

Introduction

Does anyone want to make a mystory? Why not give this assignment to a class, or try it myself as an experiment (since only the genre, but not its exemplars, are transferable).

"Write a mystory bringing into relation your experience with three levels of discourse—personal (autobiography), popular (community stories, oral history or popular culture), expert (disciplines of knowledge). In each case use the *punctum* or sting of memory to locate items significant to you; once located, research the representations of the popular and expert items in the collective archive or encyclopedia (thus mixing living and artificial memories). Select for inclusion in your text fragments of this information most relevant to the items in your oral life story. Arrange the entries to highlight the chance associations that appear among the three levels. Organize the fragments by means of one or the other (or both) of the following formats:

- 1) *vita minor*: a resume including entries representing the sources of your "images of wide scope" in your personal and community background. The *vita minor* lists those aspects of your experience that tend to be excluded from the conventional resume presented to prospective employers or granting agencies.
- 2) *punctcepts*: sets of the fragments collected on the basis of a single shared feature.

In both orders the disciplinary discourse may be drawn from your major, or from a discipline in which you have a potential career interest. You may substitute for, or intermix with, this disciplinary discourse fragments on the topic of a major catastrophe (which may or may not be the catastrophes of Auschwitz or Hiroshima). If you are making the mystory not simply to represent to yourself the generalization of your signature into an *Inventio*, but to discover new points of entry into a specific problem, replace the catastrophic materials with information on that problem. The same format may be used to translate between expert and popular discourses."

This version of "Derrida at the Little Bighorn" is provided as an example of an alphabetic mining of a filmic mode—the compilation film. Like films

made from other films, the compilation text is made from other writings, consisting primarily of citations. The “originality” of the piece rests with the actions of selection and combination, treating the archive of extant works as a vocabulary of a higher order discourse. To cite one of Jay Leyda’s authorities:

In this paper I want to consider the film as source material for history in the sense that palimpsest and parchment, hieroglyph and rune, clay tablet and memorial roll are source materials—fragments, sometimes fragments of fragments, often defaced by time, and applied to purposes of historical reconstruction rarely contemplated by the original authors. . . . films can be used, as other historical source material can be used, for various and different historical purposes. (Leyda, 16)

The basic source material for the compilation film, Leyda noted, is the newsreel. Manipulation of the newsreel resulted in a new text—a documentary. This arranged reality could be turned to serve the interests of art, propaganda, instruction, or advertising (10).

It is worth noting that the public mind, or popular culture expressed in the media of everyday life, seems to produce mythology in a similar kind of compilation process, working with historical events the way an editor works with old newsreels.

Myths are stories, drawn from history, that have acquired through usage over many generations a symbolizing function that is central to the cultural functioning of the society that produces them. Historical experience is preserved in the form of narrative, and through periodic retellings those narratives become traditionalized. These formal qualities and structures are increasingly conventionalized and abstracted, until they are reduced to a set of powerfully evocative and resonant “icons”—like the landing of the Pilgrims, the rally of the Minutemen at Lexington, the Alamo, the Last Stand, in which history becomes a cliché. At the same time that their form is being simplified and abstracted, the range of reference of these stories is being expanded. Each new context in which the story is told adds meaning to it, because the telling implies a metaphorical connection between the storied past and the present. (Stolkin, 16)

In teletheory, it is important to learn not only to perform critique, but also to perform mythology. A mystery may be myth and critique at once, funx functioning for the composer the way Brecht’s “learning plays” were intended to educate the actors, and were not meant to be performed for an audience. Hermetic politics may be brought to bear on a mystery at any time, although there is no explicit interpretation of the sample offered here.

One rationale for writing in this manipulative way, selecting and combining a montage text out of the archive of personal, popular, and spurrillend

material, is that in the age of Artificial Intelligence, we are learning the lesson of the integration of artificial and living memory. The technology of print and all its apparatus—the archive of libraries, journalism, the entire great machine of information storage and retrieval—is a prosthesis for the living mind of the student. There are several ways to relate to this apparatus, but the way promoted in teletheory is this operation of taking what is to be found there and using it again in order not to repeat the old work but to make another one that is at least a mystery.

What especially recommends compilation scripting as a practice for academic writing is its simplicity of execution. The historiographical rationale comes from Benjamin: “To write history therefore means to quote history. But the concept of quotation implies that any given historical object must be ripped out of its context” (Benjamin, 1983: 24). The research will be guided by the principles of mystery. Once the inventory is brought together, the arrangement follows (writing as selection and combination), including images as well as words. The resulting composition may or may not be of interest to an audience; may be more or less aesthetically or argumentatively coherent. Since mystery is not a text of justification, but of discovery, such judgments are secondary to its primary purpose, which is to help the composer articulate the ground of invention. In this discourse there is a deliberate conflation of the senses of invention, compressing the rhetorical notion of *inventio* together with the scientific sense of original innovation. In the age of mechanical reproduction, in any case, it turns out that exact repetition generates complete difference. The first reader of a mystery—the primary addressee—is the writer. The desired effect is surprise, as if one could tell a joke to oneself for the first time, which is to say that there is no original time for the mystery. Or its temporality is that of the confluence of the social and psychological imaginaries. One’s surprise at the association produced by the juxtapositions marks the operations of bliss-sense. The third party of this joke, exposing one’s image-repertoire, is myself. I am the target of the aggressive wit that replaces the monumental melancholy associated with the pedagogy of specialized high culture.

The following example, then is included to demonstrate one approach to a mysterious compilation. It is valuable only to the extent that it encourages others to turn to their own archives—as a relay and not as a model.

“Derrida at the Little Bighorn” —A Fragment

Part One: Vita Minor: “Gregory L. Ulmer”

Languages

French.

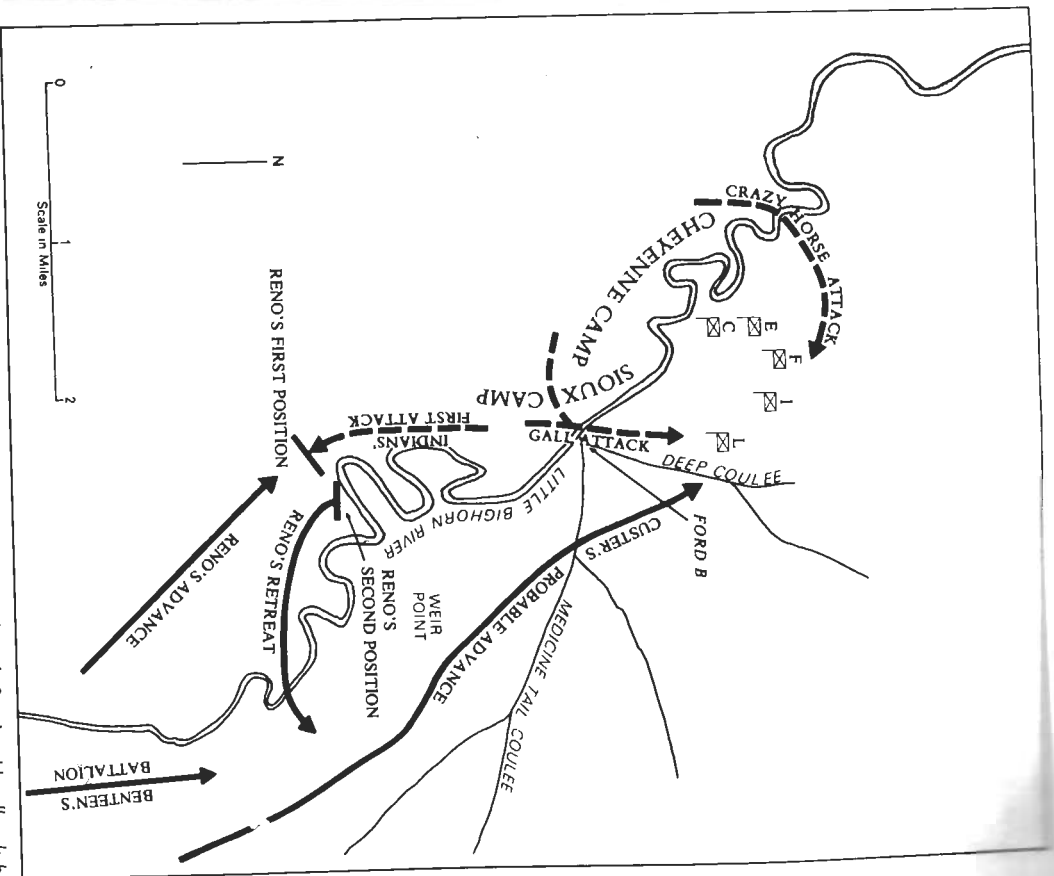
CUSTER’S FRENCH

[Map of “Custer’s Hill,” site of the Last Stand, showing the deployment of the Companies that fell with Custer—C (T. Custer), E (Smith), F (Yates), I (Keogh), L (Calhoun)]

He wrote on the hillside in French, with the letters of his Companies: ce fil, “this yarn.” Fil gives “thread, wire, yarn, edge, grain, vein (in stones etc.); (fig.) clue, thread (of a plot etc.); nexus, thread (of an argument etc.).
Anything else?

ficel. We could take this as the root of ficeler, “to bind or tie up with string? Or as a pun on ficelle (the only had so many Companies to work with) or he changed its sex: “string; (fig.) dodge; (Theat.) stage-trick; (Mil slang) stripe. Monter la ficelle, to betray the secret motive; connaitre la ficelle, to be up to all the tricks (of the trade), to know the ropes.—a. Il est ficelle, he’s a trickster.”

He could have read Henry James, you know, the prefaces to the novel, in which he says, “Half the dramatist’s art, as we well know—since if we don’t it’s not the fault of the proofs that lie scattered about us—is in the use of ficelles; by which I mean in a deep dissimulation of his dependence on them. Waymarsh only to a slighter degree belongs, in the whole business, less to my subject than to my treatment of it; the interesting proof, in these connexions, being that one has but to take one’s subject for the stuff of drama to interweave with enthusiasm as many Gostreys as need be” (James).
No, he couldn’t have. You have your dates wrong.



Custer Battlefield map. From CUSTER BATTLEFIELD, a National Park Service Handbook by Robert M. Utley.

And le fic?
 "Fig"? Could be a macaronic code for "figurative." Or for the insult, "to give someone the fig" (thrusting the thumb between two fingers, or into the mouth) meaning "you aren't worth a fig." But in French they use *chillo* (a worthless bit of floor tiling, a small coin) rather than fic. The gesture meaning "I spit on you."

What about ce fils? He didn't have an "s," but he was known as the "Big General," and Whitaker mythologized him as the All-American Boy. Or fille? The ambiguity of his gender image is often noted, with the long, yellow hair?

Did Custer speak French?

He found gold on "French Creek" while making an armed reconnaissance of the Black Hills, which led to the treaty violations and the last Sioux war. Maybe it wasn't Custer who was writing, but *Sitting Bull*? Didn't he go to France with *Buffalo Bill*?

In 1878 the Chicago printing firm of Knight & Leonard published a thirteen-page pamphlet, *The Works of Sitting Bull in the Original French and Latin, with Translations Diligently Compared, to which was appended an eleven-page supplement, The Works of Sitting Bull, Part II.* (Connell)

String Stories

Two children, playing "Cat's Cradle." The hands, the string. They begin making the loops, and narrating: "There was once a little boy who slept in a cradle. / But it didn't take long to grow up and when he became a young man he had to go off and serve in the army. Then he slept in a soldier's bed . . ." etc.]

Strings can be described as one of the earlier forms of the book. Quite a number of peoples are known to have used strings for record-keeping and historical accounts. The most famous of these string "books" were the quipu of the Incas: long strips of leather knotted and twisted in patterns that told of events in the life of the tribe. In order to tell string stories, one has to study carefully the typical patterns and their names in each culture and then try to re-create the tales imaginatively from the bits and pieces recorded by ethnographers, folklorists, and string figure hobbyists. (Pellowski, *The Story Vine*)

FORT LINCOLN. FORT KEOGH. FORT DA

This good little boy had an occasional disturbing habit of taking any small objects he could get hold of and throwing them away from him into a corner, under the bed, and so on, so that hunting for his toys and picking them up was often quite a business. As he did this he gave vent to a loud, long-drawn-out "o-o-o-o,"

accompanied by an expression of interest and satisfaction. His mother and the writer of the present account were agreed in thinking that this was not a mere interjection but represented the German word "fort" ["gone" I. I eventually realized that it was a game and that the only use he made of any of his toys was to play "gone" with them. The child had a wooden reel with a piece of string tied round it. What he did was to hold the reel by the string and very skillfully throw it over the edge of his curtained out, so that it disappeared into it, at the same time uttering his expressive "o-o-o-o." He then pulled the reel out of the cot again by the string and hailed its reappearance and return. The interpretation of then, was the complete game—disappearance and return. The interpretation of the game then became obvious. It was related to the child's great cultural achievement—the instinctual renunciation which he had made in allowing his mother to go away without protesting. (Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*)

"The formation of the I is symbolized in dreams by a fortress, or a stadium." (Lacan, 1977)

Education

CUSTER COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL, MILES CITY, MONTANA, 1962.
 [MAP: Custer's route from Fort Abraham Lincoln at Bismarck to the site of the battle. Also showing the convergence on the Little Bighorn from the south (Crook) and west (Gibbon)]

My father grew up in Bismarck, and we lived in Mandan, across the river, until I was five, when we moved to Miles City. There is a symmetry in time and space that I first noticed when I returned home for my father's memorial service. He died on May 17, the same day Custer, in Terry's column, started his march in 1876. The service was delayed (autopsy, cremation, and so forth) until nearly the day of the Last Stand (June 25). In thinking about that coincidence it occurred to me that the movement of our family replicated Custer's route, in that Judy (my sister) after she got married lived in Lodge Grass for about five years (one of the translations of the Indian name for "Little Bighorn," the other being "Creasy Grass"), near the site of the battle. The new Chair of my Department is a Gibbon specialist.

Miles City

Work on the railroad in the Yellowstone Valley in 1872 had to be stopped because of the Sioux and Cheyennes. A surveying party was sent out the next year with a strong military escort, including part of the Seventh Cavalry. "While Custer's men were in the vicinity of Lock Bluff, a few miles above the present location of Miles City, Rain-in-the-Face killed the veterinary surgeon and the regimental sutler, thus beginning an incident which lasted

three years and ended in a myth which has been perpetuated to the present day" (Brown and Felton, *The Frontier Years*).

What was the myth?

Custer sent his brother Tom to arrest Rain-in-the-Face for the killings, Rain swore revenge on the Custer brothers for this, and he is said to have killed the one who cut out Tom's heart at the Last Stand.

The response to Custer's defeat was a rapid military build-up in the region, fueled by a national passion for revenge. Fort Keogh, named after the owner of the horse that survived the massacre, was established in the fall of 1876, with Nelson Miles in command.

Milestown was born in the fall of 1876 when Colonel Miles, becoming tired of having the coffee-doolers loafing at the Tongue River Cantonment, had a stake set about two miles east of the post, and ordered all the hangers-on to move to the other side of the marker. By evening on the day Miles had issued his ultimatum, these civilians had a few tents set up and two saloons and a gambling house in operation. This infant village was a vigorous, lusty, man's town which provided its customers with alcohol, the necessities to support life on the frontier, and women. (Brown and Felton, *The Frontier Years*)

When Brown and Felton, the biographers of L.A. Huffman, the "photographer of the plains" whose home and base of operations was Milestown during the frontier years, tried to imagine what Huffman might think about in recalling his own life story, one of their suggestions was, "the Seventh Cavalry on their way to that sagebrush-covered ridge along the Little Bighorn River from which almost half of them never returned."

[Photograph, Huffman collection, "First Monument. Custer Battlefield"]

"Hell with the fires out." (General Sully's description of the badlands).

Like Huffman, my father was a County Commissioner. One of their responsibilities was to keep the roads clear and in good repair. It being Custer County, the County vehicles all had this portrait of Custer on the door, in Romanic style, yellow hair and white hat, red scarf and shoulders of the buckskin jacket. It was the Errol Flynn look. He would drive one of these pickups out to check on the roads.

[Photograph, still, Errol Flynn as Custer.

Still: Ronald Reagan as a young Custer (Santa Fe Trail, 1940).

Painting: "Custer's Last Stand"]

Most Americans know Custer and his Last Stand through the F. Otto Brock's depiction than through any other medium. Anheuser-Busch has produced nearly

one million copies of Becker's work, a number that rivals the Mona Lisa or the Last Supper. (Rosenberg)

With the exception of Stuart's Washington, no American picture has been reproduced more often. Millions of school children have gazed up at Washington enduring the discomfort of wooden teeth while millions of fathers have peered drunkenly at the other George battling a cloud of Sioux. (Connell)

B.A., UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA, MISSOULA, 1967.
ENGLISH AND HISTORY.

When I arrived in Missoula in 1941, a new Assistant Professor in the English Department at the University of Montana, I was met unexpectedly by the Montana Face. What I had been expecting I do not clearly know; zest, I suppose, naive, a ruddy and straightforward kind of vigor—perhaps even honest brutality. What I found seemed, at first glance, reticent, sullen, weary—full of self-sufficient stupidity; a little later it appeared simply inarticulate, with all the dumb pathos of what cannot declare itself: a face developed not for sociability or feeling, but for facing into the weather. I felt a kind of innocence behind it, but an innocence difficult to distinguish from simple ignorance. In a way there was something heartening in dealing with people who had never seen, for instance, a Negro or a Jew or a Servant, and were immune to all their bitter meanings; but the same people, I knew, had never seen an art museum or a ballet or even a movie in any language but their own, and the poverty of experience had left the possibilities of the human face in them incompletely realized. (Fiedler, *Montana; Or the End of Jean-Jacques Rousseau*)

I took a humanities class with Leslie Fiedler near the end of his tenure at Montana. We learned about the Western tradition.

Ph.D., BROWN UNIVERSITY, COMPARATIVE LITERATURE, 1972.
DISSERTATION: *The Rousseau Tradition*.

Each of us is fashioned by three kinds of teachers. When their lessons are at variance the pupil is badly educated, and is never at peace with himself. Of these three educations the one due to nature is independent of us, and the one from things only depends on us to a limited extent. The education that comes from men is the only one within our control, and even that is doubtful. May I set forth at this point the most important and the most useful rule in all education? It is not to save time but to waste it. It follows from this that the first education should be purely negative. It consists not in teaching virtue and truth, but in preserving the heart from vice and the mind from error. Do the opposite of what is usually done, and you will almost always be right. (Rousseau, *Emile*)

I bought a copy of Derrida's *De la grammatologie* in 1970, thinking it was a book about Rousseau.

"This structuralist thematic of broken immediacy is the saddened, negative, nostalgic, guilty, Rousseauistic side of the thinking of play whose other side would be the Nietzschean affirmation." (Derrida, *Writing and Difference*)

The first year we collect images and sounds and experiment. Return to zero. (Jean-Luc Godard, *Le Gai Savoir* [1968], a remake of Emile)

Travel

Vacation: Custer Battlefield National Monument, 1953.

Photograph: "Custer Hill," showing the marble markers or headstones indicating the location where bodies were found after the battle]

Today marble markers resembling tombstones dot the landscape where Custer and his men died. The stones, set in 1890, stand up in the grasses and sage like soldiers frozen in battle. They more than anything else fix in the imagination of visitors visions of the death struggle. Each says in a bold inscription that a soldier or a civilian fell there on a fateful day in June, 1876. (Scott and Fox, *Archeological Insights into The Custer Battle*)

Then out of the dust came the soldiers on their big horses. They looked big and strong and tall and they were all shooting. Then another great cry went up out in the dust: "Crazy Horse is coming! Crazy Horse is coming!" Off toward the west and north they were yelling "Hoka Hey!" like a big wind roaring, and making the tremolo; and you could hear eagle bone whistles screaming. The valley went dark with dust and smoke, and there were only shadows and a big noise of many cries and hoofs and guns. There was a soldier on the ground and he was still kicking. A Lakota rode up and said to me: "Boy, get off and scalp him." I got off and started to do it. He had short hair and my knife was not very sharp. He ground his teeth. Then I shot him in the forehead and got his scalp. I thought I would show my mother my scalp, so I rode over toward the hill where there was a crowd of women and children. There were so many of us that I think we did not need guns. Just the hoofs would have been enough. Many of our men were killed and wounded. They shot each other in the dust. I did not see Pahaska, and I think nobody knew which one he was. (Neihardt, *Black Elk Speaks*)

There does seem to have been a regimental dog alive on the field after the battle. ((carnell))



First Monument, Custer Battlefield. L. A. Hultman collection. Mr. Frank Rehn, Coffin Old West Gallery, 3000 Main Street, Miles City, Montana

Research Interests

COMMUNICATIONS STUDIES

1. Messages

THE SHELL AND THE COLONEL

This is why psychoanalysis, as a result of the treatment, uses discourse in multiply instances of auto-affect and prises de conscience, providing parallels to the listener that they are dependent upon a beyond that Freud named the Kernel of Being: the Unconscious. (Abraham, "The Shell and the Kernel.")

Freud's anasemic procedure creates, thanks to the Somatic-Psychic, the symbol of the messenger and further on we will understand how it serves to reveal the symbolic character of the message itself. By way of its semantic structure, the concept of the message is a symbol insofar as it makes allusion to the unknowable by means of an unknown, while only the relation of the terms is given. What is the precise content of this symbol of the messenger, of the representative, that we have just been considering? It is called either instinct or Drive with its corollary of affects, representations, or even fantasies. Just as drives translate organic demands into the language of the Unconscious, so does the latter utilize the vehicle of the affect or the fantasy in order to move into the Conscious. Thus a passage is enacted each time by appropriate emissaries from a Kernel to its Periphery. Now, would there be messages going in the opposite direction, from the Envelope to the Kernel? This should be the case of memory traces in particular. (Abraham)

Custer's rank at the time of his death was Lieutenant Colonel.

One of the fantasies to emerge from the battle was Custer's alleged call for his Sergeant Butler, whose body was found well west of the field, was one of the many thought to have been the last man to die, though he is better known as the battalion's messenger sent with a desperate S.O.S. to Reno and Brentnall (Rosenberg, Custer and the Epic of Defeat)

Marker 174 stands near the east boundary fence of the monument, and it is two ravines east of the markers which denote where Captain Keogh and his men killed a boot nail, three spent .45/55 carbine cartridge cases, a Colt cartridge, a Colt bullet, and a deformed .50/70 bullet were found around the marker. All three carbine cases were fired from the same weapon. These data suggest that the trooper who fell at Marker 174 was trying to escape the melee of the battle. Perhaps he was one of the last survivors, or perhaps he had feigned death among the dead around Keogh and was trying to get away. Perhaps he was a last messenger. As the man dashed across the ravines and up the final side slope, he drew fire from the Indians. He returned fire with his carbine, perhaps his last three rounds, and then fired with his Colt revolver just as he was hit by an Indian bullet. His Colt round struck the ground near where he fell. The bullet that may

have struck him was a .50/70 bullet of the type loaded by the army for its Model 1868 and 1870 Springfield rifles. Surplus ammunition did the soldier in. (Scott and Fox)

Thus mutilation of the sexual organs does not entail the elimination of the homologous nucleic function and vice versa, anasemic castration does not imply the excision of the genitals. It is by virtue of this correspondence between the Envelope and the Kernel that Freud localized the source of sexual drives in the somatic zones, meaning thereby the Erogenous Zones, with capitals, that is, originating in the Colonel. (Abraham)

Godly described his first visit to the Custer battlefield. He seems to have been startled by the colors: "The marble white bodies, the somber brown of the dead horses, tufts of reddish brown grass on the almost ashy white soil." He observed that from a distance the stripped men resembled white boulders. More than two hundred bodies and about seventy animal carcasses had been exposed to the June sun for two or three days when burial parties went to work.

Mutilations:

Eyes torn out and laid on the rocks. Noses cut off. Ears cut off. Chins hewn off. Teeth chopped out. Joints of fingers cut off. Brains taken out and placed on rocks, with members of the body. Entrails taken out and exposed. Hands cut off. Feet cut off. Arms taken out from socket. Private parts severed. (Connell)

A tribe signed the bodies of its victims with a wound. A cut throat, for example, was the Sioux signature. (Connell)

Neither The Colonel nor Keogh were mutilated.

Repressed, the trace continues nonetheless to act in relation to the unconscious Colonel, but henceforth obeys its laws exclusively—both to attract into its orbit the other traces that concern it and to erupt into Consciousness as the return of the repressed. (Abraham)

New York Herald, July 23, 1876. "A VOICE FROM THE TOMB" (headline).
(Letter written by Custer just before the regiment left on its march up the Rosebud June 22).

My last letter was sent from the mouth of Powder River and described our march from the Little Missouri. I fear it may not have reached its destination, or if it did it was in such a condition as to be illegible owing to a sad accident which befell our mail party. Just as the sergeant with the mail bag on his arm stepped aboard the small boat and was about to push off the boat overturned, throwing all hands into the water. The sergeant at once disappeared below the surface and was never afterward seen. When the sergeant disappeared in the water the mail sack went with him, but fortunately floated between the steamer and the shore, before sinking below the surface. By means of boat hooks the bag and its contents were

recovered, but not until they had been under water several minutes. Whinn opened on shore many of the letters were found opened by the influence of the water, and all the stamps displaced. . . . (Custer, in Graham, ed., *The Custer Myth*)

Who was the one, besides the biographer, Whittaker, who contributed most to the creation of the Custer myth?

It was Bennett, editor of the *New York Herald*.

You don't mean William Bennett, Secretary of Education under Reagan? Of course not. I mean James Gordon Bennett.

Custer was the perfect hero and spokesman for Bennett's views. The death of such a hero did not suggest forgiveness of enemies; rather it implied the need for revenge. The Herald's own exterminationist rhetoric now escalated and began to ramify and reach out to include social conflicts other than the Indian war. The metaphorical connections thus developed are completely interrelated with each other, and all are recurrently associated with the stories that now centered particularly on the personality and heroic fable of Custer himself. It became the text for yet another sermon on the character of savages and the best means for governing them. Through the familiar devices of language- and image-borrowing; and the physical juxtaposition of articles and editorials, the Custer-Sitting Bull material is related to the grand-scale war of races and religions then materializing; in the Balkans; to the continuing problems of "Red" agitation and violence among the "laboring classes and dangerous classes" of the city; to the proposal to build a Custer monument; and to the issues and personalities of the upcoming presidential canvass. (Slotkin, *The Fatal Environment*)

2. Jokes

The most popular and enduring subject of Indian humor is, of course, General Custer. There are probably more jokes about Custer and the Indians than there were participants in the battle. All tribes, even those thousands of miles from Montana, feel a sense of accomplishment when thinking of Custer. Custer binds together implacable foes because he represented the Ugly American of the last century and he got what was coming to him. Some years ago we put out a bumper sticker which read "Custer Died for Your Sins." Originally the Custer bumper sticker referred to the Sioux Treaty of 1868 signed at Fort Laramie in which the United States pledged to give free and undisturbed use of the lands claimed by Red Cloud in return for peace. Under the covenants of the Old Testament, breaking a covenant called for a blood sacrifice for atonement. Custer was the blood sacrifice for the United States breaking the Sioux treaty. That, at least originally, was the meaning of the slogan. (DeLoria, Jr., *Custer Died for Your Sins*)

Tom Custer: "I don't think this attack was such a good idea."

George Custer: "So? Sioux me!"

[GRAPH: "CUSP CATASTROPHE"]

As a part of mathematics, catastrophe theory is a theory about singularities. When applied to scientific problems, therefore, it deals with the properties of discontinuities directly, without reference to any specific underlying mechanism. This makes it especially appropriate for the study of systems whose inner workings are not known, and for situations in which the only reliable observations are of the discontinuities. (Saunders, *An Introduction to Catastrophe Theory*)

Why is Custer's Last Stand so funny?

The essence of humor is defined as expecting "A" and getting "B."

Note that if both rage and fear are high, the behavior exhibited depends on the way the fear and rage were built up. Thus, if at first a little fear was induced and then both rage and fear were increased to certain levels, say x and y , the resulting behavior might be flight. But if a little rage was first induced, and then both rage and fear were increased to the same values x and y , the resulting behavior might well be attack. This property, called divergence, makes the cusp catastrophe particularly useful in the social and biological sciences, where behaviors, responses, attitudes, in addition to being subject to abrupt and discontinuous changes, sometimes vary greatly despite almost identical "causes." (Paulos, *Mathematics and Humor*)

Custer's greatest fear was that the Indians would flee upon discovering his approach, their general practice being to avoid direct confrontations. His entire strategy was based on preventing the Indians from escaping.

When Custer at last caught sight of the village—extending perhaps four miles—he studied the encampment through DeRudio's field glasses, then waved his hat to the troops and shouted: "Hurrah, boys, we've got them!" This is what the Italian trumpeter told Benteen the general said. If indeed Custer made such a remark after sighting the greatest concentration of militant Indians in the history of North America it sounds like a joke from an old vaudeville routine. (Connell)

Thus the cusp catastrophe combines the cognitive incongruity theory and the various psychological theories of humor with the release theory of laughter—all in one parsimonious model. An incongruity of a pair of possible interpretations is of course necessary. This incongruity must, however, be such that its resolution releases emotional energy (from sexual anxieties, "sudden glory," "playfulness, or whatever). Moreover, the model is at least consistent with the derailment theory of humor, since the second (hidden) meaning (x coordinate) often depends critically on the context. (Paulos)

According to the Italian trumpeter Martini, who carried Custer's last message to Benteen ("Come on. Big village. Be quick. Bring packs"), and who admitted

tedly didn't understand English too well, Custer's plan was to sneak into the village unnoticed.

Grants

National Defense Education Act, Title IV, Brown University, 1967–1970.

The Space Age began on 4 October, 1957. On that date the Soviet Union successfully placed Sputnik 1, the world's first artificial satellite, into orbit round the Earth. The 84-kilogram sphere, 58 centimeters in diameter, travelled round the Earth in a period of 96 minutes, its altitude ranging between 229 and 947 kilometres, and all the while its battery-powered radio transmitter emitted the characteristic "bleep, bleep" signal so vividly imprinted on the minds of all who recall the day the Space Age dawned. (Nicolson, Sputnik to Space Shuttle)

The American program to launch a satellite was called "Vanguard."

Teaching Interests

Vanguard theory, arts, pedagogy.

Part Two: TV/AI

(whisper) What is a tv/ai?

It's the same as a vita minor, except it uses punceptual series.

Series "H"

EMPLOYMENT

STANDARD TRANSMISSION

Truck Driver, Miles City Sand & Gravel/Concrete Products. (Walt Ulmer, proprietor)

I was eleven the winter Dad bought the Sand & Gravel from an alcoholic who had let it fall into ruin. But the gravel pit was worth something. On Saturdays I went to the plant to help him. It was bitter cold that winter, skiffed snow, the Yellowstone frozen solid, with a wind whistling down the prairie all the way from the arctic. Mostly I stayed in one of the two sheds cleaning truck parts. The shed was about the size of a double garage, two garages deep, with no windows except in the front doors. There was one overhead bare bulb, and a neon light over the tool bench in back. The walls were lined with old Saturday Evening Posts for insulation; the floor was bare concrete heavily stained with grease and oil. The only heat was from a floor heater. I wasted quite a bit of time playing with a truck transmission that I found



Walt and Hider.

there—a floor shift for a dump truck, with the "H"-pattern marking the various locations still visible on the worn knob. I oiled it up a bit and then shifted through the gears pretending I was driving. The transmission is a mechanism that helps deliver the power of the engine to the wheels.

Pedagogy: the transmission of knowledge from one generation to the next

THE YELLOW HAT

The summer I graduated from Custer High I was driving trucks for Walt. I was the only kid working that summer, and I was worried about holding my own with the regular drivers. Hoping to blend in with these professionals, I developed a costume and style of conduct that I supposed to be very masculine. These consisted of boots, jeans, sleeveless T-shirt, and a short-brim yellow hat, grease-stained, with one side of the brim pinned to the crown by a button that said "Go Naked." Chewing tobacco like the other men was beyond me, since it made me get dizzy and vomit, so I kept the stub of a fat dead cigar clenched between my teeth through which I spit frequently. My speech was peppered with the phrases "summbitch," "horseknobs," and "douchebag."

I had to deliver a yard of sand for a kid's sandbox. When I pulled up in the alley of the address the kid was waiting for me. About six or seven years old I would say, holding a big stick. He watched me maneuver the truck into the designated space, run the box up with a roar of the engine, pulling the tip lever as the box went up. While the box was still up I went around back to give the door a bang. The kid is really taking this all in and I'm thinking he's impressed with how it's going. He says to me, poking his stick in my direction "Are you a boy, or a man?"

THE LOW HOLE

One day that summer Walt got a call from Baker for a load of pea gravel. The regular drivers were all out on jobs and because the rains had finally let up they needed the gravel at their drill site right away. I loaded ten yards of rock on the International cab-over and headed for the highway. Dad's orders were to ask at the gas stations for directions, and to remember to have somebody sign the ticket accepting the delivery.

The road between Miles City and Baker is hilly, so I had to actually come to a full stop many times because I just couldn't seem to hit the low hole first gear—while the truck was moving, no matter how I double-clutched. Anyway I did not have a chauffeur's license and I had never made an out of town delivery before. This was my opportunity to show I was up to the job. The first challenge was just to get to Baker and find the drill site before it started raining again.

At the station they told me the place was along the river. Take the gravel road, turn at the third cattle guard. I caught sight of the rig and swung through

the next cattle guard without really counting, only to find that the ruts did not lead toward the river but off into a field. I realized at once by the way the engine started to lug down and labor that I was on muddy ground with the land on either side looking even softer than the trail I was on. I knew if the truck stopped I would be stuck. I would have to dump the load there to even have a chance to get the truck out, turning the mission into a failure.

It was do or die for Custer High. I would try to make it into first gear without stopping: if I missed the shift the day was over. I double-clutched, red-lining the tachometer, cranked the transmission lever over-down-back, and hit the low hole clean. Swinging off the trail out into the field I floor-boarded the gas, slowly circling with enough power now to get back onto the road. Feeling tremendously relieved and proud I made it to the drill site without further problems. I backed up toward the rig, guided in the dual mirrors by a man wearing a hard-hat and rain-slicker. He waved me stopped and I did the levers, revved, tripping the back gate as the box went up as I always did. But the guy started screaming. I could hear him over the engine and the rush of the rock. I was out of the cab and around back, thinking maybe I'd buried him somehow. By that time the box was empty. I was amazed to see however this little bit of a heap of rock where there should have been a great pile, twelve tons or so. The guy was fine, just standing there staring at the ground. "Where's the rock?" I asked. When he pointed at the ground I finally realized most of it had gone down the drill hole. I'd forgotten how fast pea-gravel comes out of the box, like water through a sluice, flowing further out onto the ground than you would expect.

The foreman was running toward us. I put the clipboard with the ticket into the guy's hands, who was starting to curse loudly. He signed the ticket automatically and I took off. When I got home I told Dad about the accident. All he did was give me this look, you know. Indescribable. I never got any more out of town assignments.

SPORTS

Letter, Football, 1960–1962, Custer County High School.

POST-GOALS

The goal posts for a football field form a giant "H." There is one of these "H's" at each end of a field. Games are often won by kicking a ball "through the up-rights."

The players on the field are the nuclear core of this macroscopic structure of perhaps 100,000 people. Although the activities of the nuclear core are dominant in determining coherence of the structure as a whole, the energy levels of the players and of the spectators are nevertheless interdependent. One example of this is the home-team advantage: Namely, in general the higher level of excitement

of the fans in the home stadium gives the home team an advantage in competitive sports. The more aggressive the sport, the greater is this advantage. Because the information fed into this nuclear core of players by the activities of the spectators both affects and is effected by the players, this entire stadium—players and fans—constitute a single, highly integrated nucleate social structure. (Bronn, *Psychological and Social Structures*)

Everyone remarked on Custer's athleticism. Even when he had good evidence that there were far more than the thousand Indians first reported Custer was not concerned. The Seventh Cavalry was the best; number one. It could whip all the Indians in the Northwest put together.

Somehow, within hours, Crook's scouts did learn there had been a fight; of this there can be little doubt, and from their sullen demeanor it is evident that they knew they were on the losing team.

The Custer story is exemplary in two ways: as a model of heroism; as a warning; of what happens if one fails to be a team player. (Connell)

THE SPIRIT HAND

The fans of the Florida Gators want to be number one. The President of the University wants it to be number one, and all the programs want to be the best in the country. For example, The Florida Department of English is number one in the country.

Entering the University bookstore the other day I saw as if for the first time a row of Spirit Hands, giant, oversize, pulsing with the orange and blue school colors, index finger extended, inscribed GO GATORS on one side, with the logo of the university on the other. The full meaning of logocentrism became clear to me at that moment. One half of the floor space in the store is devoted to selling books required by the faculty, and the other half is devoted to selling the name and emblem of the school. That side of the store glows with orange and grinning alligators of every description, topped by the row of Spirit Hands.

Every school sells these hands, manufactured out of foam rubber by the Spirit Hand Corporation of America, to permit the student fans to emphasize the gesture meaning "we are number one!" regardless of the ranking of the team. The students, that is, are encouraged to identify with their school to have school spirit. Later, as alumni, they are expected to support the school with gifts, nor is there any evidence to suggest that graduates of one university would respond to solicitations for gifts from any institution but their own. I know this for a fact because we tried it. We also tried to find a school that applied Brecht's epic approach of distancing and estrangement to alumni relations. Maybe Black Mountain.

THE MAGISTERIAL GESTURE

The Spirit Hand in the classroom—a gestural pun. In The Post Card Derrida describes a card he had considered including as an illustration in the book along with the one displayed on the cover, depicting Plato dictating to Socrates.

The interest of this other one is that it figures as the inversion of the Sp, its back if you will. It is a photograph of Erich Salomon, entitled The course of Professor W. Khal: seated at his table (rather a desk, slightly oblique), a bearded professor raises his finger (remonstrance, threat, authoritative explication?) while looking toward the back of the class which is out of sight. On the back of this card, a word from [Bernard] Graciet: "He speaks, alone, professorially, barricaded behind the elevated magisterial desk, strangely near, terrible, raising his right index finger toward I don't know what final knell [glas] of the question." (Derrida, The Post Card)

A student may be seen in the photograph as well, neck bent before the judge, silent, taking notes.

What is the relationship between the two gestures—of the fan's Spirit Hand and the magisterial point? Freud once mentioned that he always looked for the sign-painter's hand that could be found in the margin of a dream, indicating a point of concealment, displacement or condensation, indicating the operations of repression. Is it best to look in the direction of the point, following the habits of ostension? Or to look at the hand itself?

But the words "I see" in our sentence are redundant. I don't wish to tell myself that it is I who see this, nor that I see it. This comes to the same as saying that I can't point out to myself by a visual hand what I am seeing; as this hand does not point to what I see but is part of what I see. (Wittgenstein, The Brown Book)

Derrida raised such questions in a discussion of *Geschecht*, inquiring into the idiomatic usages of this term in Heidegger's texts. Referring in an untranslatable way to matters of sex, race, family, generation, lineage, species, genre, *Geschecht* is associated with thinking as handwork, craft, and finally as technology, through the Schlag or blow, the imprint of impression, the beat, in which I hear that beating that a team takes when losing. Derrida is studying Heidegger's hands in photographs.

The hand's being does not let itself be determined as a bodily organ of gripping. It is not an organic part of the body intended for grasping, taking hold, indeed for scratching, let us add even for catching on, comprehending, conceiving, if one passes from Greil to begreifen and to Begriff. If there is a thought of the hand or a hand of thought, as Heidegger gives us to think, it is not of the order of conceptual grasping. Rather this thought of the hand belongs to the essence of

the gift, of a giving that would give, if this is possible, without taking hold of anything. (Derrida)

The metaphor of the hand in concept formation—in the German word for concept—is open to further elaboration. The decision to write about the hand was due to its status in Paul de Man's signature (de main), macaronically.

Have you detoured? What is the "H" in Derrida, explicitly?

It has to do with an epilogue from Ponge, the source of Derrida's tutor texts for invention, in which a tree "inscribes on a leaf the common noun that is closest to the proper given name of the author, except for a gender and an aitch, a hatchet. 'Now then, this tree, who is my friend, thought that he had written on his leaves, on each of his leaves (in the language of trees, everyone knows what I mean), that he had written franchise on a leaf.'"

Now the sequel to the epilogue tells how, in brief, the tree becomes an executioner and a victim at one and the same time, signing itself and bleeding to death from the very moment that the woodcutter, after making off with one of its branches, turns it into an aitch, a hatchet with which he then tries to cut down the tree. The eyes of the tree "fasten on the hatchet, the aitch held by the woodsman and it recognizes, in the brand new handle of the hatchet, this aitch, the wood of the branch that was removed in the first place."

What comes back to cut the tree, and then to put it to death, is thus part of the tree, a branch, a son, a handle, a piece detached from the tree which writes, which writes itself on itself, on its leaf, its first leaf, franchise. The tree itself, the signer, cuts itself, and the torn-off piece with which it cuts itself to death is also a hatchet, an aitch, a letter subtracted from the franchise written on the tree, what has to be cut away from this common noun so that the noun can become a proper given name. But the supplementary hatchet, the aitch, by making dead wood, confers a monumental stature on the apologetic tree. (Derrida, Signsponge)

H-BOMB

"Nuclear Criticism," like Kantian criticism, is thought about the limits of experience as a thought of finitude.

Such a criticism forecloses a finitude so radical that it would annul the basis of the opposition and would make it possible to think the very limit of criticism. This limit comes into view in the groundlessness of a remainderless self-destruction of the self, auto-destruction of the autos itself. Whereupon the Colonel, the nucleus of criticism, itself bursts apart. (Derrida, "No Apocalypse, Not Now: (full speed ahead, seven missiles, seven missiles)")

The idea of the war of extermination is the central theme of the Myth of the Frontier. The catastrophic ravaging of the Last Stand held that it represented the



Chief Gall. L. A. Huffman collection.

possible destruction of civilization and progress by an uprising of human savagery from below. The optimistic reading emphasized the sacrificial aspect of the battle, showing that Custer's death struggle wounded the Indians and aroused the slumbering spirit of the American nation, leading in the end to revenge on the Indian and the triumph of a chastened and purified people. (Slotkin)

In his book Custer reproduced a telegram from Sherman to Grant, dated one week after the slaughter (the Fetterman fight), which says in part: "We must act with vindictive earnestness against the Sioux, even to their extermination, men, women, and children. Nothing less will reach the root of the case." If one word of this extraordinary telegram is altered it reads like a message from Eichmann to Hitler. (Connell)

When writing articles for a sportsman's journal, Custer used the pseudonym "Nomad." (Connell)

Then what was Edward Teller's design that, all at once, made the thermonuclear bomb feasible? The core of the device consisted of the thermonuclear fuel itself—in this case liquid deuterium and tritium. These two hydrogen isotopes were surrounded by liquid hydrogen that was the cooling agent to keep the deuterium and tritium in a liquid state. This core of thermonuclear fuel, plus hydrogen coolant, was then surrounded by fissionable material of the kind used in the existing atomic bombs. And, finally, the fissionable material was encased with a conventional explosive.

When the Mike device was detonated, the following sequence of events occurred: The conventional explosive drove the fissionable material inward, compressing it into a critical mass and creating an atomic explosion. This in turn compressed and heated the hydrogen isotopes (deuterium and tritium) to the point where thermonuclear fusion occurred, releasing unprecedented quantities of energy. (Blumberg and Owens, *Energy and Conflict: The Life and Times of Edward Teller*)

Let us start with a description of what is meant by isotopes: "most chemical elements are a mixture of several components identical in chemical properties, but different in atomic weight. They received the name of isotopes, that is, substances occupying the same place in the periodic system of elements." Thus we may conclude that the isotope is one of a group of nuclei which have the same atomic number (Z) but differ in both their neutronic number (N) and mass number (A).

Looking now for the linguistic counterpart of isotopes, we find a striking similarity between the latter and some aspects of the linguistic phenomenon called homonymy. Semantically, it is completely irrelevant whether we classify French "louer" [praise, eulogized from Latin "laudare," and French "louer" [to rent, to book] from Latin "locare" as etymological or semantic homonyms. Both linguistic forms have the same phonetic value and the same spelling, so that the semantic difference may be determined only by a context or a definition. There

fore for our purposes we shall call homonyms all those linguistic forms which have at the same time an identical spelling and an identical phonetic value, but whose semantic variations can be determined either by a context or by a definition. In other words, our "homonyms" are simultaneously "homographs" and "homophones." (Grava, *A Structural Inquiry into the Symbolic Representation of Ideas*)

Francis Ponge—*dici je l'appelle, pour le salut et la louange, je devrais dire la renommée.* (Derrida, *Signsponge*)

Celebration, praising the name, which may be done by "booking" space in the celebrity's text.

Exultantly watching the seismograph register the expected shock waves from Eniwetok, the delighted Teller, "father of the H-bomb," sent off a self-explanatory three-word telegram to Los Alamos—"It's a boy." (Easley, *Fathering the Unthinkable: Masculinity, Scientists, and the Nuclear Arms Race*)

SERIES "CALL"

Humor—Call

This is the humor that is not funny.

A humour is a liquid or fluent part of the body, comprehended in it, for the preservation of it; and is either innate or born with us, or adventitious and acquisite.

Blood is a hot, sweet, temperate, red humour, prepared in the meseraick veins, and made of the most temperate parts of the chylius in the liver, whose office is to nourish the whole body; to give it strength and colour, being dispersed by the veins through every part of it. And from it spirits are first begotten in the heart. Pituita, or phlegm, is a cold and moist humour, begotten of the colder part of the chylius (or white juice coming out of the meat digested in the stomach) in the liver; his office is to nourish and moisten the members of the body.

Choler is hot and dry, bitter, begotten of the hotter parts of the chylius, and gathered to the gall: it helps the natural heat and senses, and serves to the expelling of excrements.

Melancholy, cold and dry, thick, black, and sour, begotten of the more faeculent part of nourishment, and purged from the spleen, is a bridle to the other two hot humours, blood and choler. These four humours have some analogy with the four elements, and to the four ages in man. (Burton, *Anatomy of Melancholy*)

The theory of melancholy became crystallized around a number of ancient emblems. One of the properties assembled around Dürer's figure of Melancholy is the dog. The similarity between the condition of the melancholic, and the

state of rabies, is not accidental. According to ancient tradition, "the spleen is dominant in the organism of the dog." (Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*)

Sir William Ramsey, one of the leading experts in the new field of radioactive substances, thought there were no limits to what radium might mean to the world. He wrote that the "philosopher's stone will have been discovered, and it is not beyond the bounds of possibility that it may lead to that other goal of the philosophers of the Dark Age—the elixir vitae." (Hilgartner, Bell, and O'Connor, **NUKESPEAK**)

After the rise of the explicitly "masculine philosophy" in the seventeenth century and further disparagement and repression of the "feminine," only the manipulative aspect of alchemy remained of what had once been a more holistic endeavor. The role of the true alchemist as man-midwife to "mother nature" had been replaced by the goal of the masculine philosopher to be master and professor of brute (female) matter. In his sympathetic account of alchemical practice, F. Sherwood Taylor, the then Director of the Science Museum in London, has not inappropriately written: "The material aim of the alchemists, the transmutation of metals, has now been realized by science, and the alchemical vessel is the uranium pile. Its success has had precisely the result that the alchemists feared and guarded against." (Easley)

The ancient Greek scientists thought of the sun as a great big fire in the sky. By the 1930s, it was known that the energy of the sun, and therefore all the other stars, came from atomic reactions, the fusion of very light atoms to release energy. Enrico Fermi made the connection one day early in the year, as he and Teller walked back after lunch to their laboratory at Columbia University, where they were then employed on the bomb project. "Couldn't such an explosion be used to start reactions similar to the reactions of the sun?" (Moss, *Men Who Play God*)

FIRE is the material associated with cholera, along with masculinity and the color yellow. To write the anatomy of cholera, now, after Burton's anatomy of melancholy: "to anatomize this humour of [cholera], through all his parts and species, as it is an habit, or an ordinary disease, and that philosophically, medicinally, to shew the causes, symptoms, and several cures of it, that it may be the better avoided."

What is the temperament of cholera?

Such are bold and impudent, and of a more harebrained disposition, apt to quarrel and think of such things, battles, combats, and their manhood, furious, impatient in discourse, stiff, irrefragable, and prodigious in their tenets; and if they be moved, more violent, outrageous, ready to disgrace, provoke any, to kill them-

selves and others. Cardan holds these men of all others fit to be assassinate, bold, hardy, fierce, and adventurous. (Burton)

WHEN ANGER BECOMES TOO INTENSE, THE PERSON EXPLODES.

When I told him, he just exploded.

She blew up at me.

We won't tolerate any more of your outbursts.

WHEN A PERSON EXPLODES, PARTS OF HIM GO UP IN THE AIR.

I blew my stack.

She flipped her lid.

He hit the ceiling.

ANGER IS FIRE. (Lakoff and Kovecses, "The Cognitive Model of Anger Inherent in American English. In Holland and Quinn)

Gallbladder: Walt Ulmer, 1916–1983

How did Walt die?

His gallbladder, which they knew was infected, also turned out to be cancerous.

Has his ghost been the problem for you that it was for Hamlet?

What did he want, as a ghost?

Remember what Hamlet said when he saw the ghost of his father?

Oh, answer me! Let me not burst in ignorance, but tell why thy canonized bones, hearsed in death, have burst their cerements, why the sepulcher wherein we saw thee quietly inurned hath oped his ponderous and marble jaws to cast thee up again. What may this mean, that thou, dead corse, again, in complete steel, revisit'st thus the glimpses of the moon, making night hideous.

"What are these rites, really, by which we fulfill our obligation to what is called the memory of the dead—if not the total mass intervention, from the heights of heaven to the depths of hell, of the entire play of the symbolic register." (Lacan, "Desire and the Interpretation of Desire in Hamlet." Yale French Studies 55/56 [1977])

Walt's Sand and Gravel plant reminded me of "Hamlet's Mill." Hamlet's Mill is that book by Giorgio de Santillana and Hertha von Dechend on the transmission of knowledge through myth. Amiodhi in Icelandic legend was another melancholic intellectual, forbear of Hamlet. He owned a mill that originally ground out peace and plenty, then, in decaying times, salt, and finally, in the last age, rock and sand, creating a maelstrom at the bottom of



Miles City Sand and Gravel, 1962.

the sea that opened a way to the land of the dead. One of my first jobs when I worked at the plant was to clean the grids of the screens used to grade the gravel into sizes. Eventually the screens plugged up with stones and I had to knock them loose with a hammer. The pea-gravel screen could be cleaned by running the tip of a large screwdriver along the meshed grids, which produced an almost musical sound. This was the actual "gravel plant." The washer with its three grades of screen, one on top of the other, was fed by a conveyor belt carrying the "pit gravel" from the quarry, and fed in turn three piles of sized rock, with the sand coming out the bottom, to be run through another washer for further grading. The whole contraption made a terrible noise and shook violently.

There was this huge pile, a mountain, of oversize rock that came off the side. Too big for anything, unless we had a crusher, which we couldn't afford. So it just sat there and piled up over the years, always with a few rockhounds climbing over it, looking for agates. You could get a full cubic yard, over a ton of this rock, for two dollars.

One day the hired man, George, came back from lunch with a present for Walt, a birthday present, something he found at the drugstore. Walt opened it and there was this box and inside that was a pet rock. Now there was no difference between this pet rock and the rocks in the oversize pile, except that the pet one had a face painted on it, sort of a frown, as I recall, and it came in a little box. And the pet rock sold for two dollars apiece.

Dad stared at that rock, and this look came over his face.

Anyway, Amlodhi's maelstrom agrees with the anagram of "Ulmer," "le-mur," which, in Roman religion, referred to "the ghosts of the dead of a family." I live now about a mile or two from the "Devil's Millhopper," a huge sinkhole which formed when a cavern roof collapsed. The bowl-shaped cavity which resulted is 500 feet across and tapers to 100 feet on the bottom. Its depth is 120 feet. The Devil's Millhopper was created through the erosion of underground limestone deposits which formed a cavern and the subsequent collapse of the cavern roof. This natural phenomenon has been visited by the curious since the early 1880s."

Simonides invented mnemonics. He was able to identify the bodies of the party guests killed when a roof collapsed on them by remembering where each had been sitting.

What did the ghost of Hamlet's father want?
Revenge.

If melancholy is tragic, is cholera comic?

Walt was cremated in Minnesota, which we all thought was appropriate, considering that his favorite poem was "The Cremation of Sam McGee" by Robert Service. The hospital was shipping the ashes to us, so Judy and I waited for the mail every day, since we didn't want Mom to be the one to get the package. Finally the package came, a heavy metal box wrapped in

brown paper. Judy looked at the registered stamp. \$5.95. "If Dad had known how cheap it is to travel this way, he probably would have gotten cremated a lot sooner." (Laughter)

HANK WORMWOOD

Henry—better known as "Hank"—Wormwood was the first town marshal in Miles City. Hank had one personal peculiarity which set him apart—he wore his sandy-colored hair long, like a dandy who wished to attract attention. One evening the report reached Hank that a swaddy in Strader's saloon and gambling hall was getting "tough drunk" and swearing to his friends that "no red-headed, long-haired son of a so and so could do anything to him. Hank, realizing that his hand was being called, stepped into the saloon and, being careful to keep his hand away from his gun, walked straight up to the soldier in a friendly fashion. All activity stopped immediately and an ominous quiet settled on the room in which there were at least 25 other soldiers. Looking the soldier straight in the eye, Hank said, "What's this I hear? You wouldn't do anything to hurt me, would you?" The soldier, a powerful man but not as tall as Hank, hesitated, and while he hesitated Hank's hands suddenly shot out and his long fingers encircled the man's neck. The marshal quickly lifted him off the floor and held him against the wall with a grip like a hangman's noose. The soldier choked, his tongue popped out of his mouth, and his face went purple. Supporting his victim with one hand, the marshal took the soldier's gun and then set him down. Holding his prisoner at the point of a gun, Hank glanced coolly around the saloon and then addressed those present: "I'm goin' to take this boy back to the fort. I advise you fellows not to interfere." Not a man moved as the marshal walked his man out the door. (Brown and Felton, *The Frontier Years*)

Wormwood: "an emblem or type of what is bitter and grievous to the soul." To be wormwood or gall and wormwood: "to be acutely mortifying or vexing." Gall (fig.) with reference to the bitterness of gall. Bitterness of spirit, rancour (supposed to have its seat in the gall). Spirit to resent injury or insult. (Slang) Impudence. (transferred uses) Poison, venom. Name given to the Lesser Centaury, and to other plants. Barren spot in a field, flaw or rotten place in a rock. Part of the carcass that has to be removed as useless and offensive. A painful sore or wound. Something exasperating, galling; a state of mental soreness or irritation. A person or thing that harasses or distresses. A place rubbed bare. A breach, a fault, a dike. Filth, impurity, refuse. An excrescence produced on trees by the action of insects. Oak-galls are used in the manufacture of ink and tannin. (O.E.D.)

HIDER

One day George, the hired man, came out of the root cellar at the pliant with his arms full of puppies. The yard dog had hidden her litter down there. A gravel plant is not a very sentimental sort of place, so the ones that noisily

wanted were drowned in the Yellowstone. After all the puppies were gone Dad found one more hiding in the cellar. He named it "Hider."

Hider hid himself for a good reason, it turned out, because when he grew up, and he did get very large, he was the ugliest dog anyone could remember seeing. He was pitch black, and his hair (his old man must have been a wire-hair) stuck out like a bed of nails, like you could use him to scrub rust off the plant. He lived under the trucks, and never got used to being big, so he had this streak of grease all along his back, where he rubbed the underside of the trucks. He was very shy. He'd keep off from people a good thousand feet, and if you called to him he would grovel the whole way, wiggling across the yard on his belly, whimpering, until, ashamed of ourselves, we finally gave up calling to him. That was after George threw him in the Yellowstone, to try to clean him up. Then Hider stayed off two thousand feet, and had twice as far to grovel.

One morning we came to work as usual, about six, and we saw Hider laying dead in the road, run over, probably by one of the cattle trucks that went that way. Walt went over to him, to see if he might be alive, and there was this look on his face.

Call—War

Photograph: Chief Call, an Unkpapa Sioux, one of the leaders, along with Crazy Horse and Two Moon, in the defeat of Custer!

His name in English is a literal translation of Pizi, given to him by his mother when she came upon him tasting the gall of a dead animal. But he was known also as Red Walker and The Man Who Goes in the Middle.

The Bismarck Tribune had reported that a trader bought from Chief Call—"the worst Indian living"—an odd little matchbox-compass-whistle device that Custer carried in his pocket. How did this worst of all possible Indians get it? Call could not have been Custer's angel of death. For one thing he fought with a hatchet and beyond doubt Custer went down with a bullet in the side.

Most Unkpapas considered him a peaceable sort who lost his temper that Sunday after Reno's troops shot two of his wives and three of his children. The act turned his heart bad, as he confided to a journalist many years later, causing him to ride among the soldiers and split their heads with his hatchet. "I killed a great many," he said. (Connell)

What about the compass Call took from Custer? Connell reads the deployment of the Companies on the hill in a way that suggests the needle of a compass.

From above, as one views the battle field on the museum topographical map, they give the impression of being loosely arranged in the shape of a V—an arrowhead, if one chooses to see it like that—with General Custer at the northern point. Pointing slightly northwest, to be exact.

The needle of a compass never points true north.

The Sioux worshipped the sun. A male proved his manhood by participating in the Sun Dance.

The Sioux arbor usually was about 150 feet across with a twenty-foot pole in the middle from which dangled an array of rawhide or buffalo hair lariats. A medicine man, after having gashed a dancer's chest, would shove sticks beneath the muscles. These sticks would be attached to the dangling lariats and tightened until the brave was forced to stand on tiptoe, which might draw the chest muscles three or four inches out of his body. (Connell)

Gaul—Gallic Philosophy

DERRIDA

At the insistence of his collaborator, Peter Eisenman, in the design of their "folie" in the Parc de la Villette, Derrida provided a drawing for a sculpture based on the metaphor informing the passage in Plato's *Timaeus* that he finds most resistant to interpretation—the chora as cribble, sieve or sift:

my verdict is that being and space and generation, these three, existed in their three ways before the heaven, and that the nurse of generation, moistened by water and inflamed by fire, and receiving the forms of earth and air, and experiencing all the affections which accompany these, presented a strange variety of appearances, and being full of powers which were neither similar nor equally balanced, was never in any part in a state of equipoise, but swaying; unevenly hither and thither, was shaken by them, and by its motion again shook them, and the elements when moved were separated and carried continually, some one way, some another. As, when grain is shaken and winnowed by fans and other instruments used in the threshing of corn, the close and heavy particles are borne away and settle in one direction, and the loose and light particles in another. (Timaeus)

Derrida comments, describing his design based on this metaphor:

I propose therefore the following "representation," "materialisation," "formation": in one or three exemplars (if there are three, with different scalings), a gilded metallic object . . . will be planted obliquely in the ground. Neither vertical nor horizontal, a most solid frame will resemble at once a mesh, sieve, or grid and a stringed musical instrument. An interpretive and selective filter

which will have permitted a reading and sifting of the three sites and the three embeddings (Eisenman-Derrida, Tschumi, La Villette). (Derrida, 1987)

But isn't that a description of the gravel plant, which is a three-layered grid for sifting rock?

Not long after I returned from the memorial service in Montana I received a copy of *Feu la cendre* from Derrida. He was still at the *Ecole Normale* at the time, and I noticed really for the first time the return address on the stationery—"45 Rue d'Ulm." He worked on Ulm Street. I felt the same sort of shock when I read that old interview by Godard: "In other countries Cahiers has an enormous influence. People wonder if we're serious. It was bad enough to admit that guys like Ray and Aldrich have genius, but when they see interviews with someone like Ulmer—I am for the *Politique des Auteurs*, but not just anybody—I find that opening the door to absolutely everyone is a very dangerous thing." Alexander Kluge is associated with the Ulmer *Dramaturgien*. In the same way, lots of towns and other places are named for Custer.

I read Derrida's text right away, in which he says, "I now have the impression that the best paradigm of the trace is not, as some have believed, the track of a hunt, a marking, a step, and so on, but ashes, that which remains without remaining of the holocaust, of the burn-all." Not senders and receivers, then, in a theory of communication, but cinders. In an idiom referring to the "late," the deceased. A writing without debt that is as good as a burning. No monument, no Phoenix. The "late" is also the "fire" in the idiom, the fire that cannot be effaced in the cinders as trace. It is a word that is in question, that is to be put in place of memory, in the place of memory, to which we are to listen; to take the word into the mouth and ears. Fire. Cholera. But it could be any word, any black on white letters. Not icons, but indexes, in this writing. A text will not resemble what it is about, but be caused by it, the way smoke relates to fire.

What did Derrida say to the driver of the charter bus, taking him on a tour of the Custer National Battlefield Monument?

(We commute already with the "bus" that I have just named, in translation and, according to the principles of transmutation, between *Übetrtragung* and *Übersetzung*, metaphorkos still designating today, in what one calls "modern" Greek, that which concerns means of transportation). We are in a certain way—metaphorically of course, and as concerns the mode of habitation—the content and the tenor of this vehicle: passengers, comprehended and displaced by metaphor. (*Journal*, "The Retrait of Metaphor").

I came home late from the university one evening. It was dark on the front porch. I was fumbling for my keys when suddenly I felt I wasn't alone. Someone was standing next to me. After a moment I was certain it was an animal: a large one. It hissed or growled in a way that seemed like the beginning of a word or a speech, and then seemed to wait for a reply. I tried frantically to get into the house so I could turn on the light to see what it was. It waited a moment longer, while I dropped my keys on the steps, and then began to stalk away, as if in disgust, at a deliberate pace, with a scraping noise. I finally got inside and turned on the porch light, but the creature had disappeared. We got out flashlights but the thing was gone without a trace. The next day Kathy called me at the office to tell me that the creature had been found about mid-morning by the neighbor's dog, hiding in the bushes by the back fence. The animal control officer identified it. "It was a Bittern, an American Bittern."

"I told the officer on the phone we had a large shorebird in our yard. When she arrived she was carrying several leashes, and asked: 'where's the large shepherd?'"

