WRITING POSTHUMANISM, POSTHUMAN WRITING

EDITED BY SIDNEY I. DOBRIN

Writing Posthumanism, Posthuman Writing

New Media Theory
Series Editor, Byron Hawk

The New Media Theory series investigates both media and new media as complex rhetorical ecologies. The merger of media and new media creates a global public sphere that is changing the ways we work, play, write, teach, think, and connect. Because these ecologies operate through evolving arrangements, theories of new media have yet to establish a rhetorical and theoretical paradigm that fully articulates this emerging digital life.

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Books in the Series

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Cover design by Jason Crider. "The difficulty with designing a cover for a book of this
subject is that posthumanism covers such an enormous range of focuses. From theo-
retical discussions of nature and ecology, to the conceptualization of hybrid human
technologies and digital identities, to remapping of literacy with procedural rhetorics,
posthumanism isn't easy to put in a neat little box. It ranges from the cell to the cy-
borg and questions the traditional liberal humanist ideology of what it means to be
"human." This cover works because of its abstract quality and because of its fluidity.
Lines, colors, shapes and depth all blur and are difficult to define, much like traditional
humanist classifications of reality. A common question in the posthuman imaginary is
'how do I define x?' and that is precisely the question I wanted to raise (or at the very
least toy with) with this cover design."

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WRITING POSTHUMANISM, POSTHUMAN WRITING

1 Introduction

Sidney I. Dobrin

Writing Posthumanism, Posthuman Writing's posthumanism identifies a moment of inquiry in which the human subject is called into question via its imbrications with technologies such as cybernetics, informatics, artificial intelligence, genetic manipulation, psychotropic and other pharmaceuticals, and other bio-technologies, as well as species interactions (as ventures in Animal Studies have begun to make evident). *Writing Posthumanism, Posthuman Writing* considers the non-human subject, the prosthetic subject, the technologically augmented subject, the psychic-altered subject, and the (becoming) animal subject in relation to writing. That is to say, the particular avenue of entrance into posthumanist inquiry is of less importance in this project than is that avenue's projection upon writing and writing studies. Ultimately, this collection asks as to the relationship between posthumanisms and writing toward the end of developing posthumanist theories of writing. Of course, some posthumanist theorists might argue that the very idea of posthumanist writing theories is a redundant concept as any writing theory is always already a posthumanist theory given that human interaction with technologies like writing are precisely the kinds of convergences that allow the becoming of the posthuman. Others—like Andy Clark in his book *Natural-Born Cyborgs: Minds, Technologies, and the Future of Human Intelligence*—might argue that technologies like writing are, in fact, what make us uniquely human. In any case—or any other case—it is within the theoretical possibilities of what the reciprocity between posthumanism and writing might reveal that this collection unfolds.

Toward this end, *Writing Posthumanism, Posthuman Writing* inevitably runs headlong into complications of definition and complexity, as any theoretical intervention is bound to do. Yet, within these com-

plications lies the occasion for the emergence of this collection. Post-humanism and the posthuman are inextricably problematic concepts given both the breadth of approaches historically provided to describe them and the territories into which they intervene. Fundamentally, they function as amorphous umbrella terms for a variety of theories and critiques regarding human subjectivity. While some might find their shapelessness problematic, this collection embraces the complexi-ties and nascence of the very idea of posthumanism and the posthu-man as indicative of the rich potential of inquiry under the posthuman umbrella. In fact, within these pages, contributors provide more incen-tive to fragment the umbrella than to coalesce its subsumptions.

Traditionally, posthumanist inquiry has employed a number of classifications as an attempt to both explain its complexities and to control—or at least provide taxonomies of—its lines of inquiry. Most fundamentally, posthumanist inquiry can be divided between what Bart Simon has characterized as an unproductive division between a "popular and a more critical posthumanism" (2) or, as N. Katherine Hayles calls it, a "complacent posthumanism" and a more critical post-humanism. According to Simon, the popular approach to posthuman-ism is exemplified in Francis Fukuyama's 2002 book *Our Posthuman Future: Consequences of the Biotechnology Revolution.* There, Fuku-yama argues that "the most significant threat posed by contemporary biotechnology is the possibility that it will alter human nature and thereby move us into a 'posthuman' stage of history" (7). For Fuku-yama, this is important because "human nature exists, is a meaningful concept, and has provided a stable continuity to our experiences as a species" (7). *Our Posthuman Future* is, as Simon has characterized it "an impassioned defense of liberal humanism against contemporary cultures of laissez-faire individualism and unregulated corporate tech-noscience" (1). Citing Christopher Dewdney's *Last Flesh: Life in the Transhuman Era,* Simon summarizes popular posthumanism: "[W]e are on the verge of the next stage in life's evolution, the stage where, by human agency, life takes control of itself and guides its own destiny. Never before has human life been able to change itself, to reach into its own genetic structure and rearrange its molecular basis; now it can (qtd. in Simon 2). As Simon explains, "This popular posthumanist (sometimes transhumanist) discourse structures the research agendas of much of corporate biotechnology and informatics as well as serving as a legitimating narrative for new social entities (cyborgs, artificial

intelligence, and virtual societies) composed of fundamentally fluid, flexible, and changeable identities. For popular posthumanism, the future is a space for the realization of individuality, the transcendence of biological limits, and the creation of a new social order" (2).[1]

On the other hand, as Jill Didur's "Re-embodying Technoscientific Fantasies: Posthumanism, Genetically Modified Foods, and the Colonization of Life" explains a more critical posthumanism: "a more radical notion of posthumanism can serve as a basis for critiquing what is essentially a disembodied colonial attitude toward the theory/practice of biotech research today" (100). Didur's more critical, more radical posthumanism calls into question not only various humanisms, but popular approaches to posthumanism, as well. Simon, for instance, critiques *Our Posthuman Future* as being a popular humanist text, noting its important engagement with posthuman concerns, but lacking the critical engagement to provide any serious intervention. The kind of critical intervention into posthumanism Simon and Didur initiate has been described by Catherine Waldby as "a general critical space in which the techno-cultural forces which both produce and undermine the stability of the categories of 'human' and 'nonhuman,' can be investigated" (qtd. in Simon 3).

Within this distinction between popular posthumanism and critical posthumanism, we witness another taxonomic convenience emerge: the distinction between posthumanism as addressing alterations in subject and body by way of technological interaction and the distinctions between human subject and non-human subjects. That is, traditional posthumanist inquiry often reduces its scope to following one of two paths: the technological or the biological. These divisions are, of course, not only problematic but down right fallacious. In the simplest cases, we can see this division dissolve within the realm of biotechnologies. More importantly, however, we can acknowledge the essentialism of these kinds of divisions once we recognize the biologic as technologic. Likewise, posthumanist definitions used to distinguish various approaches to posthumanism are inherently anthropocentric taxonomies. Evolution, which undergirds the very notion that posthumanism is something that can be addressed, is a technology; its status as such not called to question by transhumanist or posthumanist thinking, but emphasized. Such an acknowledgement allows, then, further recognition of all that might be categorized as operating outside of human subjectivity and human control as technological. The

importance here is twofold: first, as posthumanism argues that technologies like evolution might now be controlled to influence evolutionary teleologies (the posthuman becoming/the transhuman), we should recognize that what have been assumed to be "natural" events and processes can equally be deemed technological. Second (and imbricated within the first), is that within writing studies the inextricably bound and nebulous relationship between subject and technology a) renders subjectivity inseparable from technology, thus rendering the writing subject indistinguishable from writing and b) exposes writing (and circulation) as saturating not just the intellectual inquiry surrounding posthumanism, but the very phenomenological encounters all subjects, human and non-human, posthuman and transhuman, have with the world, not to mention the very idea that there can even be something called "subjectivity." Such an understanding of technology lends to a rethinking of all technologies from the writing of genetic code and evolutionary circulation to the high-techne cyborg construction.

Within composition and rhetoric, discussions regarding posthumanism and the posthuman are by no means new. The figure of the cyborg, for example, has been taken up since the mid-1980s to the extent that it is an accepted and familiar referent throughout the field regarding the interaction between self and technology. Likewise, to some degree, the posthuman has been visible in the field's attention to identity and concepts of the Other. Despite its presence, though limited, posthumanism and the posthuman have appeared in our professional dialogue primarily in connection with conversations about writers and readers, not about writing. That is to say, the figure of the posthuman has been most useful to the field as a way of talking about subjects, bodies, and identity. In 2000, *JAC: A Journal of Rhetoric, Culture, and Politics,* published a special cluster devoted to "Posthuman Rhetorics." In their introduction to the cluster of five articles, guest editors John Mucklebauer and Debra Hawhee explain "posthumanism poses intriguing questions to many longstanding, 'self-evident' assumptions about rhetoric and communication, broadly conceived" (768) and ask as to the implications of these emerging questions for composition and rhetoric. The five essays that comprise the special cluster then attend to possibilities for engaging and producing posthuman rhetorics. Collin Gifford Brooke, for example, poses a dual question akin to one asked in *Writing Posthumanism, Posthuman Writ-*

ing: how does posthumanism affect discourse production and how/ what does rhetoric contribute to the understanding of posthumanism? Brooke's inquiry demands that we reconsider the relationships between nature, culture, and subjectivity and suggests that posthumanism offers a "return to embodied information" and an increased attention to kairos (791). David J. Gunkle uses the model of the parasitic hacker to explore hacking as a way of thinking about teaching and discourse production. He "proposes a method of investigation that infiltrates, re-evaluates, and reprograms the systems that have shaped and delimited cyberspace" (798). Jeffery T. Nealon's contribution to the cluster turns to Nietzsche as a way of proposing a posthuman ethic for encountering third-wave capital. His inquiry turns not toward familiar questions regarding representation and capital, but to questions of power. He provides, then, a posthuman ethic for engaging capital. Richard Doyle's contribution to the cluster examines emerging technologies and their entanglement with the self as well as the role of science fiction and science in inquiries of intersections between organism and machine. Christina L. Harold argues that "humanist critiques of both oppressive and subversive rhetorics often assume an a priori unity, or sameness, that oppressive discourse conceals and subversive discourse reveals" (865) and that "if we conceive of bodies as unstable, fragmented, or even dispersed across a field of discourses—in other words, as posthuman . . . then we require a very different critical framework through which to account for their rhetorical force" (865).

In his award-winning 2007 book *A Counter-History of Composition: Toward Methodologies of Complexity,* Byron Hawk takes up posthumanism as a central part of his a method for establishing what he calls "complex vitalism" (158). Noting a distinction between theories of human action which "operate from an opposition between human intention as active and material context as static and passive, thus privileging human action" and a humanist model in which human action functions as part of the feedback loop, Hawk proposes a posthumanist model that "sees humans as functioning parts of life, and any theory of action or change must take this larger, more complex situatedness into account" (158). Hawk ties this posthumanist model to Deleuze and Guattari's desire to see any body "organic or inorganic, not as a whole but as a constellation of parts that participate in multiple systems" (158). Turning to the opening section of *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* called "The Desiring-Machines," Hawk brings

Deleuze and Guattari's notion of machines into the posthumanist perspectives as a means of showing not just the interaction between human and machine, but between the machines themselves, machines that are neither objects to be used by subjects nor objects that suppress subjects. Instead each machine is connected and is part. "Everything is Machine," Deleuze and Guattari explain (2). The human (though they use the word "man"), they continue, "does not live as nature, but as a process of production. There is no such thing as either man or nature now, only a process that produces one within the other and couples machines together. Producing-machines, desiring-machines everywhere, schizophrenic machines, all of species of life: the self and the non-self, outside and inside, no longer have any meaning whatso-ever" (2). This is the basis for Deleuze and Guattari's posthumanism (though they don't employ the term), and tied with N. Katherine Hay-les address of cognitive distribution and feedback loops, is the place from which Hawk establishes a posthumanist theory for Composi-tion Studies. Through Deleuze and Guattari's posthumanism, Hawk is able to reposition the subject not as individual, but as part of the whole: "The subject is not a person, a whole, but a part of the whole that is made up of parts: it is part of the machine and also itself divided into cuts from the continuous material flow and parts of the detached signifying chain" (160). This kind of relationship between subjects and whole systems/networks is also taken up by others attending to complexity theories in Composition Studies, such as Edith Wyscho-grod in "Newtorking the Unpredictable: The Lure of Complexity" in which she cites Jean-Pierre Dupuy's "subjectless processes in which 'the subject is not a ghost in the cerebral machine but the machine itself'" (871).

Hawk's objective in turning to posthumanism is to more fully de-velop a theory of complexity and as part of this task to develop a post-human pedagogy for composition and rhetoric. Yet, embedded in his objective is a sophisticated theory of the subject that radically disrupts composition's traditional consideration of—and, I would argue, en-cumbrance with—the subject. He writes, "The subject, then, becomes a side effect of the pedagogical-machine that cannot be completely determined" (255). For Hawk, subjects are more akin to Geregory Ul-mer's notion of the conductor; Hawk explains: "As conductors we are active initiators of movement and organization, passive conduits that allow discourses and forces to pass through and reconnect to other

circuits and function in new machines, and participants in constellations that are co-responsible for our conduct. We are our accidents and our connections as much as our choices" (155). Hawk's posthumanism embarks on a Foucauldian recast of the subject not as anti-human, but as a collapse of seeing the subject as an individual and rather as an intricate complexity inseparable from technology and language.

While these kinds of discussions have situated posthumanist issues within composition studies, the conversations have been minimal despite what many see as their importance. Likewise, posthumanism enters composition and rhetoric with a substantial gaze directed toward subjects and identities, not with much attention to writing. The taxonomies used in such discussions are inevitably problematic and require concentrated theoretical dismantling. Admittedly, though, they do provide a convenient rhetorical structure for organizing the contributions to this collection. I acknowledge the convenience of making such editorial decisions and will claim I do so also to emphasize the problematics of such distinctions in light of my claims throughout this introduction regarding distinctions between various kinds of technologies, including biologies. Thus, *Writing Posthumanism, Posthuman Writing* begins its consideration of posthuman theories of writing with two pioneering interventions that bring Animal Studies and Writing Studies into conversation.

Lynn Worsham, in a ground-breaking contribution, situates animal studies within a question of violence and the powerful call to "relinquish, once and for all, the habit and the hubris of anthropocentrism and humanism and to broaden the sense of 'our time' to include the catastrophe that is the systematic and relentless and ongoing exploitation, abuse, and killing of nonhuman animals." For Worsham, animal studies "calls on us to see the deep and abiding connection between how we treat each other and how we treat nonhuman others." Worsham's treatment of the animal and posthumanism asks us to grapple with the often mind-boggling issue of violence. For Worsham, language, rhetoric, and writing stand at the center of the human/animal/violence convergence. As she explains, "the theory and practice of effective argumentation must be understood as forms of conceptual or symbolic violence—in other words, as part of the problem of human violence and not simply or simplistically as the antidote or alternative to violence, as classical rhetorical theorists proposed." More provocatively, then, Worsham also claims that "A posthuman perspective

on language, rhetoric, and writing makes available the possibility that language may have arisen in human evolution as an adaptive response to a persistent and persistently overwhelming experience of the difficulty of reality: the struggle to survive in a dangerous and threatening environment."

Worsham's previous, extensive work in trauma theory informs an intervening theory of "deflection" in her contribution to this collection. *False witness* and *deflection*, concepts Worsham adapts from Robert Jay Lifton, allow humans to deflect their own fears of death onto others through violent acts. Posthumanist sensibility, Worsham suggests, might be a productive avenue for making sense of the often "difficult realities" of extreme acts of violence, including those that result from deflection and result in trauma. Worsham traces the history of such traumas in order to suggest that "many of our human ways of being bear the traces of what [Judith] Herman calls 'complex post-traumatic stress disorder,' which is a spectrum of conditions, rather than a single disorder, arising from prolonged, repeated trauma" and that "what we mean by 'human being' or 'human nature' might be understood as post-traumatic symptoms that have endured for thousands of generations, symptoms that are the legacy of our traumatic encounter with nonhuman animals." She challenges us, then, to move beyond anthropocentric humanism by way of a posthuman sensibility to counter the acts of deflection and violence with "arts of connection."

Working within Animal Studies, as well, D. Diane Davis, in her thought-provoking contribution, "Writing-Being: Another Look at the 'Symbol-Using Animal,'" establishes that "the posthuman scene of writing is not simply about the communication of a message; it is like any scene of writing, irreducible to humanist notions of 'authorship.'" Davis dismantles common perceptions of both writing and animal, and in the wake of the disassembly, she asks as to whether animal—any animal—is capable of writing. Such an inquiry is no simple task as what is at stake, Davis shows, is "the protection and continued promotion of the metaphysical distinction between language and life (or, if you prefer, between the symbolic and the real), and therefore between 'the human' and 'the animal.'" For Davis there can be no irreducible duality between life and language without defining "the latter as speech, sign or signifier" or more specifically, language as human language. Her agenda in such claims is not to mitigate difference, but to "expose a wild plurality of differences by zooming in on the metaphys-

ical prejudice" that exists when, as Derrida puts it, we take up position between the human subject and the nonsubject: the animal. Life, that is, cannot be opposed to language. Davis unfolds her claims within two provocative situations of animal communication: communicative tool use among bonobos in the Congo and the collective communication of bees.

As noted, the categories we use to (over)simplify distinctions within posthumanism are inherently problematic. Michelle Ballif's "Zombies / Writing: Awaiting Our Posthumous, Monstrous (Be)Coming" straddles categories, considering the place between life and death which zombies occupy: not human, not animal, not alive, not dead, but monstrous—quite literally, post-human. The zombie, lacking consciousness, without mind, is subhuman; it lacks subjectivity, belonging instead to the horde, to the category of not-human. The zombie embodies the question "what does it mean to be human?" Ballif, brings the zombie figure to bear upon writing studies, even identifying writing studies' precursor rhetoric and composition as "disciplines of the dead." Ballif uses the figure of the zombie to rethink—by way of Derrida—the very idea of the human and the animal in order to provide an additional option to the accommodating or appropriate choices traditionally seen as the only viable responses to the monstrous other. For Ballif this other option is grave speech/writing. Ballif theorizes writing a la Plato as a type of living dead pressed into servitude, a domesticated zombie. Noting that zombies eat people, and that consumptive practices contribute to the distinctions between the human and the animal, Ballif argues "Posing the consumptive practices of the Zombie as an analogue to monstrous rhetorical possibilities, we can investigate the difference between eating well and eating poorly." Ballif gives us an incredible opportunity to rethink writing within the uncertainty of "writing's monstrous (be)coming." She also provides this collection a transitional move from Animal Studies by way of the zombie toward questions of what it means to be human.

Turning the posthuman gaze toward the cyborg, Kate Birdsall and Julie Drew's "Wanting Ourselves: Writing (And) the Postsexual Subject" examines how mid-twentieth century cybernetics and systems theory shifted the ways we think about human embodiment and boundaries in technological contexts. Reflexivity, they show, became "a spiral rather than a circle, resulting in dynamic hierarchies of emergent behaviors" (Hayles 241). Birdsall and Drew consider ways

in which this spiral might reveal how new dimensions of subjectivity, paired with the kinds of self-objectification that prevail in the new media society, result in a dynamic conception of the "entanglement of language and code." This entanglement, they argue, results in the loss of the borders that allow a subject to define the Other or, as the authors suggest, the Self. In this way, they show, posthumanist thinking—like that of Hayles—is generative and offers exciting opportunities to reconfigure the corporeal human, (sexual) desire, and writing in/with technological interfaces. Where posthumanisms provides other ways of imagining subjects without recourse to the categories of Enlightenment/modernity, Birdsall and Drew contend that the postsexual challenges the traditional binary between the discrete categories of information and human, thereby challenging the boundaries between writing and being, text and self. Drawing, in part, on feminist film theory and queer theory to imagine how the postsexual might both limit and expand possibilities for (textual) production and agency, "Wanting Ourselves" explores the ways in which contemporary consumer and visual culture and the new media environments we currently inhabit create space for a reworking of Foucault's care/technologies of the self, Judith Butler's performance of the self, Derrida's consideration of the slippage between present self and future self-as-Other, and what used to be called, pejoratively, ludic feminism.

Sean Morey's "Becoming T@iled" examines the prosthetic function that we often assume of computers and in doing so, considers questions as to where the human begins and ends. The prosthetic function, he explains, is one of calculations, of performing mathematical-based utilities which augments the processing speed of the human brain, making a posthuman mind. Morey explains that perhaps because of this preoccupation with the cerebral, the "brain" or "mind" becomes an iconic idea of where the prosthetic connection occurs. One only has to think of the science-fiction fantasy motif of uploading one's consciousness into a machine and leaving the body behind, or such films as *The Matrix* where the "mind" is inserted into a virtual environment—a prosthetic space—and the manipulation of such an environment is one of manipulating codes: the savviest posthuman is one that never loses her ability to compute. Instead of leaving the body behind, Morey asks, how should posthuman thinking consider the body's "behind"? Instead of focusing on the head of the posthuman, Morey focuses on the "post" of the posthuman—the tail.

In a savvy deliberation, Morey turns his attention to a tail that we have already begun to embrace: the @, sometimes referred to as "the monkey's tail." The @ appears nearly ubiquitously in online environments, and provides one kind of code that we commonly write with. However, because of its ubiquity, we often overlook its function as a code, that it instructs our "intelligent" computers to enact a certain command, or that it changes the way that we write/think in other kinds of environments. Morey argues we write everyday with the @, yet it remains transparent even to our thinking prosthetics. The @ as a monkey's tail, however, does more than just instruct our posthuman parts toward some specific function: it becomes prosthetic as a posthuman tail, and serves a different kind of prosthetic function than one of "thinking." As such, Morey theorizes the @ both inside and outside current conversations of how posthuman bodies and codes interact. He shows what it means to both "write" a prosthetic such as a t@il, as well as what that t@il looks like once written, and how it performs a function of/through writing at the level of code.

J.A. Rice, in "Inscriptions of the Possible; or, A Pedagogy of Posthumanist Style," contends that "A posthumanist writing cannot express content or concepts because it only outlines a vague direction; it only marks difference. A posthumanist writing, then, acts almost like a series of random inscriptive events—it is an irreconcilable accident that connects a rhetor's choices and the nomadic moments of style's specific, iterable capacity." Rice rethinks posthumanism and style's enjoining logic so that it better reflects the possibilities of a disruptive grammar. Within this examination, Rice claims that one of the salient features of posthumanist disruption is how well it foregrounds writing and writing style as rhetoric's first premises. For Rice, posthuman writing style should be "the horizon by which we think, and not the object of our thought."

Jim Ridolfo argues in "Rethinking Human and Non-Human Actors as a Strategy for Rhetorical Delivery" that the next phase in delivery studies will not only need to encompass oral, print, and digital delivery simultaneously, but will also need to frame these posthuman activities as embedded in a material world of great complexity." By looking at interrelated human and non-human actors, Ridolfo uses three case studies to push theories of delivery into the posthuman era. He asks us not to settle for traditional understandings of delivery as singular in their approaches; instead, he argues, delivery is multimodal and complex. Delivery brings

the human and non-human together; it brings the digital and print together.

Contending that a posthuman rhetoric must consider ways to compose nonhuman agents, Byron Hawk, Chris Lindgren, and Andrew Mara show how creating complex technological movements require a more nuanced notion of rhetoric that focuses on a diverse array of agents, including everything "from digital code to material objects, groups of actions to constellations of things." By way of Nicholas Negroponte's constructivism in the One Laptop Per Child (OLPC) project Hawk, Lindgren, and Mara examine the ways in which language and writing stand as socially constructed knowledge. The OLPC project, they argue, foregrounds rhetoric on the transformative power of education and formulates education as a type of technological deism, with the laptop acting as a proxy for a now-absent organizing presence. The authors show that Negroponte portrays writing as a naturally occurring process (education) and casts it as the victim of ideological, political, and historical processes. Hawk, Lindgren, and Mara compare early promises made at a TED conference about OLCP with the eventual rollout and deployment of the laptops. They look specifically at how laptop distribution in Rwanda constructs a specific set of relations between the OLPC project and notions of writing and language as enabling and limiting systems. They trace the gaps between Negroponte's deist rhetoric and the latent posthumanism in the deployment of technological objects into the networks that they co-produce. The deployment of these laptops as networks with an incipient, object-oriented philosophy on writing, they show, remakes the systemic role of writing in relation to learning, knowledge, and globalism.

Turning to graphology and expanding upon her work (with Jenell Johnson) about neurosciences and writing, Melissa M. Littlefield considers the idea that "handwriting is brainwriting" and asks "Why do neuroscience and graphology ostensibly share the brain as a common locus of self? How have both diagnostic technologies constructed the self as stable and knowable via a transparent human body?" Graphology, or the study of handwriting for clues about character and identity, has been a popular American pastime—and (pseudo)science —for nearly two centuries. Littlefield shows how even though the practice of seeking the self in/of script has fallen out of favor in the past few decades, another—related—practice has come to prominence: the neuroscientific study of writing and its relationship to emotion, health,

and state of mind. For Littlefield, this turn to neuroscience as a better arbiter of tried philosophical question(s) is neither novel, nor unique to graphology; the phenomenon, she shows, has become so prevalent, in disciplines from economics to English, that she and Jenell Johnson have termed it a *neuroscientific turn* (Johnson and Littlefield forthcoming 2011). In her contribution to *Writing Posthumanism, Posthuman Writing*, Littlefield considers the postmodern, the poststructural, and the posthuman era in order to evaluate the "remains" of humanism that inform neuroscientific studies of writing. Littlefield argues that instead of breaking with traditions of graphology's search for the self, medical imaging technologies's studies of writing are shifting the locus of self from hand to brain, a shift she shows that, not coincidentally, was already happening in the early twentieth century.

Kyle Jensen, in "I am Spam: A Posthuman Approach to Writer's Block" works to reimagine writer's block from a posthuman perspective. To do so, Jensen identifies the importance in demonstrating how humanism's "aspirations are undercut by the philosophical and ethical frameworks used to conceptualize them." Only then, he argues, can writing scholars begin to envision writer's block in terms that confront the complexities of both human and non-human writing. For Jensen, the study and practice of writing has become considerably more complex in the posthuman era as a consequence of proliferating digital technologies that blur the distinction between human and machine. As numerous posthuman theorists have demonstrated, digital technologies blur such distinctions by transforming life into a set of data that can be described, transformed, replicated and transmitted through wires. Jensen examines how such blurring occurs in and through writing by theorizing the contemporary phenomenon of SPAM, which has fostered a range of technological innovations that effectively informationalize the "author" identification process and thereby facilitate new forms of bot-based writing. According to Jensen, Writing Studies has yet to take up SPAM in any serious manner because it is considered a morally abject approach to writing that threatens the safety of online interactions. While this may be true, he argues, the widespread abjection of SPAM-based writing conceals a major shift in our understanding of a central concept to Writing Studies: writer's block. Whereas before, writers block identified the phenomenon in which a writer experienced an acute struggle to produce a written document, now the term announces the pressing need to stop the proliferation

of "inauthentic" and potential dangerous forms of writing. In order to theorize SPAM along this axis, Jensen introduces a new concept to writing studies: the authenticity function. A posthuman revision of Foucault's author function, this concept addresses how the authentication of identity has become predominantly informational insofar as information itself tests the veracity of disseminated identity information. The deeper implications of this concept cannot be addressed, however, until scholars and Internet security specialists come to terms with the rhetorical work of abjection that stigmatizes this writing practice. Such abjection, Jensen shows, affectively masks the complexity of this writing practice by insisting upon Humanist imperatives for singular authors, secure identity, and biological unity. To pursue this line of inquiry, Jensen turns to systems maintenance and second-order systems theories to analyze SPAM and the role of spam-bots as a representative anecdote of the complexities of non-human writing. Jensen brings this investigation to bear on the future of Writing Studies in order to test the field's humanistic underpinnings.

Kristie S. Fleckenstien, in "Cyborg Vision for Cyborg Writing," examines the reciprocity between discourses on vision and discourses on writing. She focuses, in particular, on the ways in which the epistemology undergirding a theory of vision reinforces the epistemology undergirding a theory of writing. In what is perhaps one of the most theoretically rich texts to examine the relationship between seeing and writing beyond the superficial ways in which such relationships are most often addressed in writing studies, Fleckenstien examines the historical intersection between Renaissance perspectivalism and Ramist rhetoric, a union of vision and writing central to the Enlightenment agenda that Donna Haraway seeks to dismantle. Likewise, she examines the intersection between ecological approaches to vision and composing. Fleckenstien's powerful essay contends that the qualities of embodiment, embeddedness, and transactivity that characterize discourses on vision and writing as ecologies support Haraway's cyborgian agenda by privileging the dynamic relationship among individual bodies, material-social environments, and coding systems as a strategy and site for change. "When we see and write ecologically," she says, "we see and write through the partiality and particularity of sited bodies, in-corporating the cyborg writing and vision that Haraway advocates."

Bruce Clarke's "Evolutionary Equality: Neocybernetic Posthumanism and Margulis and Sagan's Writing Practice" starts to unfold and clarify distinctions of definitions within posthumanism and the posthuman. By way of systems theory and deconstruction, Clarke considers the scriptive and rhetorical strategies employed in evolutionist Lynn Margulis and writer Dorion Sagan's writing. Clarke asks—and looks to answer—a number of questions about the relationship between posthumanism and writing: "How does one write about science for non-scientists in a way that challenges and ultimately subverts the verities of scientific humanism? How does one present posthumanist science to a general audience?" Through the works of microbiologist Lynn Margulis and her son, science-journalist Dorion Sagan, Clarke poses these questions with particular attention to how Margulis and Sagan's scriptive and rhetorical strategies play against their posthumanist constructions.

In sum, these essays galvanize a convergence of Writing Studies and Posthumanism toward the possibility of theoretical generation. By no means should this collection be considered an attempt to press posthuman writing theories into the archive. Instead, *Writing Posthumanism, Posthuman Writing* should be read as a jailbreak, as a public act of defiance, as noted at the beginning of this introduction, an attempt to incite and disrupt Writing Studies from the constraints of humanist thought. The essays gathered here examine the relationship between posthumanism and writing in the theoretically demanding space of Writing Studies.

Note

1. The term *transhuman* derives from thinking that in order to achieve a condition of the posthuman, a figure must have at one time been human. In this thinking, because the posthuman is yet to come, or by some accounts only hypothetically may become posthuman, the condition of the transhuman is the state between being human and being posthuman. For those who see the posthuman as either inevitable or hypothetical, the transhuman represents a current condition in which we have moved beyond humanity but not yet achieved posthumanity. In the case of this collection, it would seem that transhumanism provides a convenient appeal to the nascence of posthumanism. Yet, to extract the transhuman from the posthuman—or vice versa—would be to further contribute to the taxonomic impulse.

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