Disposal of the Body: Upending Postmodernism[1]

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abstract

A failure to problematise a *disposal* of meanings encloses the modernity/postmodernity debate. Modernists, with their focus on knowledge have equated the disembodied mind with the *production* of meanings. Postmodernists, with their focus on identity have equated fragmenting images of the self with the *consumption* of meanings. In this paper, drawing on the work of Heidegger and Derrida, the mode of reflection is decentred from its philosophers' throne as engaged neither in the production nor the consumption of meanings, but in the disposal of an 'excess' in meaning. Bringing back the body, without re-centring the subject, offers a more sustainable view of culture as recursively constituted by actors in the work they do to dispose of meaning. Far from any arbitrariness in the assigning of meanings to expressions preshadowing an 'end to the social', the paper goes on to argue that knowledgability about ambiguity should be seen as a key resource of social actors.

Consider a frenchman tying his shoelace. An untied shoelace is self-evidently a matter for investigation and the frenchman does not hesitate to comport himself to this sign of disorder in the universe. In throwing himself at the problem he disposes of his body likewise. He up-ends himself as 'supplement' to his investigation. In contrast, the englishman, for whom the pose is everything, refuses to be so dis-posed. While he instantly recognises the untied lace as a sign to be read by others of a disorder in him as universe, he has at his disposal his leg as a loyal and docile servant. Practised in the economy of command, he raises the knee to bring the boot to heel.

Introduction

In a nice turn of the meaning of 'refuse', Mary Douglas has pointed to the interpretative possibilities of examining what is pollution or taboo for identifying 'implicit meanings'. Douglas (1966, 1975) examines what is taken to be 'dirt', that which is too mundane to

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1 This paper was presented at the *Theory, Culture & Society* 10th Anniversary Conference, Champion, Pennsylvania, 1992 and the 10th SCOS conference, *Organisation and Theatre*, Lancaster University, July 1992, and subsequently revised later that year. As a number of people writing on disposal refer to the revised 1992 manuscript, I have resisted the temptation to refine or correct this version with the exception of adding a postscript.

be other than implicit. She relates this to the backgrounding of cosmological knowledge, which for Douglas is also implicit, since it is 'too true to warrant discussion'. Implicit meanings do not, therefore, represent opposite ends of a discursive spectrum, with some meanings beneath thought and others above talk. For Douglas implicit meanings are wholly related:

> Humble rules of hygiene turn out to be rationally constructed with the way that the Lele cosmos is constructed... (Douglas, 1975: 4)

Douglas's point is that the Lele must refuse to change their belief that contagion will spread by food cooked in a fire tended by a menstruating woman, since to include a negation of this possibility requires their whole cosmos to collapse.

A less exotic example linking conceptions of refuse and conduct comes from a consumer behaviour study of 'appropriateness' in London and Newcastle. Marshall's respondents in the Newcastle area recount their problems for the disposal of fish:

> 'I would not do anything with left overs.'
> 'I mean once fish is cold and cooked no way would I think of heating it up or putting it in the fridge.'
> 'It would be straight into the bin.' (Marshall, 1990: 108)

As Marshall (1990: 107) points out 'this behaviour feeds (sic) directly back into the acquisition stage'; according to his study, people in the Newcastle area do not eat much fish. Problems with disposal position our consumption. Indeed, as this paper intends to demonstrate, disposal affects all we do and interpenetrates how we 'go on' in the world.

Problematising disposal inverts consumption as the mainstay of postmodern thinking. Commodification (Lukacs, 1971), symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1984), the collapse of metanarratives (Lyotard, 1984) and Baudrillard's own thesis of cultural implosion and a universe of floating signs, all privilege the symbolic in terms of consumption, but fail to problematise questions over the disposal of meaning. This is no small failing. As a consequence of the tendency to regard consumption as derived unproblematically from production (Featherstone, 1991: 13), the spectre of consumption as meaningless haunts much of postmodern theory.

Ironically, as will be discussed, an emphasis on disposal evinces that there can be no deletion of meanings. Disposal works along *conduits* to alleviate pressure. Disposal is never effected through deletion; meanings are *arranged* and *managed* through recursively constructed 'structures' (Giddens, 1984) which facilitate their dispersal and displacement. Only in this latter sense can the production and consumption of meaning be fully understood.

Figuratively, the paper excavates the sump in con-sump-tion. Plumbing may seem an odd re-duct-ion of social life. The argument over con-duct, however, is that disposal matters wherever there is pro-duct-ion. When the septic tank is full, what goes down must come up. Another flush in the john and back up the pipes comes a brown looking liquid together with an unpleasant smell. Postmodern views that we float on endless signs takes on a new meaning. Next time you overconsume and it may be you floating.

More substantially, the paper makes two moves. First, disposal is introduced to the debate on modernity and postmodernity in order to unsettle the dominance of the production/consumption pairing by forming a triptych. This move allows the mode of reflection to be realigned away from that of the production or consumption of meaning, where philosophers and social theorists have always taken it to be. Instead, drawing on Heidegger and Derrida, it will be argued that the mode of reflection is largely geared to the *disposal* of meaning. That is, rather than effect a denial of the cognitive nature of cognition, I am reworking the mode of reflection away from its prior pre-eminence as that which produces or consumes meaning towards that of a secondary and 'back-up' role concerned with the disposal of meaning. The task is not to celebrate the collapse of meta-narratives (Lyotard, 1984) as irrational, but to clarify the nature of rationality.

Second, and against the thrust of much postmodern theory, I will argue that our propensity for the consumption of signs depends on how well 'plumbed out' meanings are for their dispersal and displacement. This move decenters the disposal of meanings from the self to the social. The flush of embarrassment when one discovers a block in one's con-duct. Adopting the most crude interpretation of Mary Douglas's thesis, I take 'culture' to represent the architecture of disposal. Where before many may have gained some feelings of belonging by attending a football match, today some 'take their stress' to the floatarium (Parks, 1992); instead of relating to film stars, women exercisers draw on advertisements in ways that enable slimmers to separate off their images of self from the materiality of their failure, disposing of their body as 'jello walking behind me' (Ray, 1992); others who take writing the body very literally just 'eat, fuck, tattoo' (Wauters, 1992).

Decentering the disposal of meaning away from the self and into the ducts of the social takes much of the load of interpretation out of the mode of reflection. This marginalises the mode of reflection from its historical placing as the seat of a disembodied mind, where it has been long equated with 'thinking', to a more occasional and post hoc intervening in an embodied consciousness. As will be discussed, these occasional interventions seem unconcerned with the production and consumption of meanings. Rather reflection, as will be discussed, appears more limited to, and preoccupied with, a disposal of any 'excess' in meaning.

PART I

The Postmodern Challenge

The social appears challenged by the 'depthless culture' thesis. Postmodernity, in at least one of its major guises, is associated with a shift of significance away from conditions of materiality towards a universe of signs. For example, Baudrillard is read as having replaced a theory of the mode of production with a theory of 'modes of seduction' (Gane, 1991: 193). This reversing of the direction of determinism through saturating social relations with shifting cultural signs Baudrillard interprets as the 'triumph of a signifying culture' and forms the 'end of the social' (Featherstone, 1991: 6).

For the purposes of this paper, postmodern theory, even where there is no postmodernity to address, at least raises the question of what sort of meanings can survive without the support of 'culture'. In the more extreme view, however, culture 'implodes' to reduce significance to a practice which can amount to no more than consumption of pure signs. This 'culture of consumption' constitutes the millennium, a *monstre froid* recursively constructed from a liquidation of the self into ever-fragmenting bundles of quasi-selves (Featherstone, 1991), a black hole of our own making into which the social vanishes.

Perhaps because of the extremity of Baudrillard's thesis, others have drawn back from describing a world emptied out into 'pure signs'. For example, de Certeau (1988) argues that consumers are the place where meaning is not only recognised and given shape but also ordered and consumed in real and symbolic terms. In drawing on de Certeau's theme, Grafton-Small adds:

> ..it is our understanding which adds substance, if not meat, to the menu. (Grafton-Small, 1991: 1)

But where the subject has been decentred, what is understanding? Where there is no meat to the meaning, what is substance? The melancholy of millennium postmodernism (Jay, 1986) can hardly be pushed off by a tacit return to the subject with voluntaristic intentions.

Featherstone also argues against a mere "reverse populist celebration of mass pleasures and cultural disorder". In a more deterministic mood than de Certeau, he seeks a more detached sociological account:

> ...it is important to focus on the growing prominence of the *culture* of consumption and not merely regard consumption as derived unproblematically from production. (Featherstone, 1991: 13)

Certainly the culture of consumption cannot merely invert the culture of production. But again there are difficulties here. Where is the space in which consumption can be examined without recourse to the projects of modernity?

Largely missing either from those who theorise consumption as a 'depthless' culture, or from those who wish to study the empiricicity of consumption, is some account of disposal. In this respect Mary Douglas's thesis does more than equate culture with social mechanisms for directing and stabilising meanings. In moving away from such structuralist concerns, she emphasises rather the importance of thinking 'culture' as it were from the bottom up. In her focus on the exchange of signs, whether in the form of goods or the form of norms, she suggests first how the social is central to consumption and second how acts of disposal reinstantiate the social.

Drawing on Levi-Strauss's insight that animals which are tabooed are chosen not because they are good to eat but good to think, Douglas and Isherwood (1980: 76) insist that "any choice between goods is the result of, and contributes to, culture". Properly understood, Douglas's thesis undercuts conditions of possibility for postmodernity. There can be no 'end to the social'. What can be expected instead is that the social is always forming and reforming; while no doubt to many, deforming (see also, Featherstone, 1991).

The purpose of this paper, however, is not simply to point to an omission in the 'depthless' culture thesis, or even point to a failure of the 'depthless culture' critique to 'follow' Baudrillard further into his search for 'modes of disappearance' (Baudrillard, 1990a: 15). Rather, on the above cue from Douglas, the intention is to displace the implied order by suggesting that theorising disposal cannot stand as a mere addition to consumption. Instead I will argue that difficulties in the disposal of meanings dramatically affect a propensity for consumption of significance and affect our positioning towards the symbolic.

An Outline of the Problem

Once meanings are formed, how do we rid ourselves of unwanted images? I might, for example, have attended an orgy yesterday evening. Now I want to get back to work, but some images are recurrent. Now I am back with my partner, but some images are still present. Now I want to go on as before, but some images jar with my self-esteem. Far from my images being consumed in the early sense of "to destroy, to use up" (Williams, 1976: 68), psychoanalytic theory has re-sown meanings as "dragon's teeth which jump up as armed men".

Post-marx, post-freud, the question is: How do I throw away meaning? The question today is not: How are meanings formed? Meanings are formed; they run ahead of reflection as Hume argued in his much misunderstood discussion on 'necessary connection'. And, following Heidegger, they are pre-formed; and perhaps prefigured (Fernandez, 1986). Meanings are part of our 'throwness'; they are sedimented and constructed into the 'projective' nature of understanding before reflection wakes that understanding up. Meanings therefore are neither determined by choice or by cause. Meanings are recognised, where they are recognised at all, *after* their formation, not before.

So how do I dispose of meaning? Answers vary. Humanist traditions espouse volition, which at least offers a last-in-first-out disposal mechanism. In contrast, rationalism so sequestrates experience, the body and the lifeworld that it dispenses with meanings altogether, since knowledge consists of objective representations alone. Inversely, although his own program for progress rested on a simplistic account of deletion through falsification, Popper (1963: 3) notes that rationalism cannot even admit the possibility of there being 'sources' of ignorance. Within the rationalist creed, since knowledge is indubitable, knowledge can never be contemplated as a disposable object, as something to trash. Kuhn's (1962) crime was to open the dustbin of history and point out that it wasn't ignorance that was thrown away, but that which stood as, and could still stand as, knowledge.

More surprisingly, postmodernists have also left unexamined problems inherent in any disposal of meanings. In their emphasis on consumption of the symbolic, disposal has not formed an explicit part of the postmodern critique of rationalism. However, setting rationalism aside re-introduces problems made invisible by that perspective. Any rejection of rationalism cannot avoid attending to the problem of disposal, or non-disposal, of meanings. Nor can postmodernists have recourse to last-in-first-out

deletion, unless they abandon the poststructuralists' decisive rejection of volition in their decentring of the subject.

The failure to problematise disposal is intense for postmodernists. By failing to problematise disposal, it appears that their conclusions of an emptied out universe of signs simply arise from prior assumptions about disembodied meaning. Explaining knowledge as disposable looks to be crucial for any non-foundationalist position. It is self-evident that contextualization of theorising within time-space settings is not possible without a certain disposability of meanings. Even in physics, some contextualization of what constitutes knowledge is always tacit (Kuhn, 1990) and necessary (Putnam, 1974). If meanings are not actually abandoned in order to switch settings, some ability to rearrange so as to *defer* meaning looks to be a minimum condition.

There is of course some irony in disposability being foundational to all non-foundationalist positions. The aporia is so immediate as to suggest at once the impossibility of disposal having been completely overlooked. Such a lacuna, following Derrida, can be expected to have its absence marked by the presence of the problem everywhere within extant theories. Indeed, Baudrillard's 'modes of disappearance' is an interesting turn on his earlier positions. Bourdieu's (1984) symbolic capital manifests itself in each's 'disposal' of their body: this exceeds just the tying of shoelaces since symbolic capital affects one's shape, one's walk and an ease or discomfort with one's body. And Derrida's own emphasis on differance suggests that pre-disposals over meanings are pivotal in the processes of deferral and displacement.

PART II

In problematising disposal I first examine meanings in respect to the 'logic of presence'. As Derrida (1982: 22) remarks, Heidegger's meditation on the ontico-ontological difference is 'uncircumventable'. Heidegger's interrogation of Being stands as a conduit through which all examination of meanings must pass. Specifically I draw out understanding as located in time-space settings (Goffman's [1958] 'neglected situation'), sharpening conceptions of modernity as being the will to act at a distance (Latour, 1987; Rose & Miller, 1992) and circumvent the 'presence' of time-space settings. Heidegger's emphasis on a 'fall' from Being suggests that some loss of meaning, essence, is the price to be paid for navigating modernity through what Margaret Donaldson has termed disembedded thinking.

I turn then to reexamine Derrida's attack on the 'logic of presence' and suggest that his deconstruction of the hierarchy of speech over writing can be reinterpreted as a recognition of text making meanings ever present. There is no deletion of meaning, merely a continuous deferral. Derrida's examination of text stresses a materiality in the signifier which reverses Husserl's failure to dispose of the signifier in his search for pure meaning. Since no signified can escape the inevitability of becoming a signifier, Derrida is raising the impossibility of abandoning meanings. Instead, any deconstruction of text pivots on a disposability of meanings in terms of their *rearrangement* through an

ability to differ and defer. Writing, in Derrida's ontology, stands as a machine for moving among signifiers, expressions, in order to think the Other and pull through meanings.

Being-in-the-World and the Logic of Presence

As conventionally stated, Heidegger (1959, 1962) reveals traditional metaphysics to be obsessed by questions of materiality, whose poverty is governed by the either/or of questions, such as do I exist? why are there things rather than nothing? Materiality is always privileged over meaning. Or at least it seems so from these questions which arise from viewing the world as composed of/fragmented into 'things' (Siendes). Heidegger (1959) deconstructs metaphysics as a tradition within which the very questions of meaning, constantly evaded by a stress on existence *as* materiality, are brought into being in the form of questions of essence and by the very same tradition. Exposing the frailty of a foundationalism built around the (false) separation of meaning and materiality is an essential part of Heidegger's legacy.[2]

The logic of presence is critical to Heidegger's (1962) account of meaning. Being involves presence. Presence therefore entails meaning, understanding, as located materially in the time-space settings of being-in-the-world. Since presence is specific to a time-space setting, meanings can be expected to alter through alterations in presence and, hence, in time-space. In this way, although Heidegger would not state it so, time-space acts, movements of the body, can be conceived as a medium through which meanings change. That is, meanings are not only constructed through presence in time-space, prior meaning is *disposed* of, deleted, by changes in presence.

Central to Heidegger's account of meaning is a theory of action. Acts are central to his logic of presence. Meanings and action are always interlinked, but not always in the same way. It is important to distinguish two moods (Stimmungen) in Heidegger's analysis. The first is when we stand in 'production'. Here meanings are *ready-to-hand*. As ready-to-hand we do not notice meanings; they pivot action, not reflection. Thus in nailing down the roof, the hammer disappears into an extension of my arm. Only when the hammer slips from my fingers, or bangs my thumb, does the hammer 'announce' itself as hammer. Meanings become visible to consciousness only when they are *un-ready-to-hand.* Only in the mood of interrogating language, when consciousness turns on itself in the mode of 'reflection', do meanings become the object of reflection and, hence, visible *as* reflection.

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2 Heidegger (1962) locates meaning through his concept of Dasein, being-in-the-world. Following Husserl's call 'to the things themselves' and Brentano's tenet that only things can be the object of thought (Kotarbinski, 1976), Heidegger evolves presence as a logic in which meanings and things co-constitute each other. This unifying of signifier and signified within presence breaks radically with Husserl's attempt to form a 'pure' signified through his method of transcendental reduction. In this way Heidegger exits from the Cartesian subject/object split and repudiates the 'ontic' doctrine of meanings as merely representational of objects. Instead of focusing meaning on the epistemological question of how can we know, Heidegger gives 'meaning' and ontological turn.

It should be clear from this summary account of the logic of presence, that if meanings are accepted as not only pivotal to action, but inseparable from action, then their disposability becomes paramount for modernity and the rapid navigation of time-space settings. Unless meanings are subject to change, alteration or rearrangement, action will self-arrest. Meanings which are ready-to-hand in one setting become un-ready-to-hand in the next. Instead of helping us to 'go on' in the world, meanings become the barrier to action. Indeed, the position is worse. Not only will I shift moods, out of one characterised by 'production' to one of 'reflection', but I would become stuck for ever in the particulars of *that* reflection.

Language and Making Everything Present

Derrida's inversion of writing over speech can be understood as an attempt to overthrow the logic of presence.[3] By mobilising writing rather than speaking, Derrida wants to emphasise the impossibility of deletion. The word stroked out is a new inscription, the attempted erasure inscribes a new mark. These facts are elided by philosophers when they introspect and mistake the illusion of speaking as speaking *for* consciousness. Derrida first notes that presence, as pure presence, rules out the possibility of language:

> The hinge [brissure] marks the impossibility that a sign, the unity of a signifier and signified, be produced within the plenitude of a present and an absolute presence. (Derrida, 1976: 69)

Derrida perceives language for Heidegger to be an 'undecidable supplement' to the logic of presence. Heidegger wants to rethink meaning as Being, but however close he comes to the brink of saying so, he cannot propose that language be finally abandoned. And if, instead, language is that which is to be interrogated, how can this process of interrogation escape being endless?[4]

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3 In *Of Grammatology* Derrida (1976) contends that philosophers have always privileged speech over writing. In support of his contention, Kamuf quotes Aristotle:

> Spoken words are the symbols of mental experience and written words are the symbols of spoken words. (1991: 31)

Formally stated, if philosophers has (mis)taken speech to represent reality, writing has been accorded an even more lowly status as the mere representation of speech. However, Derrida's inversion of writing over speech attacks not only this second hierarchy, he is also displacing the dogma of language as representational. In this last displacement, Derrida follows Heidegger, but no attempt will be made here to split their relative contributions to an overturning of the foundationalist view of language. Instead, in this section, I want to explore Derrida's account of language and make sense of his claim that we stand before the text and that there is only the text.

4 'Tympan' (Derrida, 1982) can be read as illustrating this dilemma. In the scientism on the left hand side of the page, Derrida demonstrates on the reader the endlessness of deconstructing a particular term. By weaving in more and more terms, the deconstruction repeats 'what is implicit in the founding concepts' and hence the text becomes more and more technical, tedious and boring:

> Here one risks ceaselessly confirming, consolidating, *relifting* (*relever*), at an always more certain depth, that which one allegedly deconstructs. The continuous process of making explicit, moving toward an opening, risks sinking into the autism of closure. (Derrida, 1982: 135)

Deriding Heidegger's account of presence as an "ontotheological determination of the meaning of Being", Derrida (1982: 33-34) seeks instead the "hidden passageway" that makes "the problem of presence communicate with the problem of the written trace". For Derrida, the hidden passageway is language. Language, Derrida argues, comes into play as a 'hinge', in the very movement across moments of presence. The double meaning of hinge, as a joint and a break, Derrida (1976: 65) takes to designate both "difference and articulation". Language enters therefore not only in the production or consumption of meanings, but acts to facilitate their disposal: first by differing, marking a distinction in meanings; and second by deferring, putting off an engagement with *those* meanings because *other* meanings are already being pulled through.

Certainly on this account language looks central to facilitating rapid movement across time-space settings. For Derrida, the catch is that through recourse to language all other experience is deferred from presence. The only artefact which can claim presence is language. But this is not to say that 'things' have absence. Rather it is to recognise that their very thingness reveals them as the residue of a mediation through language It is the disciplining powers of language which hypostatize 'things' as primary and obscure their nature as a residue of being-in-the-world. In order to invert this displacement and point to the "arche-phenomenon of 'memory'" Derrida (1976: 70) names this residue as *trace*:

> That the signified is originally and essentially ...trace, that it is *always already in the position of the signifier*, is the apparently innocent proposition within which the metaphysics of the logos, of presence and consciousness, must reflect upon writing as its death and its resource. (Derrida, 1976: 73)

It is as trace that language constitutes a labyrinth of association, one of both difference and articulation.

However, in order to for trace to instantiate these powers of suggestion, language eliminates presence for all but itself.. As Derrida argues, since no signified can escape the inevitability of becoming a signifier, the text before us stands for all text. A text in which there can be nothing absent and which is all that is present. If Heidegger was always on the verge of recognising the fullness of the presence of language, it is Derrida's contribution to have revealed that through language nothing can have absence. Everything is 'lifted' into language. Since the continuous constituting of 'things' through language also acts *on* language, only specific *inscriptions* may be absent.

The literary nature of the right hand side of the page registers the second strategy of deconstruction, illustrating Derrida's argument that throwing off the discipline of a discourse merely throws discussion onto older ground:

> …the simple practice of language ceaselessly reinstates the new terrain on the oldest ground. (Derrida, 1982: 135)

Derrida does not claim any easy way out of this dilemma but suggests that 'a new writing must weave and interlace' these two motifs of deconstruction. This process is illustrated by the way in which a new margin is created through footnotes cutting across the pages of 'Tympan'.

In re-examining writing, Derrida has picked up language from its status as that of an 'undecidable supplement' to the logic of presence and transformed language-in-use into presence itself as *text*.[5] Once the simulacrum of text is entered, the logic of presence is abandoned and, in consequence, as Roland Barthes has noted, language can never be exited. In Derrida's words, we stand before the text, there is nothing but the text, etc. On this account the rapid movement across time-space settings through inscriptions (Latour, 1987) is in part illusion since language is never left and the time-space setting only ever entered as text.

Bringing Back the Subject

Heidegger and Derrida offer distinct, and competing, theories of the disposal of meanings. Within the logic of presence the transition of meanings from one time-space setting to the next appears unproblematic; one minute we are consuming nailing in all its full-fill-ment; the next minute we are sucking our thumb and consuming the hammerness of a hammer. Within the logic of text the transport across meanings is also unproblematic; language stands as a machine (Derrida, 1982: 316) the productivity of whose marks and inscriptions is, in all their linearity, to pull through meanings. Stated baldly thus, each amounts to a determinative view of meaning, although the materiality constituting presence and the materiality constitutive of text register important differences.

This provisional result is due to the absence of the 'subject'. While both Heidegger and Derrida de-centre the subject, it is nevertheless, a serious misreading of their philosophies to think that either do not attend assiduously (and throughout their respective writings) to the subject. My reason for caricaturing Heidegger and Derrida respectively as the text of presence and the presence of text, however, is to note an overlap. Both the logic of presence and the logic of text offer possible worlds for understanding how a disposal of meanings can be accomplished through action or through writing.

Conceiving the mode of reflection as directed towards disposal provides a way of theorising the subject that is perhaps consonant with both Heidegger and Derrida. Although space only permits a sketch here, what directs reflection at disposal is an 'excess' of meaning. It is the excess of meaning that exerts pressure on consciousness, bringing reflection to bear upon it *in order to dispose of this excess.* For Heidegger, it is the excess of meaning that makes something 'un-ready-to-hand' and turns the projective nature of understanding upon its tools *as* tools. The hammer enters reflection when the

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5 Derrida sees 'presence' as the trace of the trace. Or, since language constitutes the erasure of presence, the term presence registers the death of Being and stands as 'the trace of the erasure of the trace' (Derrida, 1982: 66). Derrida's point, perhaps one of his most difficult concepts as he struggles to give due credit to Heidegger's insight, can be approached by analogy with the problem of the murderer who either has to dispose of the body or, as some popular novels might have it, dispose of the traces of the crime. It is the erasure of expected signs which constitutes a trace. For example, in Philip Friedman's *Beyond Reasonable Doubt* the absence of *any* fingerprints on the telephone indicates the pivot part a telephone call has played in the crime.

nail is missed, or the hammer slips. For Derrida, the attempt to dispose of the Other, through making a difference and a deferral, always imparts to the subordinated or excluded predicate (Derrida, 1982: 329) an 'excess' of meaning. This excess of meaning re-turns the 'trace' into something present, by way of 'supplement'. For example, sucking my 'hammer bruise' sets up a trace for the next swing of the arm, throwing my confidence to dispose of the hammer into my armswing.

Conversely, if the argument that reflection centres on disposal is correct, those meanings which carry no excess of meaning pass by unnoticed. They seem more akin to Mary Douglas's 'implicit meanings'. The unnoticed are the meanings which are ready-to-hand, those which are silently and centrally facilitating a 'going on' in the world. What has to be added therefore to Heidegger's view is that what are also unnoticed are the traces which are not present. Traces may not appear 'within' reflection as present but, as Derrida has shown, neither are they absent. It is the 'not absent' status of unnoticed traces which critically give the subject its fluidity to pass from meaning to meaning.

To be sure all this sounds strange and paradoxical. But this is largely a matter of metonymical confusion, a tradition of identifying 'consciousness' with its more obtrusive and distinctive counterpart 'reflection'. How consciousness is theorised can fluctuate the subject between the meaninglessness of determinism and the illusion of voluntarism. The latter exists I suggest because philosophers, in their fix on essense, have been prone to treat the mode of reflection as the essence of the subject. The heritage of rationalism is for the production and consumption of signs to be treated as a matter of choice, a matter for the constant minutia of 'decision-making'. Consciousness is always being conceived of as a pro-active consumer. To be caught in the 'mirror of nature' is to (mis)take the problematics of 'going on' in the world as a matter of 'deciding' the signifieds as if these 'meanings' reflected unproblematically the 'materiality' of the signifiers. But thinking and 'going on' in the world are much more than the process of reflection or its products and neither Heidegger's logic of presence nor Derrida's logic of text allow for any rupture of the sign into a dualism of signifiers and signified.

Problematising disposal suggests how reflection comes to constitute the subject for the subject. It seems too precipitate to dispose of either a logic of presence or a logic of text, but neither should we dispose of the subject, since Derrida merely dethrones subjectivity:

> In this typology, the category of intention will not disappear; it will have its place, but from this place it will no longer be able to govern the entire scene and the entire system of utterances. (Derrida, 1982: 326)

Voluntarism accords a sovereignty to a governance of intentions which Derrida rejects. The limits of governance begin with the inescapability of the speech act being already, and always, different from intention and ends with the endless "quest for context" (Derrida, 1982: 327).

The limits of reflection to govern action do not arise simply because, once clothed in text, traces pull through un-ready-to-hand meanings from the constituting subject which

result, for example, in forms which Goffman (1972) locates as embarrassment. The limits to self-governance can be better understood in terms of the mode of reflection being decentred from its philosopher's throne and figured instead to be engaged in a surveillance over disposal.

Encounters offer an intersection of text with the time-space settings of the body and these can be expected to afford meanings for the constituting subject which are both ready-to-hand and un-ready-to-hand. But it is only the un-ready-to-hand which appears 'in' reflection. Nevertheless it is their potentially for disposal, the ease with which the unready-to-hand may be turned into the ready-to-hand which 'matters' to a consciousness bent on disposal. Forgetting a name can freeze action or be turned into an opening line of conversation. Indeed, both trace which is present in its excess and trace which is absent can be important to effect disposal, since the first is pivotal for the initiating of deferral and the second is necessary to effect difference.

PART III

The paper turns now to a discussion of the empirical implications of non-disposable meanings, in the sense that they may be differed, displaced or disregarded but never abandoned. Difficulties in the deconstruction of meanings suggest, against the conventional view that conduct is simply driven by prior meanings, that con-duct is anchored and shaped by the conduits of the social, Derrida's 'hidden passageways' which form the pre-disposal of meanings.

Consumption Revisited

In considering the above sketch of disposal, a tale of Baudrillard's with fatal consequences is apt:

> A little boy asks a fairy to grant him his wishes. The fairy agrees on one condition, that he never thinks of the colour red in the fox's tail. 'Is that all?' he replies offhandedly. And off he goes to find happiness. But what happens? He is unable to rid himself of this fox's tail, which he believed he had already forgotten. He sees it everywhere, with its red colour, in his thoughts, and in his dreams. Despite all his efforts, he cannot make it disappear. He becomes obsessed with this absurd, insignificant, but tenacious image, augmented by all the spite that comes from not having been able to rid himself of it. Not only do the fairy's promises not come true, but he loses his taste for life. Perhaps he dies without ever having got clear of it. (Baudrillard, 1990b: 74)

"An absurd story", Baudrillard adds, "but absolutely plausible, for it *demonstrates the power of the insignificant signifier*, the power of a meaningless signifier".

While elsewhere "words and gestures are emptied of their meaning by unflagging repetition and scansion", the insignificance of the colour red of the fox's tail, Baudrillard claims, is the reason why the child was "not on his guard". From the above sketch, however, we can anticipate that the child was in mortal danger. The child had no means at his disposal with which to dispose of the image. When words have "neither context nor referent, they can take on the power of a self-fulfilling prophecy" (Baudrillard, 1990b: 75). As Baudrillard remarks:

> If the fairy had forbidden the child from doing something serious or significant, he would have pulled through easily, instead of being seduced against his will. For it is not the prohibition, *but its non-sense that seduces him.* (Baudrillard, 1990b: 75)

Baudrillard's argument is that the sign proved "compelling because of its very nullity". This argument, in its displacement of the central actor as a 'child', calls for some examination.

The significant is disposable (although not always as easily as Baudrillard implies) since its very significance marks the existence of its ducts for disposal. However, if the boy can be understood to be seduced by the idea of (instant) happiness, what fails the boy is not his inability to find significance, but precisely his ability to connect his task to the reward! 'Significance' marks a ready-to-handness, a 'pre-disposal'. The child was not pre-disposed to think *otherwise* about the redness of the fox's tail. (Just, presumably, like people in Newcastle do not think the *otherwise* of fish). And without such a predisposal he could not be on guard. Lacking a 'gaze' (Foucault, 1973) the child could not regard it as other than that it was for him, he could not re-connect it, re-g(u)ard it so as to take care of its significance.

But Baudrillard fails to see all this. Instead he argues that seduction works on the very absence of sense:

> This is why neither magic nor seduction concerns belief or make-believe, for they employ signs without credibility and gestures without referents; their logic is not one of mediation, but of immediacy, whatever the sign. (Baudrillard, 1990b: 75)

Yes, the immediacy of the redness of the fox's tail was un-refuse-able. But why? Baudrillard suggests that the child could not dispose of the sign because the requirement not to think about it was for him a sign 'without credibility', a gesture 'without referent'. Is there a harking back to a correspondence theory of meaning here?

Perhaps the better move is to recognise the likelihood of the child *assigning* correspondence: of the child attaching "red in the fox's tail" to the reward of 'instant happiness'. Perhaps the latter represented to the child the sole possibility of assignment? If the child cannot abandon the trace - the lure of gaining 'instant happiness' - then the child also cannot also erase the red in the fox's tail. Somewhat against Baudrillard's argument, it is not the nullity of significance that is important here, even if such a thing was thinkable. Rather, by not regarding *other potentialities* of the sign as significant, the child lacked all 'context or reference' with which to re-g(u)ard it and, hence, dispose of it.

Effacing the Trace

The problem of disposal, of which meditation is perhaps the classic struggle, is not that of erasing the trace. Nor is the problem even an epistemological difficulty, that of knowing which trace to erase. The recurrence of an 'unwanted' image suggests already that the *volition* of last-in-first-out disposal fails. That language cannot just be abandoned is consonant with the de-centring of the subject by poststructuralists. But will the opposite path, seeking a *determinacy* inherent in a first-in-last-out disposal, not

fail too? If this paper were to try to follow Freud and excavate what propels the recurrent, would this not also end in an endless loop of trying to trace the trace?

Indeed if Derrida is right, an attempted erasure of a trace simply creates another trace into which all other traces become drawn. And this eventuality does not only cover a leucopathy in the fox's tail. Think of mother. Even if a lobotomy could be conducted to nullify mother, to eliminate all 'traces' of mother, very soon a red coat, a gesture in a restaurant, through the use of a particular word and mother would be back.

My point here is not that a disposal of signs, images, meanings is difficult. For much of the time disposal appears easy and effortless, affected as it is all the time through our pre-disposal. When we think *smell* the leftover fish is in the bin before we reflect on keeping it in the fridge. Our consumption of images, gestures, signs of all kinds, is constituted in part by our ability to transform meanings from these into the 'readymade'. As readymades we have pre-disposed ourselves towards their disposal. When we see *pate* instead of a cold wet fish the bin is deferred until we next open the fridge.

Nevertheless, the difficulty in disposing of signs is central to our day to day experience and is likely therefore to affect our conduct. For example, difficulties with disposal may heighten a pre-disposal towards r-out-in-es, towards those out-in experiences which we take, and possibly mistake, to be readymade for disposal. Television is turned to for relaxing but how many turn off at night more tired, more 'drained' than when they began? Boring lectures are supposed to turn people off, but intellectual challenge may stimulate boredom.

Indeed difficulties in disposal seem so central to our day to day experience that one wonders why it should be necessary to 'discover' the difficulty?[6] Perhaps it is this very centrality which leads us to 'dispose' of *this* difficulty and that we are, in consequence, always covering up our failure here. This is of course similar to Heidegger's argument over the existential anxiety. That our very inability to think death is brought about through our everyday experience of the certainty of our death.[7]

The point here, and it is hardly an original one given difficulties in accomplishing a 'death' of the centred subject within depth meditation, is that knowledge of problems

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6 As I have shown, it is hardly necessary to discover the problem of disposal. Rather disposal marks the subject for poststructuralists. Even if it is only by way of their 'supplement', their excess which they can't or won't efface, Derrida and Baudrillard keep rubbing our noses in the difficulty of disposal.

7 One of Heidegger's insights over Dasein is that it is always covering up itself. That this gets 'forgotten' suggests the dangers of reading his example of death as a universal truth, rather than as an empirical, and context-driven, 'noticing'. In what follows I want to stress that positioning towards consumption - disposal in an early meaning of the term - is a matter of strategy, not certainty; and so underline how problems with disposal are always situated. In saying this I intend no return to the 'endlessness' of context as foundational. Rather it is to underline that the 'neglected situation' includes language not just setting. Text is always brought to settings since it is language alone which disposes of the logic of presence. Text guards against the threat of a situated 'arrest' within meaning, but text is also, always, con-text.

over disposal of signs acts to change our conduct. Our propensity for a particular consumption of signs is affected by our positioning towards that potential consumption, both in the time-space settings of the body and of text. But further, con-duct is affected by our prior experience and its effect on disposal. The relations here are however complex. Predisposal plus outcomes does not equal future conduct. For example, I might return to the floatarium when it fails to dispose of my stress, but this time to excite myself with sensory deprivation.

Reflection is accomplished through that excess of meaning which has announced itself as un-ready-to-hand and by that trace which is so effaced as to be always be in excess and appear as supplement. The complexities here suggest that we do not, as Giddens (1984) has it, learn much about how to 'go on' in the world through accumulating rules. Rather than cognitively loading up rules, although negatives are a likely counter-instance here, we shift about on strategies which we think will help to anticipate or circumvent difficulties with disposal. This question of strategies and the ducting of language by the social is now discussed.

Consequences for Conduct

As has been discussed the importance of culture as norms for stabilising meanings has been challenged by the 'depthless culture' of postmodern theories. To the extent that postmodernist thinking has helped to decouple the concept of culture from the concept of norms, the intervention is welcome. To the extent that postmodernist thinking simply represents an attempt to delete culture as important, postmodernists place themselves alongside modernists in their misunderstanding of the nature of the social.

Hidden within postmodernist views are preconceptions that conduct is driven by prior meanings, with the feedback effects of conduct adding to, or deleting, prior meanings more or less unproblematically. These are the familiar suppositions of modernity: causality and accumulation. Against these suppositions the paper has demonstrated that conduct is affected by strategies which are anchored around a *pre*-disposal of meanings in the social. That is, the interpenetration of the self by the social, through the exchange of goods or their simulations, simultaneously instantiates one's prior experience of disposal.

Difficulties in the disposal of meanings, therefore, suggest not only more caution in interpreting Baudrillard's thesis but some revision of the 'consumption' view. For example Friedman (1990) develops the consumption thesis thus:

> Following a line of argument that began with the recognition that goods are building blocks of life-worlds, we have suggested, as have others, that they can be understood as constituents of selfhood, of social identity. (Friedman, 1990: 327)

By further assuming a global historical frame, he goes on to assert that it is possible to:

> ...detect and even to account for differences among broad classes of strategies of identity and therefore of consumption and production as well as their transformations in time. (Friedman, 1990: 327)

No doubt, but perhaps the more local frame, which Friedman also seeks, can only be found through problematising disposal? A disposal analogous to the 'bricoleur' in using devious means (Levi-Strauss, 1966: 16) to shape and reshape conduct out of the ruins of previous engagements with the social.

Explaining the local remains fundamental. Once the fatal search for essence is abandoned *all* the dualisms of 'base' and 'superstructure', production and consumption, economics and culture, 'technical acts' and 'aesthetic frills', macro and micro, and even global and local, can be thrown out the window.

The extreme challenge here comes from Cohen (1985, 1987) who, in the tradition of Saussure's arbitrary relation of signifier to signified, has pointed up the logical consequences of ambiguity in the *semiotic gap* between 'shared expressions' and 'shared meanings' for notions of community. For Cohen it is this very ambiguity of signs which affords their binding properties. Unless Whalsey is taken as an outpost of postmodernity, Cohen's 'symbolic construction of community' both prefigures and undercuts much postmodern discussion.

At risk from an irredeemable ambiguity in meanings are not just the sacred version of culture from Durkheim, the top-down tumble of values, but also the profane. For example, much as she wants to distance herself from Durkheim and argue culture 'bottom up', Douglas posits an "elusive exchange between explicit and implicit meanings". According to Douglas, this elusive exchange arises from a large part of discourse being:

> ...dedicated to creating, revising and obliquely confirming this implicit background, without ever directing explicit attention on it. (Douglas, 1975: 4)

Perhaps. Certainly this is a less grand culture, even if it still appears totalising. But if the gap between shared expressions and shared meanings is to be taken seriously, Douglas's proposed 'elusive exchange' is elusive indeed.

Relating con-duct towards disposal suggests a less totalising view. Sedimentation processes, as hinted to by Schutz, would *contextualise* paths between shared expressions and shared meanings and further contextualise these paths specifically as written into each knowing subject. The remaining difficulty is to see how these paths, having become sedimented as ducts, conduits for disposal, can *also* be avoided and by-passed.

Given a knowledgability of ambiguity in meanings, actors will not necessarily rely on the availability of these conduits. Unlike Baudrillard's child they may add, or even deliberately seek out, other possibilities for treating some sign *as* something else. Part of 'experience' is surely to learn to as-sign other potentialities; to know that things could be other than *as* they seem. On this version, conduct is an engagement in the social which draws upon, but is not fixed by, the network of disposal strategies that culture represents. Where the making of fish into pate is absent from the day to day in Newcastle, fishsellers may attempt to simulate a pate-making culture within their advertising.

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This drawing on disposal strategies as resources is a chiasmic interplay of bets and noticings. The interiority of strategies, which governs the bets by which each actor deports text to setting and imports setting through text, by the same token registers an exteriority of these strategies, which will be read by others. Broadly, although brush strokes are inadequate here, settings become 'read' explicitly for their excess of meaning and it is this excess of meaning which may be communicated in gestures such as a grunt or a raised eyebrow. Whereas we can actively dispose of an excess through constant rearrangement, conversely we may also comport ourselves in ways which preface, or efface, the excess of meaning afforded by the setting.

Actually what 'encounters' afford are *account-able* experiences within which or from which one can examine one's standing 'with' and 'in' the social. But when all bets are on, and this is the force of knowledgability about ambiguity in signs, we are more bookkeepers than bookmakers. With great irony Bauman depicts this examination within modernity thus:

> ...actors are challenged to justify their conduct by reason as defined either by the goal or by the rules of behaviour. Only actions thought of and argued in such a way, or fit to be narrated in such a way, are admitted into the class of genuinely *social* action, that is *rational* action, that is an action that serves as the defining property of actors as *social actors.* (Bauman, 1991: 144)

In understanding the projects of modernism as one of a re-disposal of bodies through our accounting to and for ourselves, this rearrangement, the examination depicted by Bauman has to be seen as *continuous*. There are no separate 'accountability' encounters, although there are certainly in a manner of speaking moments of reckoning. But moments of reckoning have become fractionalised and internalized and are likely to have occurred long before those those encounters staged as calls to account.

Concluding Remarks

Postmoderists have been busy celebrating the implications of Saussure's semiotic gap long after linguists quietly abandoned it (Hopper, 1992). By drawing attention to different strategies for disposal, I am not suggesting that there *is* a gap between expressions and meanings which could be addressed linguistically or sociologically. What the poststructuralist, postmodern and postfeminist debates have shown is that the problem for everday conduct is not one of producing meanings to close gaps. Meaning is produced from closure. The problem is how to *open up* gaps, create the clearings, break into the fissures and *make* the spaces.

In theorising disposal I have tried to show why there are no gaps to close. The connections between signifiers and signifieds are already made. They are always prior to reflection. Our astonishment at the holocaust is already in place (Bauman, 1991) and *must* be in place if we are to dispose of it as a one-off event of history, if we are to hold it aside as that ultimate of all abberations.

The problem, when there is a problem, is one of not *liking* the connection. It is some *discomfort* that obtrudes meanings into reflection as an excess of meaning. Far from the

mind writing the body, it is the body that writes the mind. But this ability to write into reflection is a very limited compared to the extent that the body is written on by the social.

Our bets on the social are written into us, I have argued, as conduits for disposal. Thes conduits form a *distribution* of knowledge that pre-fixes closure in our readings of the social. What Baudrillard's child, the good people of Newcastle and this paper all fail to do, is to pre-guard against this closure by re-assigning that potential excess which we won't like into a different trace. We fail to do this because it doesn't occur to us to do this. And further because it can only occur to us *after* the opportunity for reflection to engage has given rise to an excess. Opening up my bets into other meanings is not something that is much under my governance and depends on my noticings interweaving with interventions from others.

This said, the likelihood that actors are apperceptively aware of their own *semiosis* (Eco, 1984) between meanings and expressions should not be overlooked. Specifically this entails recognising that members' knowledgability about moves in a language game (Lyotard, 1984), which may be poor or tacit, enters as part of their resource and facility to engage in the social, whether this is conceived as traversing the time-space settings of modernity or not. Derrida (1976: 76) is surely at the heart of the matter here when he reminds us that 'ambiguity' is a trace of the logic of presence and that instead of ambiguity we should call it 'play'. Stated as such the 'semiotic gap' cannot be denied of social actors, but the question is why members of organizations 'forget' to deploy this central resource. All research on conduct should confront this question before fixing their theories: where is the play?

Whatever the epoch, and the paper *is* questioning the dichotomising of modern/postmodern over its exclusion of the non-western as 'primitive', disposal strategies matter. Whereas in close island communities such as Whalsay apperceptions about ambiguities, the play in meaning, may be turned inward to construct a 'private' space in which differences in meanings can be celebrated as the self, a different strategy may be adopted where culture is perceived to be receding or 'depthless'. For example, a would-be member may adopt one of Baudrillard's 'saturated' signs as an *overcoding* (Eco, 1977) to upstage ambiguity, a floating fortress of meaning with which to advertise their affiliation. Why else do Tory ladies wear those hats?

Or register disaffiliation? Nationalism has long been associated with a 'standing against' and a mainstay of Douglas's thesis is to point out that *all* inclusion necessitates exclusion across *all* cultures and, presumably, *all* epochs.

Through problematising the disposal of meaning, the paper has questioned preconceptions of reflection in an attempt to unsettle the existing order which pairs together production/consumption with modernity/postmodernity. A safety pin through the nose may not prevent a raised eyebrow but, in advertising a readiness to excite disapproval, its difference blocks a 'normal' transfer of the problem of disposal and thereby both anticipates and defers the secret exchange of the social.

Through 'culture', the everday making of moves in language games, the social serves the disposal of meanings. And such pre-disposal in turn instantiates culture *as* the

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social. But just as neither is the other, so neither determines the other. Nor do they together determine conduct. For example, although one strategy of disposal may involve complicated accounts of the self to the self, another strategy might involve avoidance of settings, such as orgies or death camps, which may be thought to lead to those meanings which require an intensive accounting to the self for their 'internal' disposal.

Whereas either strategy followed relentlessly might be experienced as a 'loss' of culture, the everyday excavation and dissemination of disposal strategies also offers new conditions of possibility for 'culture' to mutate away from its 'deep' and highly localised form. For example, a more reflective and deliberative 'switching' of strategies can be expected to have implications for both culture in both its production and consumption; we have all learned that to *refuse* a joke unexpectedly can radiate power. Or again, domination may be effected particularly through shifting language games rather than staying within that of a particular expertise. For example, managers shift from the production numbers to the accounting numbers in order to perform power. Where all this is so the concept of culture calls less for its disposal, millennium or not, but for revision, in order to see its what and where.

A Parthian shot. Given the age and ubiquity of language, competence in the disposal of meanings surely goes a long way back? But does play only begin with the invention of the phonetic alphabet, the division of the world , as McLuhan (1962) suggests, into visual and aural spheres? And then end in cold print? Only to come back after the ruinous projects of modernism through film? Of course *technologies* change and these may create conditions of possibility for different conduits and new strategies for disposal. But McLuhan (1962: 25) in his retelling the myth of the invention of writing, skips over Plato's point. The upshot is one of writing helping people not to remember, but 'to forget'. Featherstone is right to call for more focus on the 'culture of consumption' but the entire triptych of primitive/ modern/postmodern could still be located as an accommodation by the social of differences in technology, were it not more exciting to figure each as staging posts in a race towards a millennial deletion of the social.

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Postscript

There is a notion (in crime novels) that no-one can be tried for murder in the absence of a body. No body, no crime. A clear implication is that a perfect murder requires the perfect disposal of the body.

The title of the paper borrows this trope. For a disappearance of the body from the sociological canon long pre-dates the postmodernists and their confessions. The death of materiality can be traced to earlier, modernist emphases on meanings in which symbolism replaced culture, the subject replaced the social and decisions replaced deeds. Once meanings are made precise and valorised as real - and this double production of meanings is the modernist project - the mumblings of materials are silenced. Putting postmodernists on trial for dematerialising the world reminds one of those inversions of the middle ages in which the village fool is made Pope for the day.

This is my first 'upending' of postmodernism: the ephemera of finding a world upside down. The moral panic over relativism heralding an outbreak of lynchings in which postmodernists and poststructuralists were being roped together for the same crimes. Like others, I found myself engaged in a critique of consumption theory, particularly over its dalliance with postmodern ideas of a universe of signs. But I also felt arguments against 'dematerialisation' had to avoid a return to brute empiricism and take seriously the interpretive mood of twentieth century sociology. Hammering materialism back into the world would likely just reinstate the dualisms of mind and body, form and substance, word and object.

The second 'upending' came from the intuition that the endless inversions beloved by postmodernists could themselves be inverted. The gambit was to take postmodernism at its word: over the supposed omnipresence of meanings, not over postmodernism's dismissal of the object world. (The cry to 'to the things themselves' seems a fatal strategy in a world which has already renounced materials in its attachment to meanings). So my tactic was to pursue the meanings themselves. And pursue them to excess. What happens to meanings? Where do they go? How do they not just accumulate and jumble up the world?

My answer, then, to the conundrum of excess posed by the paper was that it was not us who disposed of meanings. Rather, as I would say in the light of my subsequent work with Strathern, it is the circulation of materials that disposes of us. I assumed the

impossibility of actually disposing of meaning - as if by volition - was made self-evident in the paper. Instead, drawing on poststructuralist thinking, the analysis stressed the importance of materials as offering conduits for disposal. Thus, far from suggesting 'anything goes', a putative superfluity of meanings implied a (hidden) presence of (moving) bodies. Regrettably, at the time, I took this answer - that there never was any murder - to be too obvious to explicate fully and no doubt, for this reason, this crucial move in the paper remains obscure.

Certainly the irony of the writing seems lost on commentators who have taken the disposal theme itself at face value. The point of introducing a third term - disposal - was not primarily an attempt to theorise a new concept. It was as much a move to challenge an implicit priority of consumption over disposal and so destabilise the 'seesaw' of production and consumption (a pairing of perspective and supplement complicit in their 'violent hierarchy'). My intuition was that the contemporary turn to consumption - for all its focus on fluidity - remained in the thrall of production. Yes, materials were again being made present - in the form of Mary Douglas's goods - but more as vehicles for the exchange of meanings. In the name of consumption, commentators were still mapping out the production and reproduction of highly static identities and overlooking any motility to belonging: the way in which one is inside one moment and outside the next.

The kind of radical interpretivism in which I was engaged accepts meaning - the ephemera on which the world turns - but rejects any reification of movement into 'meanings'. Confusion, as I still see it, arises from a failure to observe the ontological difference between meaning and meanings. A key part of the paper therefore lay in making associations here with Heidegger's notions of truth as momentary - the 'unrevealing' of silver as the ore is beaten into the form of a goblet. The existential phenomenology of this 'logic of presence' was extended by making a comparison with Derrida's 'logic of text'. The reasons for doing this are clear enough, but the convoluted play on Derrida's more usual dismissal of presence (in the classical sense) distract from the argument that Derrida's desire to 'dispose' of Heidegger leaves him over-valorising language as 'text' rather than re-membering it as 'extension'.

By way of an historical note, the paper was performed dressed in a black bin liner at the 10th SCOS conference, Organisation and Theatre, Lancaster University, July 1992. The chiasmus of the frenchman tying his bootlaces took on the body of Derrida and the paraphrase of Kennedy's notorious Berlin speech - Ich bin ein Binliner! - found its way into a radio show some years later. I made one attempt to get the paper published, but Theory, Culture & Society *rejected it on the basis of a one paragraph review suggesting more clinical evidence was needed! (To be fair, Mike Featherstone suggested I resubmitted the paper with a new introduction - the wisdom of which I guess this postscript confirms).*

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