Michel Foucault, Friedrich Kittler, and the interminable half-life of "so-called man"
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"The *a priori* character of causal necessity, on which Kant builds the principle of the validity of knowledge and the stability of nature," observes Catherine Malabou, "is openly in question today" (2). Indeed, the Kantian critical project, premised upon a demarcation between empirical and transcendental modalities of thought, with the latter furnishing the necessary laws upon which the former is grounded (synthesized under a transcendental unity of apperception), is perhaps more unfashionable today than it has ever been. The critique of "correlationism," a now familiar term coined by Quentin Meillassoux to describe the indivisible coupling of truth and being which he views as peculiar to the Kantian project and its varied inheritors, alongside a desire to undermine the simultaneously universalizing and exclusionary figure of "man" *qua* transcendental subject, has led to the very notion of transcendentalism being routinely challenged within contemporary continental philosophy, depicting it as little more than a dogmatic vestige of Enlightenment hubris. In the wake of speculative realism, new materialism, and other such undertakings, we find numerous currents of thought concerned with discrediting both the metaphysical primacy of "man," and the Kantian philosophical scaffolding accused of sustaining this figure.

Although it would be specious to treat these variegated currents as straightforwardly compatible, there are certain commonalities amongst them that we can identify: most pressingly, a scepticism regarding the very existence of the transcendental as a distinct modality of thought, and a desire to either ignore or transcend the boundaries placed around theoretical reason by such a modality, instead retrieving a "naïve" or pre-critical model of metaphysics. In these recent accounts, especially those that subscribe to the aforementioned thesis of correlationism expounded by Meillassoux, the arrival of the Kantian critical project in the late eighteenth century signals a tragic mistake in the development of philosophy, for it forecloses "the *great outdoors,* the *absolute* outside of pre-critical thinkers" (7), impoverishing philosophy by wresting from it the authority to speak of an unconditioned absolute outside of and undisturbed by the finitude of human knowledge. As Graham Harman puts it, the "great error" of philosophy from Kant onward is its presumption that "a reflection on human being is the key to passing from an unphilosophical perspective to a philosophical one" (16).

Whether or not we accept this narrative (at the very least, it should be acknowledged that Kant's foreclosure of the absolute to theoretical reason is not equivalent to its erasure from thought as a whole), there is no doubt that it exercises a powerful influence over present-day philosophy. What is rarely acknowledged, however, is that this vitriolically anti-Kantian narrativization through the lens of correlationism involves the conflation of two distinct, albeit related concepts arising from Kant's work: on one hand, the separation of the empirical from the transcendental; on the other, the identification of "man" as the anthropocentric locus of this separation (and its simultaneous unity under the aegis of the transcendental). According to such accounts, at least implicitly, the dissolution of the primacy of "man" (and with said figure, the presumed need to reflect upon the boundaries of human knowledge as a precursor to any rigorous metaphysical enquiry) thus

demands the concomitant dissolution of all transcendental structures, and thus any presupposition of necessary conditions for thought.[1]

It is for precisely this reason that we must avoid equating these recent currents of thought with the "death of man" so famously proclaimed by Michel Foucault in *The Order of Things* (1966; hereafter *OT*), for contrary to these contemporary anti- or post-humanist departures from the Kantian critical project, it is in fact the foundational Kantianism of Foucauldian archaeology that renders the death of man desirable for the latter in the first instance. In his archaeological texts, Foucault demonstrates a continued adherence to the methodological circumscription of the Kantian critical project – and in particular, a heedfulness to the problem of thought's anthropologization, by which the transcendental comes to be drawn illegitimately from the realm of the empirical – that belies the common wisdom that his pronouncement of the "death of man" is commensurate with the demise of Kantian transcendental thought. What Foucault actually proclaims is the death of the *empirico-transcendental doublet* with which transcendental philosophies from Kant onward have tended to delimit the boundaries of "man," conceiving of this death as facilitated by a reinvigoration of the fundamentally Kantian demarcation of the empirical and the transcendental.[2]

In the remainder of this article, it is our aim to both explicate and uphold this transcendental circumscription in the face of "the immense provocation," as Malabou would have it, "involved in the proposal that we relinquish the transcendental" (2-3), observing the *confused* and ultimately *aporetic* deadlock of anti-humanism, which continually re-presents and re-inscribes "man" in "his" absence. We wish to do this through reference to a single thinker – Friedrich A. Kittler – who explicitly attempts to go beyond Foucault by articulating an anti-humanism that purports to be unshackled by the empirico-transcendental doublet. Kittler develops a thoroughly anti-Kantian anti-humanism, a media theory that destabilizes and obsolesces this figure of "so-called Man," subordinating it to the *a priori* media technologies through which its appearance is effected. We wish to counterpose Kittler against Foucault not only because the former is an influential, albeit very much contested figure in contemporary anti- and post-humanisms (especially within media studies) who engages quite directly with Foucauldian concepts and themes, but also because his work is emblematic of the denunciation of Kantian transcendentalism discussed above, attempting to collapse the empirico-transcendental doublet by folding the latter term entirely onto the former (not so much eliminating the transcendental as obscuring its function).

Over the course of this article, we will contend that Kittler draws loosely upon the familiar narrative of the "death of man" without entertaining either of what Marc Djaballah describes as

> the two guiding philosophical themes of Foucault's work during the 1960s, the coupling of the empirical and the transcendental as the confused form of discourse on the human, and the analysis of literary discourse as the form of thought indicative of a transformation in it. (7)

Both themes stand "as moments not only of Foucault's reading of Kant, but of the Kantian form of Foucault's thought" (ibid.) more generally. If Kittler's attempted "update" of the Foucauldian archaeological vector and accompanying historicization of discourse analysis is explicitly anti-

Kantian (inasmuch as it refuses to countenance any transcendental usage of reason that would identify a non-technically mediated, and thus non-empirical condition for experience), it would seem that it can only be so by extending the figuration of the "death of man" beyond the confines of its Kantian presentation in Foucault's archaeology, leading only to the continued propagation (rather than elimination) of a confused discourse on the human – that of which the death of man is supposed to signal the end.

We consider Kittler exemplary of the follies of dogmatic anti-humanism precisely because in his hyperbolic, deliberately un-philosophical approach to these issues, in his utter confidence in being capable of finally exorcising any remnants of the Kantian spirit from the archaeological method described by Foucault, he inadvertently foregrounds the risks that come with bypassing the strictures of Kantian transcendentalism. In order to demonstrate this, we will examine more closely three key aspects of the Foucauldian archeological method: first, its hesitance to ascribe any direct causal role to external causation with regard to the historical *a priori*; second, its caution in conflating the transcendental figure of "man" with the autonomous human subject that is the target of so much anti-humanism; and finally, its refusal to speak determinately of our own contemporary "archive" by which our discursive statements are conditioned. Kittler, we will go on to suggest, in ignoring the Kantian tenor of the archaeological method, expunges much of this circumscription and circumspection, producing an admittedly compelling (and indisputably valuable), but nevertheless more dogmatic mutation of the archaeological project – one that unintentionally perpetuates the circularity of the empirico-transcendental doublet by deriving the transcendental (i.e. mediatic) conditions of "man" entirely from the latter's own empirical experience.

The (purported) limits of Foucauldian discourse analysis

Any attempt to present a systematic overview of Kittler's work is going to be both selective and reductive, for his writings do not conform to the conventions of philosophical disputation. Even Foucault, whose own corpus functions in decided opposition to systematicity in the specifically Hegelian sense of the term – that is to say, the insistence that "the true insofar as it is *concrete* exists only through unfolding itself in itself, collecting and holding itself together in a unity, i.e. as a *totality*" (43) – nonetheless writes books that, within themselves, mostly cohere argumentatively. This is not the case for Kittler, whose style of writing, whilst certainly drawing from the work of Foucault, is also manifestly influenced by Friedrich Nietzsche, Jacques Lacan, Harold Innis, and Marshall McLuhan, amongst others, all of whom spurn the niceties of prosaic scholarly writing. Although his works evidence considerable research and a deep knowledge of media at both a historical and technical level, Kittler's presentation of ideas tends toward the aphoristic, digressive, and enigmatic, at once hyperbolic and polemical.

This style of writing – "a remarkably economic but also forbiddingly tortuous tongue" (Peters 8) – places great difficulties upon us when trying to extract from his corpus anything in the way of sustained lines of reasoning. Not only are we faced with a decidedly oblique manner of writing, but we also must contend with Kittler's various shifts in approach, and the distinct (and often directly contradictory) theoretical and philosophical directions of thought that traverse his project, often with little attempt at reconciliation or synthesis, including but not limited to: Lacanian psychoanalysis; the media determinism of Innis and McLuhan; information theory as formulated

by Shannon and Weaver (and other related theories from early computing, including those of Turing and Wiener); and certain key German philosophers, especially Hegel, Nietzsche, and Heidegger. He also draws heavily upon literature – from Homer through to Goethe, Stoker, and Pynchon – often seemingly treating the content of these texts as historical documentation in its own right.[3]

Although this theoretical and philosophical diffuseness complicates the identification of overarching themes, we nevertheless submit that Kittler's corpus (and especially its anti-humanist component) remains heavily conditioned by the French "post-structuralist" tradition, and in particular, by Foucault's major "archaeological" writings of the mid-to-late 1960s.[4] "[Kittler's] historical study of media," writes Sybille Krämer, "becomes the heir of discourse analysis, but only in order to radically alter the inheritance" (97). Notwithstanding the often bewildering mosaic of divergent ideas wherein it is expounded, we would contend that the central thesis driving Kittler's anti-humanist project – in short, his assertion that the philosophical image of "man" as a unitary transcendental entity is just the misrecognition of the media with which such a discourse is generated – can be identified as a guiding (though not always all-encompassing) thread running throughout much of his work, even if it cannot be clearly isolated to any single text. As N. Katherine Hayles puts it, Kittler "replaced foundations with media horizons beyond which questions are forbidden to reach" (129), firmly planting the conditions of possible experience *within* the immanence of this experience – the historically-contingent data structuration afforded through technical media providing the ultimate grounding of cognition and knowledge, demarcating the boundaries of possible experience within a determinate historical and mediatic epoch.[5]

Attempting to "update" Foucault's archaeological methodology, Kittler appropriates the epochal narrative structure characteristic of the former's highly influential *OT*, outlining a succession of *discourse networks* (rather than epistemes or discursive formations): epistemological configurations engendered by respective *technical* (rather than *historical*) *a priori*s that function as the mediate conditions of all possible experience. Kittler overrides Foucault's often tentative response to the question of what causes change in the historical *a priori* by positing qualitative ruptures in the technical specifications of media – in particular, such media's capacity for the processing, storage, and transmission of data – as responsible for such mutations. Yet in so attempting to resolve the problem of causation by "ground[ing] several of Foucault's discursive irruptions in media-technological shifts" (138), Kittler's deliberately provocative anti-humanism still largely recapitulates the basic structure of "death of man" narrative popularized by Foucault throughout this period, albeit complemented by a distinctly anti-Kantian positivism confident in its location of these technical *a priori*s that provide the conditions for the possibility of empirical experience within this very same domain. Crucial to Kittler's work, argues Bernhard Siegert, is "the irreducible 'onticity' (if there is such a word) or facticity or worldliness of the transcendental," which aims to "protect the concrete from the generalities, the irreducible singularities from the universals" ("Media After Media" 82).

Like Foucault before him, much of Kittler's work constitutes a pointed fulmination against the orthodoxies of philosophical reason – in particular, philosophy's tenacious and "perennially victorious campaign against the blindness of everyday life and non-philosophers" ("Thinking

Colours" 43) which privileges *theoria* at the expense of *techne*, forgetting the material basis of philosophical discourse – and has inspired "a vehement criticism of an ontological conception of philosophical terms," aiming instead at "revealing the operative basis of those terms" (Siegert, "The Map" 15). Kittler posits this forgetting of media – the fact that "[t]he very concept of writing as philosophy's own (technical) medium is missing from Aristotle onwards" – as the source of many of philosophy's problems, but the one that he most directly and frequently foregrounds is that of "man" ("Towards" 24). Inspired by the aforementioned post-structuralist tradition, Kittler seeks to problematize this philosophical category, arguing that "there is no such thing as pre-discursive reality" (*Literature* 53), and thus no human essence outside of language and communication. Unlike Foucault, however, he does this not in the name of discourse per se, but in that of the *discourse networks* of technical media that constitute and condition such discourse.

"All knowledge, being a historical network of arguments," Kittler claims, "presupposes certain media that have to acquire, store and transmit the relevant data," and to that extent, "it is a direct function of technological thresholds" ("A Discourse" 159). The human individual is a discursive product of technical standards. Philosophy not only forgets these technical and mediatic preconditions for its own existence, but actively resists such a recognition and, in doing so, reifies the universalizing category of "man." Unlike many other critics of post-Enlightenment humanism (especially those working within the post-structuralist framework), Kittler is not especially concerned by the power differentials implicated in gender, race, sexuality, colonialism, and other such categories that are elided in such an identification, but instead focuses his attention upon the historical contingency of the discourse network wherein this category of "man" is produced: "as long as memory is considered an attribute or even a peculiarity of the 'human being,' books, mnemo-techniques and memory machines must continue to be taken for granted, that is, veiled" ("Forgetting" 90).[6]

Kittler's anti-humanist project, then, directs much of its censure at those philosophies that would continue to perpetuate this image of so-called man as a unitary, autonomous actor – more specifically, his object of critique is primarily the transcendental unity of apperception that lies at the heart of Kant's critical project, which "gave his German followers the new order to put their transcendental ego into the middle of ontology" ("Towards" 28). In the course of this disputation, however, Kittler is not merely targeting the Kantian tradition, but also its prior critique by the post-structuralists. In this respect, Kittler's approach relies upon, but also thoroughly reconfigures, the defining features of the Foucauldian archaeological vector. For Kittler, the importance of the Foucauldian account lies in its recognition that the category of man is not obvious or self-evident, but rather constructed through specific archival techniques and operations. According to Kittler, however, Foucault does not adequately reckon with the discourse network within which his *own* study is situated – the way in which the archive itself, as the material body within which the sources of Foucault's findings are located, comprises a technical *a priori* determinative of his research. "It was Foucault's decisive step to define discourses as events with a certain materiality and with limited, not infinite effects," writes Kittler, hence "the very possibility of his program of research – the analysis of discursive formations – is strictly contemporary with modern media-technologies" ("A Discourse" 158).

> [W]riting itself, before it ends up in libraries, is a communication medium, the technology of which the archaeologist simply forgot. It is for this reason that all his analyses end immediately before that point in time at which other media penetrated the library's stacks. Discourse analysis cannot be applied to sound archives or towers of film rolls. (Kittler, *Gramophone* 5)

"Foucault, the last historian or first archaeologist" (ibid.), conceives of discursive rules as unproblematically comprehensible, and thus tends to analyse them only in terms of their form and application, overlooking the material restrictions of the archive itself that would not only enable such rules, but also constitute the conditions of possibility for his very enquiry into them.

Perhaps most importantly for Kittler, the Foucauldian method of archaeology fails to acknowledge that its later conception of the archive is in effect synonymous with the library, thus falling into tautology: if all is seen to emanate from the archive, it is precisely because it is within this particular form of (written and/or printed) archive that his research is conducted.[7] The concern here is that "[a]ll libraries are discourse networks, but all discourse networks are not books" (Kittler, *Discourse Networks* 369), and as a result, this method cannot properly account for historical material that has not been produced under the aegis of print media. Specifically, what this single-minded focus upon the printed text ignores is the way in which "the technological differentiation of optics, acoustics, and writing exploded Gutenberg's writing monopoly around 1880" (Kittler, *Gramophone* 16). Collapsing any distinction between empiricity and its transcendental conditions, Kittler appeals to an empirical development in media technologies in order to posit a direct causal agent for a change in the epistemological configuration of the discourse network. The gradual introduction of photography, phonography, and cinematography across the course of the nineteenth century (as well as the simultaneous development of the typewriter as a supplement to the printing press) not only dissolved the monopoly that writing and print had held over communication for the two prior millennia, but established a set of discrete media forms synchronized with and extending different aspects of human apperception. This has significant consequences for Kittler's uptake of Foucault's "death of man" narrative.

"Kittler's media-historical analyses begin where Foucault's end," observes Krämer, transforming discourse analysis "into the reflex and symptom of a specific – and since ended – media epoch" (97). Whereas Foucault believes himself to be heralding the death of man over a century and a half after the emergence of this figure at the close of the eighteenth century, Kittler views him as failing to discern that man has been dead since the close of the nineteenth century, having been obsolesced by the discourse network of this new media environment:

> [t]he "I think," which since Kant was supposed to accompany all of one's representations, presumably only accompanied one's readings. It became obsolete as soon as body and soul advanced to become objects of scientific experiments. The unity of apperception disintegrated into a large number of subroutines, which, as such, physiologists could localize in different centers of the brain and engineers could reconstruct in multiple machines. (*Gramophone* 188)[8]

In short, "[p]rinted laments over the death of Man or the subject always arrive too late" (Kittler, *Discourse Networks* 370), failing to account for the transformations in media that have occurred over the preceding two centuries.[9] Consciousness is understood to store, transmit, and process data in a manner radically incompatible with the unitary synthesis of the Kantian model, let alone the self-mediating movement of the Hegelian Spirit, which "summed up the perfect alphabetism of his age" (Kittler, *Gramophone* 16).

Foucault's mistake, Kittler suggests, was to herald the death of man at a time when this event had long since passed: the dramatic media-technological shift that occurred in the nineteenth century, breaking up the monopoly of writing and print, put to rest both the unity and autonomy of the human subject. As Mark Hansen writes, "[w]hile Foucault allows Man to play an active role as the "form" that shaped the episteme of the nineteenth century, even this is stripped away by Kittler," revealing man to be "nothing more than an illusion, a purely passive construction of the autonomous force of information" ("Cinema" 68). For Kittler, because "the search for conditions that constitute 'the human being' … renews and prolongs the empirical-transcendental folding" (*Truth* 15), we must cease our speculations into the boundaries of human knowledge, and instead focus our attention upon media technologies – not as "extensions of man" (to follow McLuhan's formulation), but as *a prioris* that elude this anthropocentric paradigm. Kittler expunges from the archaeological method of discourse analysis any remaining adherence to transcendental thought (and more specifically, the Kantian circumscription of the transcendental in relation to the empirical), depicting a field of immanence wherein both experience and its causes are located. In order to determine whether this attempt to resolve the problem of causation regarding historical *a prioris* actually clarifies the notion of a death of man, we must first look more closely at the Foucauldian model of archaeology.

A thought from the outside

According to Foucault's foreword to the 1970 English translation of *OT*, the omission of media-technological shifts from his archaeological work (the supposed misstep identified by Kittler) is no accident, for this lacuna results from a basic dissatisfaction with their explanatory efficacy. Responding to early critiques of the absence of such "traditional explanations" of the general and corresponding cross-disciplinary ruptures that *OT* takes as its object (and anticipating the future Kitterlian formulation of this critique), Foucault writes that "spirit of the time … social changes, influences of various kinds" and, most importantly for our purposes, "*technological*" changes, simply "struck [him] for the most part as being more magical than effective" (*OT* xiii; our emphasis). As such, there existed no sufficient "theory of scientific change and epistemological causality" (ibid.) at the time of *OT*'s composition. Foreseeing the development of said theory in time for future iterations of the archaeological method, *OT* proceeds by putting this "problem of causes to one side," heavily circumscribing its explanatory claims to the point of making no empirical determinations concerning the causes driving such discontinuities. We might observe, however, that any such empirical determination is not only difficult to ground in the absence of a sufficient theory of epistemological change, but is in fact *inadmissible* within *OT*, and this for two reasons.

The first reason concerns the theory of epistemological causality Foucault subscribed to at the time of *OT*'s composition and publication, informing *OT*'s treatment of epistemological shifts,

including that under the moniker of the "death of man." This theory of causation, which remains largely latent within *OT* itself, was elaborated in greater detail in concurrently-published work examining the writings of Maurice Blanchot, and came to be abandoned in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1969; hereafter *AK*) as part of what has been termed "Foucault's turn from literature" at the close of the 1960s.[10] Blanchot, of course, had by this point already firmly established his conception of literature as opening an enigmatic alterity, "the experience of what is without understanding, without agreement, without law … error and the outside, elusive, irregular" (205), and Foucault builds upon this, describing a "thought from the outside" that can only make itself apparent once the subject has disappeared. This is "a thought that stands outside subjectivity, setting its limits as though from without" (Foucault, "Maurice Blanchot" 15), an experience of exteriority that paradoxically leads us to an interiority that is nothing other than the *being of language.*

Within *OT*, however, Foucault only gestures toward this theory in a tentative, cautious manner, writing in the early stages of the book that discontinuity "*probably* begins with an erosion from *outside*, from that space which is, for thought, on the other side, but in which it has never ceased to think from the very beginning" (50; our emphasis). Although the allusion to Blanchot here is clear, by using the non-committal "probably" *OT* avoids positing a determinate cause responsible for effecting such discontinuities (and more specifically, conspicuously avoids directly identifying the thought of the outside with any such hypothetical cause), thus leaving archaeology's self-imposed methodological circumscription on the question of epistemological causality firmly intact.

Foucault depicts the being of language that occupies this space of the outside as the "unique and absolute," "raw and primitive," "single being of the written word" (*OT* 42-43) that went into disuse at the opening of the seventeenth century. Since that time, language has persisted only as "a particular case of representation (for the Classics) or of signification (for us)," dissolving an originary "kinship of language with the world" (*OT* 43), separating words from things, subordinating discourse to that which it seeks to represent or signify. *OT* ultimately serves to herald language's "return" (303), a possibility indebted to figures like Sade and Hölderlin who "simultaneously introduced into our thinking, for the coming century, but in some way cryptically, the experience of the outside" (Foucault, "Maurice Blanchot" 17). Such an introduction sufficed not to restore language's kinship with the world, as "[t]hat experience was afterward to remain not exactly hidden, because it had not penetrated the thickness of our culture, but afloat, foreign, exterior to our interiority" (Foucault, "Maurice Blanchot" 17). What Foucault designates "literature" thus serves to increasingly erode any notion of a constituent subjective interiority:

> throughout the nineteenth century, and right up to our own day … literature achieved autonomous existence, and separated itself from all other language with a deep scission, only by forming a sort of "counter-discourse," and by finding its way back from the representative or signifying function of language to this raw being that had been forgotten since the sixteenth century. (*OT* 43-44)

The return of language thus designates a critical mass of literary expositions of language's "raw and primitive" being, eroding in turn the epistemological arrangement (specifically, that of "man") charged with having exorcised this being since the late eighteenth century.

In alluding to Foucault's concurrent studies on literary limit experiences, *OT* suggestively and tentatively posits the "experience" of the outside as an indeterminate cause of discontinuities, open to a particular, asubjective modality of *thought*, but not to knowledge (a thoroughly Kantian distinction). Foucault's reticence to fully designate this thought as the particular cause of epistemological change tout court, however, is due to its incommensurability with any subjective interiority: "the being of language only appears *for itself*," Foucault writes elsewhere in 1966, "with the disappearance of the subject," engendering "a thought that, in relation to the interiority of our philosophical reflection and the positivity of our knowledge, constitutes what in a word we might call 'the thought from the outside'" ("Maurice Blanchot" 15-16). He suggests that discontinuities are caused by an experience outside that of any subjective synthesis (which accounts in part for the inadmissibility of empirical determinations in *OT*'s approach to epistemological change), and furthermore argues that such an experience is outright incommensurable with subjectivity. He thus speaks of the return of language as the return of a being fundamentally incommensurable with the very "being of man." To wit,

> the right to conceive both of the being of language and of the being of man may be forever excluded; there may be, as it were, an inerasable hiatus at this point (precisely that hiatus in which we exist and talk), so that it would be necessary to dismiss as fantasy any anthropology in which there was any question of the being of language, or any conception of language or signification which attempted to connect with, manifest, and free the being proper to man. … [I]n Western culture the being of man and the being of language have never, at any time, been able to coexist and to articulate themselves one upon the other. Their incompatibility has been one of the fundamental features of our thought. (*OT* 339)

It is not surprising then that Foucault's motif of erosion directly informs *OT*'s famous closing pronouncement on the death of man, not to mention the carefully delimited form of its presentation: "one can certainly wager that man would be erased, like a face drawn in sand at the edge of the sea" (*OT* 387). The past occurrences of such mutations at the archaeological level of thought, effecting a change in the historical *a priori* of previous epochs, point to the inherent mutability of the current historical *a priori* of "man." In remaining unable to designate any empirical cause responsible for effecting this or any past mutation, however, Foucault can do no more here (at the close of a study effectively devoted to outlining the contingency of this figure of man) than venture that such an event will soon occur. The popular appeal of *OT*'s closing prophecy, invoking the recent birth and base contingency of "man" in an intellectual milieu thirsty for a succession to post-war humanism, has been well documented,[11] yet the peculiar form of a certain "wager" that this pronouncement takes, remains deserving of further scrutiny as a product of *OT*'s methodological circumscription and its tentatively posited theory of epistemological change.

The empirical and the transcendental
This brings us to our second reason for the inadmissibility of the empirical in *OT*, concerning the Kantian commitments of Foucault's study and most clearly manifest in its critique of post-Kantian philosophy. According to Foucault, with the appearance of Kant's critical project in the late stages of the eighteenth century "there arises the problem of the relations between the domain of

empiricity and the transcendental foundation of knowledge" (*OT* 247). This is a problem that would continue to be felt up to Foucault's day, making it

> probably impossible to give empirical contents transcendental value, or to displace them in the direction of a constituent subjectivity, without giving rise, at least silently, to an anthropology – that is, to a mode of thought in which the rightful limitations of acquired knowledge (and consequently of all empirical knowledge) are at the same time the concrete forms of existence, precisely as they are given in that same empirical knowledge. (*OT* 248)

Foucault here dismisses both the transcendentalizing of empirical contents *and* their subordination to the syntheses of a transcendental subjectivity *on the very same grounds*, for both engender the anthropologization of thought, tracing out the transcendental figure of man (and the limits of possible experience) from within the empirical horizon of said empirical experience. The anthropologization of thought is thus not an issue on account of its inevitably giving rise to subject-centred philosophies, but rather its illegitimate inversion of the very idea of Kantian criticism as determining "the rightful limitations of acquired knowledge" (ibid.). In deriving transcendental conditions from empirical knowledge, Kant's critical distinction between transcendental and empirical, determining and determined, is turned on its head.

As an archaeological enquiry, it is not the function of *OT* to intricately set out the numerous examples of this inversion, so much as to demonstrate how such examples are made possible by the particular epistemological configuration of the modern's epoch's historical *a priori* of "man." This figure, as an "epistemic structure" in place since the late stages of the eighteenth century, takes the form of a "doublet," the dual subject and object of knowledge. As Kimberly Hutchings writes, "[i]t is not Kant's critique in itself which decisively shifts the conditions of possibility of knowledge, but the way in which it makes possible the idea of man as both origin and object of knowledge" (78-79). It is the easy transposition of contents from one aspect of this structure to the other – the capacity to "give empirical contents transcendental value, or to displace them in the direction of a constituent subjectivity" (*OT* 248) – that inverts the traditional Kantian relation, engendering a circular and confused discourse on the human. "Anthropology as an analytic of man," Foucault notes in the closing stages of the text,

> has certainly played a constituent role in modern thought, since to a large extent we are still not free from it. It became necessary at the moment when representation lost the power to determine, on its own and in a single movement, the interplay of its syntheses and analyses. It was necessary for empirical syntheses to be performed elsewhere than within the sovereignty of the "I think." (*OT* 340)

By predicating the syntheses of empirical apperception (and the according empirical consciousness of oneself) upon an original and transcendental unity of apperception, Kant's critical project marks the point in time at which the anthropological inversion of the transcendental/empirical relation becomes a possibility; for post-Kantian and indeed contemporary anti-humanists, however, simply doing away with this Kantian transcendental ego does not absolve them of the problem of the empirical and the transcendental insofar as these are both the products of the epistemic structure of man as dual subject and object of knowledge. Channeling Kant, what

Foucault terms philosophy's "anthropological sleep" (ibid.) accordingly provides the chief justification in *OT* for the desirability of the death of man, and the thought of the outside its eroding tool. *OT*'s Kantian commitments thus not only drive Foucault's dogged critique of post-Kantian philosophy (and the circumscribed advocation of an asubjective thinking, rather than a knowing of a pre-critical, absolute outside) but also, and by extension, provide the impetus for the very desirability of the death of man.

If, after Kant, it is necessary for the synthesis of an empirical datum to be detached from the *a priori* surety of the transcendental ego, then it is equally necessary to have the thought of the epistemic structure responsible for engendering anthropological circularity (and, more specifically, of the event announcing its supersession) to also occur in a sphere distinct from that of the empirical, so as not to be drawn into the vortex of this circle, inverting the relation once more. This ultimately explains Foucault's tentative "probably" on the question of the outside's erosion and the inadmissibility of empirical determinations as the causes of epistemological change in *OT*, insofar as any such reliance would be to derive the transcendental from that of the empirical, perpetuating the very problem of which the death of man is deployed to mark the end. Such events cannot, that is, be figured as responsible for effecting such a shift at the transcendental level of the historical *a priori*, for to do so would be to once more invert the Kantian relation by figuring an empirical content as effecting a change at the transcendental level. Any more "empirically complete" picture of such a mutation (analogous to Kittler's own identification of technological changes as the empirical causes of transcendental mutations, to which we will soon return) would only signal the total subjection of such a heralding to that which it is charged with succeeding.

Given that Foucault himself proceeds in such instances to confuse his own archaeological claims with broader empirical ones, a distinction must be drawn here (as we have in greater detail elsewhere)[12] between the declarations to be found in *OT* concerning such events (attempting to secure the absolution of archaeology from having to explicitly subscribe to a theory of epistemological change), and some of the more sensationalistic comments made by Foucault in interviews following the initial success of his book. [13] In the absence of a theory of epistemological change, if *OT* can only provide cautious declarations concerning the necessity, causes and form of this (at the very least *desirable*) mutation that is the death of man, this makes it doubly difficult for *OT*'s closing augury to have any popular purchase outside those concerned with upholding the virtues of the Kantian critical project (or, perhaps more precisely, an idealized and *impossible* variation on this project, for which the empirical and transcendental are not ceaselessly mixed) against its subsequent anthropological inversion.[14]

Strictly speaking, the mutation designated in *OT* by the phrase "the death of man," is posited as desirable only on the basis of its potential return to a critically Kantian order of things (as distinct from the specificities of the Kantian system as a whole) that upholds the traditional relation between transcendental and empirical.[15] Devoid of any normative judgement, archaeology can depict the philosophical subjection to the anthropological as a problem *only insofar* as it is a direct consequence of an illegitimate inversion of a central Kantian distinction. "Foucault's own archaeological project," observes Hutchings, "is an attempt to return to the moment of rupture in which, on his own account, the episteme of representation is confronted with the question of its limits" (80). *OT*, as an archaeological text, can strictly do no more than this, as the drawing of

what is effectively a *transcendental* determination concerning a change at the level of the historical *a priori*, from that of an *empirical* cause, would render it subject to its own critique of those philosophies deriving transcendental determinations from the empirical determinations they are posed as conditioning. This has a bearing on the case of Kittler specifically, as the claim that Foucault "forgets" the textual nature of the archive (thus deriving the transcendental concept of the historical *a priori* from an empirical and mediatic contingency) actually repeats the same manoeuvre in a more dogmatic fashion, attributing the death of man to a single, implicitly transcendental cause drawn directly from empirical experience.

The givenness of the archive
With the publication of Foucault's methodologically revisionist *AK* came the construction of an archaeological theory of epistemological causality that not only allowed for such outright illegitimate or minimally suspect manoeuvres to be avoided, but one that fundamentally reconfigured the Kantian pretensions guiding *OT* (in particular, the formulation of the historical *a priori* as it was presented in the earlier text). Deploying two noticeable changes to the historical *a priori*, *AK* allows for the problem of causality (and, by extension, that of the confusion of the empirical and the transcendental) to be addressed, but in a thoroughly bounded manner that still leaves Foucauldian archaeology at odds with Kittler's confident account of the technical *a priori* of the present.

First, *AK* actively and retrospectively dissociates archaeology from the formalizing and totalizing tendencies clearly exhibited in *OT* – as Béatrice Han describes it, Foucault no longer "commit[s] himself to any transcendentalist claims and simply intends his 'historical *a priori*' to indicate and underline the possibility of studying discourses in an autonomous way" (65). *AK* draws an explicit distinction between "this rather barbarous term" of the historical *a priori*, and that of the Kantian "formal *a priori*s whose jurisdiction extends without contingence" (127-128). The conception of the historical *a priori*s governing Western knowledge production was of course a defining claim in the archaeology of *OT*; however, in now claiming that "[t]he formal *a priori* and the historical *a priori* neither belong to the same level nor share the same nature" (*AK* 128), Foucault explicitly distances himself from the former text's tentative invocation of a transcendent theory of external causation by positing in its stead a theory of *immanent* transformation of determining factors which no longer relies on the extraneous factors (however undetermined) previously alluded to with the concept of the outside.

Contrary to the concept's presentation in *OT*, Foucault now contends that the historical *a priori*

> does not constitute, above events, and in an unmoving heaven, an atemporal structure; it is defined as the group of rules that characterize a discursive practice: but these rules are not imposed from the *outside* on the elements that they relate together; they are caught up in the very things that they connect; and if they are not modified with the least of them, they modify them, and are transformed with them into certain decisive thresholds. The a priori of positivities is not only the system of temporal dispersion; it is itself a transformable group. (*AK* 127)

To be sure, the historical *a priori* as conceptualized in *AK*

> cannot take account (by some kind of psychological or cultural genesis) of the formal *a priori*s; but it enables us to understand how the formal *a priori*s may have in history points of contact, places of insertion, irruption, or emergence, domains or occasions of operation, and to understanding how this history may be not an absolutely extrinsic contingence, not a necessity of form deploying its own dialectic, but a specific regularity. Nothing, therefore, would be more pleasant, or more inexact, than to conceive of this historical *a priori* as a formal *a priori* that is also endowed with a history: a great, unmoving, empty figure that irrupted one day on the surface of time, that exercised over men's thought a tyranny that none could escape, and which then suddenly disappeared in a totally unexpected, totally unprecedented eclipse…. (128)

Operating at a level beneath that of the Kantian formal *a priori*, *AK* posits a theory of *immanent epistemological causality* by sacrificing the totalizing purchase of *OT*'s conception of the historical *a priori* as an historicized transcendental for the comparatively weaker conception of an immanently transformable group of positivities.[16] The question of the genesis of the formal *a priori*s (regardless of their psychological, cultural or, we might add, technical genesis) therefore now lies explicitly outside the purview of the archaeological method (as distinct from existing as a notable "problem"). Foucault's qualified extension addresses the problem of causation outlined in the 1970 foreword without falling subject to either the confusion of the empirical and the transcendental, nor the deferral of causality to which Kittler's approach will soon be shown to have succumb.

AK's revision of the archaeological position on the problem of causality offers another spin on Kittler's critique of the absence of media-technological shifts from Foucault's work in this period, as the supplementation of the now weakened historical *a priori* with the archive restrains the archaeologist in a manner different to that seen in *OT*, by foreclosing the possibility of apprehending the *contemporary*. *AK* understands the archive as "[t]he domain of statements ... articulated in accordance with historical *a priori*s" (128). No longer possessive of the "appearance of a monotonous, endless plain" evoked in his previous description of a "surface of discourse," the archive now exists for Foucault as "a complex volume," as "systems of statements" within "the density of discursive practices ... that establish statements as events (with their own conditions and domain of appearance) and things (with their own possibility and field of use)" (ibid.).

To Kittler's charge that Foucault fails to sufficiently delineate the nature of his (and our) own archive, one might respond that this is due not to a lack of trying on Foucault's part, so much as a modified form of methodological circumscription that is once more dictated by the nature of his (now modified) archaeological method and object:

> it is not possible for us to describe our own archive, since it is from within these rules that we speak, since it is that which gives to what we can say – and to itself, the object of our discourse – its modes of appearance, its forms of existence and coexistence, its system of accumulation, historicity, and disappearance. (*AK* 130)

For Foucault, whilst the archive "in its presence ... is unavoidable," it "cannot be described in its totality … emerg[ing] in fragments, regions, and levels, more fully, no doubt, and with greater sharpness, the greater the time that separates us from it" (ibid.).

"The analysis of the archive, then, involves a privileged region: at once close to us, and different from our present existence, it is the border of time that surrounds our presence, which overhands it, and which indicates it in its otherness; it is that which, outside ourselves, delimits us" (ibid.). For Foucault, the archaeological apprehension of the contemporary moment (that which, in *OT*, might amount to the outright delineation, rather than tentative *wager*, of a subsequent epistemological arrangement marked by the death of man) always already remains an incomplete (im)possibility. For although it grows increasingly accessible with one's distance from the contemporary, this "never completed, never wholly achieved uncovering of the archive" (*AK* 131) is never accomplished to the point of total elucidation. It would thus appear that, regardless of his proximity to the Kantian concerns giving rise to *OT*'s death of man narrative, Foucault still poses a direct challenge to a Kittlerian anti-humanism. For whilst Kittler's extension of the former's archaeological vector would appear to avoid the issue of contemporaneity as much as possible by attending to the contemporary on the basis of distant technological developments of the early twentieth century, it still remains dependent on the observance of a comparatively crude and naïve theory of epistemological causation.

Foucault's emphasis on the increasing (though asymptotic) clarity of the archive over time is coupled with the dissolution of the focus on the literate as a privileged means of epistemological erosion, *AK* marking the point at which the literary as transgressive thought loses its primacy for Foucault as an indicator of a transformation in the confused form of discourse on the human. In so unbounding the originally limited range of factors potentially conducive to epistemological change, Foucault presages both Kittler's critique of the archaeological privileging of the written word, and his consequent anticipation of an anti-humanist future tied to the very dissolution of this privileging. Where *OT* sought to effect an erosion of its own by way of an archaeological method geared toward tentatively invoking the outside - and in this sense, as Simon During notes, "belong[ing] itself, if somewhat tenuously, to 'literature'" (114) - by the time of *AK* "Foucault himself was ceasing to appeal to transgressive thought" (117). He was no longer prepared to "treat archaeology as a search for the origin, for formal *a priori*s, for founding acts" (*AK* 203), however cautious or circumscribed, so much as a means of charting the immanent transformation of a group of positivities.

If, as During observes, "archaeology occupies … a space bounded on the one side by modern positivism (and the replacement of the 'synthetic a-priori' by the 'historical a-priori') and on the other by transgressive thought" (113) embodied by literature, the transition from *OT* to *AK* marks a swing from one bordering tendency to the other, where Kittler might be seen waiting to join the party. From *AK* onward "[Foucault's] gaze past the modern no longer fixes on the future – on the end of man and transgressive writing" (120), and as such, even if Kittler's concern with the extra-literate, having failed to register the cessation in *AK* of Foucault's fixation with transgressive writing, is not quite as groundbreaking as he might believe, this gaze toward the future is one Kittler can at the very least be said to have restored in his predecessor's wake. In short, Foucault and Kittler are at different times directed toward the same future end: having ceased to privilege

the literate's erosive capacity, the former departs all too quickly from the archaeological theory of immanent transformation (before enough of its archive could be uncovered), whilst the latter commendably continued on this trajectory, even if (as we outline below) he ends up taking a questionable turn toward the determinate power of media technologies that fails to adhere to the circumscription still characteristic of Foucault's archaeological swing toward positivities, thus concomitantly failing to resolve the problem of causation.

The re-inscription of "so-called man"

Although it may seem unfair to counterpose Kittler against Foucault, given the stylistic discordances acknowledged prior, and the general lack of systematicity within his corpus, we believe that the former's patent desire to play the role of academic provocateur should not exempt him from such critique. Firstly, because his concepts, and his approach to media studies more broadly, have come to play an increasingly important role in this field of study over the past three decades. As Florian Sprenger remarks, in large part "the German *Medienwissenschaft* of the 1980s and 1990s was successful because it not only made new objects productive with new perspectives but allowed the blind spots of other disciplines – namely, their media-technical conditions – to be taken into account" (74), and this is chiefly a result of Kittler's influence. This perspective has also become increasingly prominent in Anglophone media studies, wherein it has been advocated as a "cold-turkey cure for hermeneutic and ideological fixation" (Packer 296), challenging the textual and representational focus of so much media research (an advocation with which we would at least somewhat concur). Secondly, because such complaints belie the sophistication of Kittler's project, the detail and rigour of his research (notwithstanding the oft-peculiar conclusions that he draws from it), and the themes that run quite consistently throughout large swathes of his oeuvre. We consider his desire to ameliorate the purported deficiencies of Foucauldian discourse analysis to be a significant guiding thread in Kittler's work and as such, we think it entirely reasonable to judge it by such standards.

There are two major discrepancies between Kittler and Foucault's thought of interest to us here: the first concerning the essentially Kantian methodological concerns that provide the impetus for Foucault's celebration of the death of man, and the second regarding the givenness of the archive, delimiting archaeological claims of and to the present. Kittler appropriates the totalizing features and anti-humanist rhetoric of the death of man from Foucault's early archaeology, and a number of key conceptual innovations of the latter text of 1969 without, it would seem, sufficiently addressing the methodological considerations driving such decisions on Foucault's part. In the first case, Kittler's claim that "[e]very medium that brings the hidden to the light of day and forces the past to speak contributes, by gathering evidence, to the death of Man" (*Discourse Networks* 286) patently transcendentalizes our empirical apperception of media. In the second, his proposal that "[a]rcheologies of the present must also take into account data storage, transmission, and calculation in technological media" (*Discourse Networks* 369) presumes the archive (and in turn, the historical *a priori*) to be directly apprehensible within the empirical confines of the epistemological arrangement that it conditions.

Consequently, the folding of the transcendental onto the empirical does not actually eliminate the former, but merely obfuscates its function – and in particular, occludes Kittler's idealization of media as technical *a priori*s. In both of the above cases, media are treated by Kittler as

unproblematically given to empirical experience, even whilst they furnish the transcendental conditions for said experience – precisely the situation that Foucault assiduously tries to avoid. By placing the media that philosophy has typically ignored (or actively disparaged) in the position of the transcendental conditions that were once monopolized by the human subject, making direct recourse to these media as determinate causal agents, Kittler actually reifies and idealizes media as merely formal entities, reducing them to a series of functions ascertained in advance (viz. storage, processing, and transmission) and thinking them through their relation with an empirical posteriority. He proffers, as Alexander Galloway describes it, "a hermeneutics of media devices as they appear after being pulled from the pit of history" (14), ironically categorizing them in relation to a pre-fabricated categorial schema.[17] For Foucault, by contrast, the technical and mediatic conditions Kittler identifies as lacking in archaeology can serve only as insufficient causes driving the dissolution of the philosophical image of man. Indeed, if, according to Kittler, the anthropological sleep to which post-Kantianism is subject "dreams away the machines" ("Forgetting" 96), reintroducing them does not at all address the problem of causation. In updating Foucault through a recourse to empirical (and so, in the sense of *OT*, anthropological) determination, the thinking rendering such a manoeuvre reprehensible for Foucault (namely its inversion of the Kantian transcendental schema), is sidelined or, dare we say it, *forgotten*.

As Geoffrey Winthrop-Young remarks, if Kittler's basic contention in this respect "is that epistemes change because media change" (in the same way that for Foucault, epistemes change because historical *a priori*s change), then "this is not much of an answer since it begs the obvious question: why do media change?" (138).[18] By removing human agency from the equation, the problem of causation is not so much resolved as merely deferred: whilst the cause of epistemological discontinuity is clearly identified, the ultimate cause of developments in media technologies themselves remains either frustratingly underdetermined (as in the overly convenient appeal to military exigencies, or even more problematically given Kittler's anti-humanist rhetoric, familiar romantic narratives of genius) or entirely undetermined.[19] Our concern here though is not to assess the tenability of either the Foucauldian or Kittlerian approaches on the basis of their respective responses to this particular problem; rather, we wish to conclude this article by arguing that Kittler's lack of methodological circumspection covertly reproduces the anthropologized subject of "man" which he seeks to abolish. Kittler's shortcomings in this regard are characteristic not only of his own particular anti-Kantian, post-Foucauldian stance (nor indeed of many of Foucault's own departures from his archaeological position), but more broadly of any anti-humanist position that attempts to uncover the determinative, empirical conditions of the figure of "man" *qua* unitary subject.

For Kittler, technical media seem to take the place of the enigmatic outside that Foucault (and Blanchot before him) views as stemming from literature, asserting that "[w]hat novels and systems of philosophical aesthetics formulate as wonders or enigmas can be explained in very simple – that is, technical – terms" (*Truth* 104). But whereas Foucault refuses to ascribe an unambiguous causal role to any such exteriority, acknowledging the pre- and post-Kantian dogmatic thirst for an absolute outside without sacrificing critical strictures at its behest, Kittler by contrast is more than willing to not only grant media this power (such that changes in their structuration of data directly engender epistemological ruptures), but to unabashedly draw such observations from empirical experience. Unlike Kant, who "could not but spirit away naked sensory data by way of synthesis"

("Thinking Colours" 44), foreclosing the datum of sensibility to all cognition, Kittler's adaptation of the Foucauldian archaeological vector embraces a conception of determination entirely immanent to the empirical, substituting a multiplicity of factical media for the unity of the transcendental ego. "All cultural techniques – from simple perception all the way to memory and thinking itself – are one with their appearance or phenomenality; that is to say, they arise from self-observation" ("Thinking Colours" 42). This does not actually eliminate the transcendental however, but merely supplies it with a more plastic and supple form, one that does not fret about its separation from that which it conditions.

In accordance with this "happy positivism" ("A Discourse 158), the death of man is presented no longer as an historically contingent epistemological rupture, but as the revelation of a universal transcendental principle, desirable not because it signals the return of a methodological delimitation between the empirical and the transcendental that might avoid falling into the trap of anthropologization (as is the case for Foucault), but because it unveils the *true cause* of epistemological change (thus actually collapsing the aforementioned boundaries).[20] Whilst it might sometimes be couched in a certain level of pragmatist rhetoric – after all, he reassures us, "[e]very theory has its historical *a priori*" (*Gramophone* 16) – Kittler's overall system, if we may speak of such a thing, is founded upon a quite consistent transcendental principle. Media form the necessary *a priori* conditions of experience, such that the figure of "man" is simply an "anthropocentric illusion" ("A Discourse" 166), a false and epiphenomenal unity, a surface effect fabricated from the media systems that underpin it. It is also through our apprehension of such media, however (facilitated by the fragmentation of media that occurred in the nineteenth century), that we might avoid such an illusion. "The empirical-transcendental doublet Man, substratum of the Romantic fantastic, is only imploded by the two-pronged attack of science and industry" (Kittler, *Literature* 95).

The irony is that in attempting to so dismantle the assumptions of subject-centred philosophy, Kittler actually reifies the image of "so-called man" that he wishes to subvert. Although his project emphatically seeks to deny the unitary ego any transcendental primacy by dispersing its functions amongst a plethora of incompatible media, his overall aim is still tacitly to uncover the conditions of possible experience and, in doing so, cannot help but remain anthropocentric. Indeed, observes Hansen, "[r]ather than rejecting any hint of a lingering 'humanism,' as one might expect, [Kittler] brings home with emphatic force *the similarity of carbon and silicon hardware*" ("Symbolizing Time" 213), establishing a strict homology between the human and machine. Shifting said conditions of experience from the faculties of the mind to the data processing of external media, and thereby breaking down any presumed delineation between the transcendental and the empirical, does not at all eliminate the tacit notion of a synthetic unity by which the experience of "man" as a presupposed universal is constituted. By utilizing the death of man to symbolize the universal condition of mediatic determination, Kittler inscribes all media within a specific teleological horizon – that which determines the figure of "man" in "his" epiphenomenality – paradoxically reinserting this purportedly epiphenomenal and illusory figure as the overarching principle of the media-theoretical project.

As Justin Clemens puts it, "Kittler can only arrive at [his] conclusions by *isolating* and *subjectivizing* 'media' themselves, which are now covertly assigned the capacities that Kant himself

would have assigned to the individual human subject" (63). The result is that although the conditions of subjectivity are fragmented, dispersed amongst factical media, they still remain meaningful to Kittler because of their position within a transcendental structure through which the illusion of the transcendental ego is produced: media exist because "man is … an animal whose properties are not yet fixed," and this relationship "ensures that the history of technology is not so ahuman that it would not concern people" (*Optical Media* 36). In other words, it is the very contingency and mutability of man's apperception – its determination by the properties and capacities of the media forms that envelop it – that makes the study of media meaningful in the first place, ensuring that Kittler's project remains oriented around the human being as the locus of experience. By attempting to isolate the cause of empirical experience through recourse to that very same experience, the empirico-transcendental doublet is retained, and the anthropological image of man maintained.

As with so much of the post-structuralist rhetoric regarding the decentred subject from which he draws, Kittler does not so much abolish the transcendental ego as broaden its confines (whilst preserving its overall unity). The Kantian schema – whereby the "I think" that accompanies all representations necessarily precedes empirical cognition – is inverted, so that this posited unity is nothing other than the illusory product of our empirical experience (as conditioned by media directly apprehensible within this experience), but it is not at all abandoned. The post-structuralist subject, as Sadie Plant describes it, is merely "an updated model no longer vulnerable to the dissolution it once feared; a subject even rejuvenated by its pretended dissolution," one that "has learnt to live with the challenge of shifting foundations and uncertain perimeters and become reconciled with the vulnerability of its identity" (88), and this remains the case for Kittler's "so-called man," granting the transcendental a mutable or aleatory element without ever relinquishing its ultimate authority. Against all his best intentions, Kittler unwittingly shores up the figure of man, by revealing the depths of "man" (i.e. that which undergirds the surface effect of the human subject as a unitary whole) to be nothing other than the media by which "his" experience is conditioned. Media are an exteriority that folds into an interiority, sustaining the ultimate coherence of these categories.

It is perhaps less surprising, then, that Kittler's final, Philhellenic writings try to bring "man" back from the dead, so to speak – as Claudia Breger argues, "this return of man in the recent works suggests that his demise was incomplete in the first place," his project being consistently "concerned less with displacing any anthropological enquiry than with problematizing affirmations of human autonomy" (126). In sum, Kittler's approach suffers from the same setback that afflicts so many attacks upon the transcendental subject: by suturing the conditions of thought to the image of "so-called man" (such that the former are only philosophically meaningful on the basis of the latter), not only is the transcendental modality of thought covertly maintained (albeit now flattened onto its empirical counterpart), but the presence of "man" is re-inscribed in its absence – a universal subject *in absentia*. In observing this aporia, we do not advocate the installation of a new, "improved" universal human subject; rather, we hope to vindicate the Foucauldian circumspection regarding the transcendental determination of epistemic change, which would in turn entail a renewed consideration and maintenance of the Kantian critical circumscription of the empirical and the transcendental (without necessarily subscribing to Kant's broader system) in subsequent endeavours.

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[1] We witness this, perhaps most acutely, in Meillassoux's positing of a "hyper-chaos" that absolutizes contingency, such that "nothing is or would seem to be impossible, not even the unthinkable" (64).

[2] The presence of such Kantian gestures in *OT*, notes Étienne Balibar, is due to the "exquisite sensitivity of Kantianism to the tensions of an anthropological positivity" (59). Although for brevity's sake we will not take this into consideration here, other noted "post-structuralist" philosophers, such as Gilles Deleuze (especially in *Difference and Repetition*) and Jean-François Lyotard also show strong sympathies to at least some form of Kantian transcendentalism, whatever their dissatisfactions with Kant's project in the main.

[3] After all, Kittler insists that "literature (whatever else it might mean to readers) processes, stores, and transmits data, and that such operations in the age-old medium of the alphabet have the same technical positivity as they do in computers," thus legitimizing literature as an information system (in concordance with the Shannon-Weaver model of communication) at the same time as he dismisses the hermeneutic obsession with literary *meaning* (*Discourse Networks* 370).

[4] For all the fondness that he shows toward Foucault and Lacan, Kittler seems to have little time for the work of Jacques Derrida, arguing in a quite pointed (albeit simplistic) rebuke to deconstruction that it is inevitable that one remains "within the space of philosophical discourse if one portrays and suppresses the Western metaphysics of presence in terms of another which, already by virtue of its name: arche-writing, is transcendental and categorial" ("Forgetting" 92; translation altered).

[5] Although Hayles often draws upon Kittler as a precedent for her own work on the "posthuman," she rejects the unilateral causality he posits between humans and the media that condition them, seeking instead a more fluid and open-ended relationship between bodies and machines.

[6] As with many of his influences (e.g. Heidegger, Schmitt, Innis, McLuhan, etc.), Kittler's politics are often deeply (and provocatively) conservative in orientation. Maybe the most troubling of such impulses is his

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"participation in a discourse of European, and also German, identity," which seeks to "re-capture collective identities in the age generally known as the age of globalization," premised upon a primacy and originarity of Greek culture (Breger 126).

[7] "One does not need to derive the individual philosophically from the concept, nor denounce it, in Marxist fashion, as an ideological semblance; the individual is the real correlate of the new techniques of power that save its data and produce its discourses" (Kittler, "Authorship and Love" 28).

[8] A similar, but less cursory argument is put forward by Bernard Stiegler, who proposes that Kant's model of schematism elides the fact that "schematics are originarily, in their very structure, industrializable: they are functions of tertiary retention; that is, of technics, technology, and, today, industry" (41).

[9] Given that he posits the transcendental ego as not internal, but discursive, Kittler elsewhere argues that "[t]he I then has its positivity only in the literary: as the shifter of the author's proper name, which since the time of Kant and Herder must be able to accompany speech acts," directly connecting it to the function of literary authorship ("Authorship and Love" 31).

[10] See O'Leary, who argues that whereas in the 1960s "literature was given a privileged status and role in Foucault's work," from 1970 onward (specifically, beginning with his inaugural lecture at the Collège de France) "it loses that role and becomes just one more possible object of analysis – and, in fact, an object of analysis which Foucault chose not to pursue" (104).

[11] See Miller 148-159.

[12] See Sutherland and Patsoura, wherein we interrogate Foucault's "death of man" in light of François Laruelle's "non-humanist" intervention. Laruelle is notable here insofar as the premises of his so-called "non-philosophy" lie in an attempt to overcome the empirico-transcendental doublet (as he argues explicitly in *Le principe de minorité*) by identifying a real and transcendental subjectivity that is not in any way mixed with empiricity, even as it determines the latter in a unilateral manner.

[13] On Foucault's occasional, indulgent failure to distinguish between man as epistemic structure and man as empirical content – whereby he harnesses the popularity of *OT* and its defining trope for an explicitly and technically *dissociated* anti-humanist cause, ignoring the inconvenient fact that *OT* speaks not of humanism in this sense, and thus effacing much of the specificity of the concept of "man" (and, by extension, this figure's death) in the process – see Han-Pile.

[14] We invoke said "impossibility" in light of Foucault's earlier study of the intertwinement of Kant's critical project and his lectures on anthropology, which shows Kant himself struggling to avoid the confusion of the empirical and the transcendental within his own critical work. See Foucault, *Introduction to Kant's Anthropology*, and Han 17-37.

[15] As Djaballah notes, following Léon Brunschvicg, we must distinguish "between the *doctrine of the Kantian system* and the *idea of criticism*" (1), with Foucault's considerations in *OT* being clearly driven by the latter.

[16] See Han 68.

[17] Similarly, Lisa Gitelman remarks that "it is as if Kittler doesn't need to persuade his readers of details about why or how phonographs were invented because he already knows what phonographs are, and therefore he knows what (and particularly how) they mean … that is to make a medium both evidence and cause of its own history" (10).

[18] As During notes, directing us toward both Kant and Foucault's sensitivity to the problem in the *Critique of Pure Reason* and *OT*, respectively, this is a "difficulty with the notion of 'conditions of possibility'" that Foucault does not himself resolve (so much as respect): "They are recursive, moving into a *mise en abîme*. If, for instance, the archive is deemed to condition positivities, why stop there? How do we know that there is only one archive?" (100).

[19] "Kittler's media histories systematically neglect what students of the diffusion of innovations call the 'implementation' phase of new technologies – all the messy false-starts, slow creeping transitions, negotiations, and adjustments that occur in the long dull non-state-of-emergency between the births of new discourse-networks" (Peters 18).

[20] This notion of a "happy positivism" is derived from a concept often ascribed to Foucault, based upon his declaration that "[i]f, by substituting the analysis of rarity for the search for totalities, the description of

relations of exteriority for the theme of the transcendental foundation, the analysis of accumulations for the quest of the origin, one is a positivist, then I am quite happy to be one" (*AK* 125). It is our contention, of course, that Kittler's positivism, in contradistinction to that with which Foucault associates himself in *AK*, precisely involves a *return* to the search for transcendental foundations and origins, under the guise of mediatic determination.