy and Counter-Revolution in the Early Republic* (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 2010).

Farrell, Thomas B. "Knowledge, Consensus, and Rhetorical Theory," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 62 (1976): 9, 11.

_____. "Social Knowledge II," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 64 (1978): 329-334.

_____. "From the Parthenon to the Bassinet: Death and Rebirth along the Epistemic Trail," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 76 (1990): 82.

Felman, Shoshana. *Jacques Lacan and the Adventure of Insight: Psychoanalysis in Contemporary Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), 40-41.

Fink, Bruce. "The Four Discourses" in *The Lacanian Subject: Between Language and Jouissance* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), 129-137.

Foss, Sonja K. and Ann Gill, "Michel Foucault's Theory of Rhetoric as Epistemic," *The Western Journal of Speech Communication* 51 (1987): 384-401.

Foucault, Michel. *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York, NY: Random House Inc, 1970)

_____. *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (New York, NY: Pantheon Books, 1972), 9-10.

_____. "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, ed. Donald F. Bouchard, trans. Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1977), 142, 145, 148, 151.

_____. *Fearless Speech*, ed. Joseph Pearson (Los Angeles, CA: Semiotext(e), 2001), 20.

_____. *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the College de France 1977 -1978*, ed. Michel Senellart, Francois Ewald, Alessandro Fontana, and Arnold Davidson, trans. Graham Burchell (New York, NY: Picador, 2007), 201.

_____. *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and other writings* ed. Colin Gordon (New York, NY: Pantheon Books, 1980), 132.

_____. "The Subject and Power" in *Power*, ed. James D. Faubion and Paul Rabinow, trans. Robert Hurley (New York, NY: The New Press, 2000), 341.

_____. "Truth and Juridical Forms" in *Power*, ed. James D. Faubion and Paul Rabinow, trans. Robert Hurley (New York, NY: The New Press, 2000), 9.

Francois, Anne-Lise. *Open Secrets: The Literature of Uncounted Experience* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2008), .

Freddoso, David. *The Case Against Barack Obama: The Unlikely Rise and Unexamined Agenda of the Media's Favorite Candidate*. (Washington D.C.: Regnery Publishing, 2008), xiv.

Frye, Northrop. *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990), 40.

Gallop, Jane. *The Daughter's Seduction: Feminism and Psychoanalysis* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1982), 21

Gaonkar, Dilip Parameshwar. "The Idea of Rhetoric in the Rhetoric of Science," in *Rhetorical Hermeneutics* eds. Alan G. Gross and William M. Keith (New York, NY: State University of New York Press, 1997), 36.

Geraghty, Jim. "The Alinsky Administration," *National Review Online*. May 14, 2009, accessed March 26, 2015. <http://www.nationalreview.com>.

Goffman, Erving. *Strategic Interaction* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1969)

Goodnight, G. Thomas and John Poulakos, "Conspiracy Rhetoric: From Pragmatism to Fantasy in Public Discourse," *Western Journal of Speech Communication* 45 (1981): 307.

Gregg, Richard B. "Rhetoric and Knowing: The Search for Perspective," *The Central States Speech Journal* 32 (1981): 130-144.

Gross, Alan G. "On the Shoulders of Giants: Seventeenth-Century Optics as an Argumentative Field," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 74 (1988): 2.

_____. "Rhetoric of Science *IS* Epistemic Rhetoric," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 76 (1990): 69-72.

Gunn, Joshua. "Death by Publicity: U.S. Freemasonry and the Drama of Public Secrecy," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 11 (2008): 268.

Gunn, Joshua and Mirko Hall. "Stick it in Your Ear: The Psychodynamics of iPod Enjoyment," *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 5 (2008): 137.

Gullett, Charly. *Cooking Alinsky's Goose: The New Capitalist Cookbook* (Prescott, AZ: Warfield Press, 2009), 1.

Heidegger, Martin. "The Anaximander Fragment" in *Early Greek Thinking*, trans. David F. Krell and Frank A. Capuzzi (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1975), 17.

Hikins, James W. "The Epistemological Relevance of Intrapersonal Rhetoric," *The Southern Speech Communication Journal* 42 (1977), 220-227.

_____. "Plato's Rhetorical Theory: Old Perspectives on the Epistemology of the New Rhetoric," *The Central States Speech Journal* 32 (1981): 160-176.

_____. "Nietzsche, Eristic, and the Rhetoric of the Possible: A Commentary on the Whitson and Poulakos 'Aesthetic View' of Rhetoric," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 81 (1995):353-377.

_____. "The Seductive Waltz: Rhetoric and Contemporary Interpretations of Nietzsche," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 85 (1999): 380-399.

Hemmingway, Mark. "Re: 'Pattern' of Obama's Borrowing," National Review Online. June 27, 2013, accessed March 26, 2015. <http://www.nationalreview.com>.

Horwitt, Sanford D. *Let Them Call Me Rebel: Saul Alinsky – His Life and Legacy* (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 1989), 2.

Horowitz, David. *Take No Prisoners: The Battle Plan for Defeating the Left* (Washington D.C.: Regenery Publishing, 2014), 46, 144-5.

Jaeger, Werner. *Paideia: The Ideals of Greek Culture* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1943), 268.

Jarratt, Susan C. *Rereading the Sophists: Classical Rhetoric Refigured* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1991)

Jay, Martin. *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twenty-First Century French Thought* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993), 27.

Johnson, Eliana. "James O'Keefe's Rules for Radicals," *National Review Online*. June 27, 2013, accessed March 26, 2015. <http://www.nationalreview.com>.

Kennedy, George A. *The Art of Persuasion in Greece* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1963), 32.

Kerferd, G.B. *The Sophistic Movement* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 1, 24, 28.

Koopman, Colin. *Genealogy as Critique: Foucault and the Problems of Modernity* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2013), 218-219.

Lacan, Jacques. *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York, NY: W. W. Norton, 1981), 29-30, 212.

_____. "Seminar on The Purloined Letter," in *Ecrits*, trans. Bruce Fink (New York, NY: WM Norton, 2006), 6-48.

Leff, Michael C. "In Search of Ariadne's Thread: A Review of the Recent Literature on Rhetorical Theory," *Central States Speech Journal* 29 (1978): 73-91.

Linkins, Jason. "We Watch The 'King of Bain' Attack Documentary So You Don't Have To," *Huffington Post*. March 12, 2012, accessed March 26, 2015. <http://www.huffingtonpost.com>.

Lundberg, Christian. "Enjoying God's Death: *The Passion of the Christ* and the Practices of an Evangelical Public," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 95 (2009): 401.

_____. "Letting Rhetoric Be: On Rhetoric and Rhetoricity," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 46 (2013): 247-55.

_____. *Lacan in Public: Psychoanalysis and the Science of Rhetoric* (Tuscaloosa, AL: The University of Alabama Press, 2012), 52.

Lyne, John. "Discourse, Knowledge, and Social Process: Some Changing Equations," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 68 (1982): 201-226.

_____. "Rhetorics of Inquiry," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 71 (1985): 66. Marx, Karl. *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*, ed. Dirk J. Struik, trans. Martin Milligan. <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/pdf/Economic-Philosophic-Manuscripts-1844.pdf>

McCloskey, Donald N. "The Rhetoric of Economics," *Journal of Economic Literature* 21 (1985): 481-517.

McCloskey, Deirdre N. "Big Rhetoric, Little Rhetoric: Gaonkar on the Rhetoric of Science," in *Rhetorical Hermeneutics* eds. Alan G. Gross and William M. Keith (New York, NY: State University of New York Press, 1997), 101-112.

McDaniel, James. "Liberal Irony: A Program for Rhetoric," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 35 (2002): 297-327.

McKerrow, Raymie E. "Critical Rhetoric: Theory and Praxis," *Communication Monographs* 56 (1989): 103-104.

Miller, Toby. "New Technologies to Form New Selves" in *The Well-Tempered Self: Citizenship, Culture, and the Postmodern Subject* (Baltimore, MA: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 174.

Morris III, Charles E. "The Pink Herring & the Fourth Persona: J. Edgar Hoover's Sex Crime Panic," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 48 (2002): 229.

Mouffe, Chantal. *The Return of the Political* (New York, NY: Verso, 2005), .

Nelson, John S. and Allan Megill, "Rhetoric of Inquiry: Projects and Prospects," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 72 (1986): 23.

Nelson, John S., Allan Megill, and Donald N. McCloskey, "Rhetoric of Inquiry," in *Rhetoric of the Human Sciences: Language and Argument in Scholarship and Public Affairs* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987): 3-18.

Nussbaum, Martha C. *The Fragility of Goodness: Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1986), 95, 115, 204.

O'Hara, John M. *A New American Tea Party: The Counterrevolution Against Bailouts, Handouts, Reckless Spending, and More Taxes* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2010), 237.

Orr, C. Jack. "How Shall We Say: 'Reality is Socially Constructed through Communication,'" *Central States Speech Journal* 29 (1978): 263-274.

Plato, *The Sophist* in *The Sophist & The Statesman*, ed. Raymond Klibansky and Elizabeth Anscombe, trans. A. E. Taylor (New York, NY: Thomas Nelson and Sons LTD, 1961), 231d 2-3.

_____. *Gorgias*, trans. Donald J. Zeyl (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, 1987), 463b.

_____. *Phaedrus* trans. Alexander Nehamas and Paul Woodruff, (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company Inc, 1995), 271a-b.

Poulakos, John. "Toward a Sophistic Definition of Rhetoric," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 16 (1983): 35-48.

_____. "Rhetoric, The Sophists, and the Possible," *Communication Monographs* 51 (1984): 215-226.

_____. "Interpreting Sophistical Rhetoric: A Response to Schiappa," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 23 (1990): 226.

_____. *Sophistical Rhetoric in Classical Greece* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1995), 16.

_____. "Terms for Sophistical Rhetoric," in *Rethinking the History of Rhetoric: Multidisciplinary Essays on the Rhetorical Tradition*, ed. Takis Poulakos (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1993), 57-58.

Reitzes, Donald C. and Dietrich C. Reitzes. *The Alinsky Legacy: Alive and Kicking* (Greenwich, CT: Jai Press Inc., 1987), xxi, 1.

Roudtree, Clark. *Venomous Speech: Problems with American Political Discourse on the Right and Left* (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2013),

Ryan, Paul. *Young Guns: A New Generation of Conservative Leaders* (New York, NY: Threshold Editions, 2010), 7-8.

Schiappa, Edward. "Neo-Sophistic Rhetorical Criticism or the Historical Reconstruction of Sophistic Doctrines?" *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 23 (1990): 196.

_____. "History and Neo-Sophistic Criticism: A Reply to Poulakos," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 23 (1990): 307-315. _____. "Sophistic Rhetoric: Oasis or Mirage?," *Rhetoric Review* 10 (1991): 5-18.

_____. "Rhetorike: What's in a Name? Toward a Revised History of Early Greek Rhetorical Theory," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 78 (1992): 3, 5, 6, 10, 11.

_____. *The Beginnings of Rhetorical Theory in Classical Greece* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999) 1-13, 21.

_____. "Second Thoughts on the Critiques of Big Rhetoric," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 34 (2001): 259-274.

Schrag, Calvin O. "Rhetoric Resituated at the End of Philosophy," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 71 (1985): 164-174.

Scott, Robert L. "On Viewing Rhetoric as Epistemic," *Central States Speech Journal* 18 (1967): 17.

_____. "On Viewing Rhetoric as Epistemic: Ten Years Later," *Central States Speech Journal* 27(1976): 263.

_____. "Epistemic Rhetoric and Criticism: Where Barry Brummett Goes Wrong," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 76 (1990): 300-303.

Simmel, Georg. "The Sociology of Secrecy," *The American Journal of Sociology* 11 (1906): 441-498.

Simons, Herbert W. "The Rhetoric of Science And the Science of Rhetoric," *The Western Journal of Speech Communication* 42 (1978) 40-1.

Sokolove, Michael. "The Outside's Insider" *New York Times*, November 8 2009.
<http://www.lexisnexis.com> .

Steigler, Bernard. *Technics and Time, 1: The Fault of Epimetheus* trans. Richard Beardsworth and George Collins (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998), 1.

Stormer, Nathan. "A Likely Past: Abortion Social Data and a Collective Memory of Secrets in 1950's America," *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 7 (2010): 339.

_____. "Recursivity: A Working Paper on Rhetoric and *Mnesis*," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 99 (2013): 41.

Sutton, Jane. "The Marginalization of Sophistical Rhetoric and the Loss of History", in *Rethinking the History of Rhetoric: Multidisciplinary Essays on the Rhetorical Tradition*, ed. Takis Poulakos (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1993), 86.

Taussig, Michael. *Defacement: Public Secrecy and the Labor of the Negative* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999),.

Thomas, Douglas. "Reflections on a Nietzschean Turn in Rhetorical Theory: Rhetoric without Epistemology," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 80 (1994): 73.

Vincent, David. *The Culture of Secrecy: Britain, 1832-1998* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1998)

Visker, Rudi. *Michel Foucault: Genealogy as Critique*, trans. Chris Turner (New York, NY: Verso, 1995), 89.

Vivian, Bradford. *Public Forgetting: The Rhetoric and Politics of Beginning Again* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010), 7-9.

Wardy, Robert. *The Birth of Rhetoric: Gorgias, Plato, and their successors* (London, UK: Routledge, 1996), 10-11.

Weaver, Richard. *The Ethics of Rhetoric* (Chicago, IL: Henry Regnery Company, 1953), 52.

Whitson, Steve and John Poulakos, "Nietzsche and the Aesthetics of Rhetoric," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 79 (1993): 132, 137-138, 142-143.

Žižek, Slavoj. *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (Brooklyn, NY: Verso 1989), 64, 150

_____. *In Defense of Lost Causes* (New York, NY: Verso, 2008), 13-14.