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Unhinged: *Kairos* and the Invention of the Untimely

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Traditionally, *kairos* has been seen as a “timely” concept, and so invention is said to emerge from the timeliness of a cultural and historical situation. But what if invention was thought of as the potential to shift historical courses through the injection of something new or alien into a situation? This essay argues that *kairos* has not been able to free itself from its historical constraints because it has been bound to a *human* sense of temporality. By evolving along patterns different from print, the apparatus of the cinema developed in a way where it was not bound to illustrating movement or time as it occurs in human-centered experience. Following the work of Gilles Deleuze on cinema, this article argues that the outside of a human sense of time is an untapped source of invention, already present yet dormant within *kairos*.

A creator who isn’t grabbed around the throat by a set of impossibilities is no creator. A creator is someone who creates their own impossibilities, and thereby creates possibilities.

Gilles Deleuze (1995, p. 133)

With the 1980s revival of *kairos* (commonly translated as “right timing and proper measure”), rhetoricians and compositionists began to turn their attention to something essential for rhetoric: contingency. Despite their differences, writers as diverse as James Kinneavy (1986/2002) and Eric Charles White (1987) agreed that rhetoric functions well when it is concerned with a reality that shifts and changes with time. Because all things are subject to decay and generation, the one thing that humans can know for sure is that given enough time, nothing stays the same. Environments, relationships, situations, our *selves* are in perpetual flux; it follows that such continual movement gives rise to a changing and shifting reality that consistently requires intervention. For many contemporary and classical theorists, *kairos* is that moment where the rhetor intervenes in the shifting circumstances that make up our professional and personal lives, what rhetoricians often call the “rhetorical situation.” *Kairos* is often conceived as best

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exemplified by the rhetor who gains a nuanced appreciation of the shifting circumstances that perpetually occur, is able to recognize what the moment calls for, and can deliver a fitting response to that moment.¹

Because the situation gives rise to an expectation that the trained rhetor is able to recognize, many have seen *kairos* as a fundamentally inventive concept. Any rhetorical situation has quite a number of elements—speakers, audiences, exigencies, values, contexts, constraints, beliefs, and so on. Enough elements and contexts are present, in fact, that some have argued that “situation” does not do the context justice, that whenever someone says “rhetorical situation,” they should say “rhetorical ecology.”² *Kairos* is inventive because it is that moment, sometimes on the spur of a moment, where the speaker or writer, in conjunction with all these disparate forces in the “ecology,” converts this energy into something appropriate and fitting to say. Rhetorical alchemy? Maybe. One thing is for sure: Except for an enterprising and talented few, the concept had largely been ignored. The time for *kairos* had come.

Scholars have since attended to this call from a number of angles. They have investigated the evolution and reception of the mainstream idea (Sipiora, 2002; Smith, 2002); focused on its pre-Socratic cosmological associations (Rostagni, 1922; Untersteiner, 1954); investigated its *nomological* qualities (Hawhee, 2002; White, 1987); and, as I’ve already hinted, emphasized its ecological aspects (Cooper, 1986; Rickert, 2004). All of these scholars have added to our appreciation and understanding of the concept. In them we find a wide variety of interpretations and emphases, from *kairos* as a lethal place on the body, to *kairos* as cosmological opening into the Pythagorean One-All, to *kairos* as a middle voice that blends into the ambient background, and more. Various projects and investigations have also taken place beyond the studies mentioned here, and although a general taxonomy is well beyond both the intention and scope of this article, the writers I have just mentioned do seem to share one thing in common that is essential for understanding the intersection between *kairos* and rhetorical invention: With some exceptions, these writers have most often sought to understand the relationship between the opportune moment and the environment from which it springs. One of the major thrusts of this article is to explain that better understanding that relationship has had the consequence of turning attention to the role of the subject in the timely act of invention, ultimately offering a more robust and complicated view of the subject. This emphasis, however, has come at the expense of increasing the territory, scope, and influence of rhetorical invention. The present article is, in part, an attempt to redirect this course.

¹*Kairos* has a long and rich tradition, and I should mention at the outset the contributions of Paul Tillich (1972), Mario Untersteiner (1954), Augusto Rostagni (1922), and Doro Levi (1923). Although rhetoric has learned much concerning the origins and diversity of meanings of the concept from these and numerous other classical scholars, Kinneavy, though he is not without his critics (several with whom I am sympathetic), should be recognized for popularizing the term into other linked domains, especially the ubiquitous 1st-year writing requirement, WAC, and the administration of graduate and undergraduate writing programs. Whether Carolyn Miller’s (2002) statement that Kinneavy “did more than anyone to revive *kairos* as a term of rhetorical art” (p. xiii) is completely accurate, his contribution is noteworthy. In more postmodern circles, I should also mention at the outset the importance of Bernard Miller’s (1987) essay “Heidegger and the Gorgian Kairos,” and I have already mentioned Eric Charles White’s (1987) *Kaironomia*; such works effectively changed the way rhetoricians would think about the link between *kairos* and situation. Indeed, this influence is a major concern of mine and I take it up next.

²See Jennifer Edbauer (2004), Byron Hawk (2004), and Collin Brooke (2009) for cogent discussions of rhetorical ecologies. See Michelle Baillif (1997) for an analysis of the feminist rhetorical space of *ethea* advanced by Susan Jarratt and Nedra Reynolds which anticipates discussions of ecology.

The argument comes in two parts and, at a general level, is straightforward. The first part depends on first identifying and tracing this pattern of thought taking place in the scholarship. Following this trajectory reveals that although the scholarship has added considerably to a refined understanding of the environment surrounding *kairos*, it has not furthered the inventive potential of *kairos*, because it has been overly invested in how *kairos* arises from historical and cultural forces.³ Traditionally, *kairos* has been seen as a “timely” concept, and in the traditional manner, invention emerges from the timeliness of a cultural and historical situation. Consequently, invention can thus be said to be largely determined by the environment and history to which it belongs. The grouping I follow next has added to the understanding of the complexity of that environment, but it has done so at the cost of thinking of how to add to the understanding of invention. The second part hopes to invigorate studies in *kairic* invention by drawing the reader’s attention to those aspects that lie outside these historical and cultural forces. What if invention was considered from a bolder perspective? What if it was thought of as the potential to shift historical courses through the injection of something new or alien into a system or situation? What if invention was thought of as innovative potential to change the course of history rather than being determined by it? Why has rhetoric accepted the determination that rhetorical invention deals merely with finding the known while, at least since Francis Bacon’s (1605/1915) *Of the Advancement of Learning*, new knowledge has become the province of the sciences? The second line of argument, then, is to rethink *kairos* at the level of its silent and hidden potential, a potential of which the 20th-century Francis Bacon was able to illustrate through paint (see Deleuze, 2003). I go on to show that taking advantage of the radically innovative potential of *kairos* requires attention to its *untimely* dimension.⁴

The untimely dimension of *kairos* is developed in the final part of the essay through a reading of movement and time originally posited by Gilles Deleuze (1986, 1989) in his books on the cinema. Deleuze’s discussions of cinema permit an illustrative understanding of what Deleuze sometimes calls the “outside” of time, that is, the outside of a *human* sense of time. One of the reasons that *kairos* has not been able to free itself from its historical constraints, I argue, is that it has been bound to a properly human sense of temporality. According to the

³I make this statement with one caveat. A particular version of *kairos*, what I call “cosmological *kairos*” is an exception, as I discuss next.

⁴The reader will notice that at certain occasions throughout this article I use the terms *inventive* and *creative* somewhat interchangeably. The terms historically carry a denotative distinction between discovery (invention) and to put into existence (creation); they also carry a connotative distinction between classical ways of knowing where matter is transformed through art, craft, or nature to form something new on the one hand and Biblical connotations that posit God as a source for the creation of the universe, or, on a smaller scale, Man as the source for ideas and their outcomes. These differences between the terms *invent* and *create* echo the debates in rhetoric taking place in the 1970s and 1980s involving the question of whether the rhetor discovers the material for invention or is the source of the material himself. All of these distinctions emphasize the differences in explaining how things come into being. They are concerned with *causes*, and from both of these points of view, whether Man discovers the material in the world or in his self, he remains the source and focal point of the inventive/creative process. For the purposes of this article, I am not interested in Man as the source of invention. It could be said, rather, that I am interested in how artifacts come into being from a nonanthropocentric point of view. Once Man is removed from the center of the equation, and one turns her attention to the objects themselves, the artifacts that are made or come into being, one can consider the network of forces surrounding the artifact itself. By placing the object, the thing created, into the center of focus, Man is thrust to the periphery and becomes one among a variety of influences. If the reader is able to entertain the decentering of Man in the question of invention, then the historical distinctions between “invention” and “creation” should become much less important.

scholarship traced next, *kairos* has been treated in a way that determines that before it can be a source of invention it must first be an effect of experience. As an effect of human experience, it is bound to the constraints of the human's experience of time and place.

But there is no reason why *kairos* must be bound to human experience, and Deleuze's work on the cinema shows how releasing *kairos* from human experience is possible. By evolving along patterns that include the machinery of the camera and a corresponding machinic perspective, the apparatus of the cinema developed in a way where it was not necessarily bound to illustrating either movement or time as it occurs in human-centered experience. Under Deleuze's analysis, the cinema *illustrates* an exteriority of time; this means that the cinema is able to show, quite literally, movements and temporalities that are released from human experience. I argue that this outside of a human sense of time is an untapped source of invention, already present yet dormant within *kairos*.⁵

Although the article comes to arrive at the notion of the untimely, it unfolds by tracing the lineage of *kairos* I just mentioned to isolate its anthropocentric tendencies and to establish that there is a need for a more ambitious perspective. Before we get there, however, I ask some leeway from the reader to establish the context and the development of kairic invention over recent years. Although it is not the last word on anything, establishing this trajectory is necessary to show "where we have been" in order that it might *not* determine the future. The article begins by discussing the traditional concept of *kairos* briefly and then to the three modern interpretations already mentioned: the cosmological, the *nomological*, and the ecological.⁶

STAGE 1: STARTING GATES: TRADITIONAL *KAIROS*

It is helpful to begin *kairos* with the traditional relationship between *kairos* and chronological time, or *chronos*. In its modern manifestation, *chronos* is said to mark linear time or duration; in other words, *chronos* is *quantitative*.⁷ *Kairos*, on the other hand, marks the instant or moment that *chronos* comes to a critical point; it is *qualitative*.

A key example of how this relationship functions can be found in the wine-growing example John Smith (2002) gave in "Time and Qualitative Time." *Kairos* comes at the time when the grapes become ready for harvest, a ripeness that results from the situation involving the cultivation of the grapes, a process that includes the conditions of the soil, temperature, vine disposition, and other growing conditions. The ripening of the grapes themselves is largely beyond the control of the grower, but as they ripen, a "certain critical point" occurs at which

⁵There is room here for confusion if one is thinking about a very old sense of time that Paul Tillich (1972) traced through the New Testament, the Jewish tradition, and back to Parmenides, namely, aeon. Commonly understood as a "future to come," it certainly does exist outside a human form of time—but one that is grounded in the Judeo-Christian tradition. To the contrary, I am speaking about actual durations that are neither transcendent nor imaginary.

⁶As already mentioned, these different versions of *kairos* are not meant to provide a general taxonomy of *kairos* but rather to disclose different phases in an unfolding discussion concerning its role and our concern with kairic invention. The intention is not to provide an overview of the scholarship of *kairos* but to reveal a line of thought that suggests that the potential of *kairic* invention has been obscured by an overinvestment in the situation surrounding *kairos*.

⁷With the inventions of electric light and clocks, moderns do not typically organize life around cyclical, natural time. It is important to recognize a point that Smith makes concerning Greek concepts of time; that is, that the Greeks, or at least through the example of Thucydides that Smith (2002) provides, that *chronos* was modeled on the cyclical repetition of the seasons rather than on a linear model (p. 54).

their “qualitative character begins to emerge.” This qualitative readiness reveals opportunities for the harvest, what we often call, in modern parlance, a “window” of time or opportunity. Such a window or opening in time, for Smith, calls for the grower’s “human ingenuity” of being able to recognize that the time is right (p. 48). The temporal opportunity to harvest the grapes cannot be separated from the process of duration that leads to their ripening, a condition that indicates the strength of the bond between *kairos* and *chronos*. The grower’s involvement amounts to reading the conditions, waiting for the best time to initiate the harvest, and then following through on that decision in the act of making the wine. The act of invention in the form of the making of the wine is determined by converting the conditions (soil, weather, etc.) influencing the wine-making process—acts held together by chronological time.

This twofold dynamic, the moment that arises from *chronos* and the grower’s ability to recognize that moment, gets carried over into traditional discourses in rhetoric. For instance, James Kinneavy (1986/2002) spent considerable effort discussing the role of *kairos* in Plato and Aristotle. Concerning Plato, Kinneavy discussed passages 271d–272b in the *Phaedrus* where Plato makes *kairos* the “capstone” to the rhetorical art. Only after the student rhetorician has mastered the nuances of his rhetorical training, the number and types of souls and speeches, their corresponding relationships (certain types of souls require certain types of speeches—the “*Psychagogia*”), and the ability to confirm his theoretical knowledge to the knowledge of everyday discursive affairs, will the rhetor be able to identify the critical moment. He will then be able to draw upon the various aspects of his rhetorical training to deliver fitting responses. The timing of the situation will necessarily call for a particular propriety (i.e., “good measure”) in how to use the rhetorical arts, so the response is essentially rational (e.g., propriety states that one would not dance in a bathing suit, cocktail in hand, at a funeral). In addition, invention is a matter of the rhetor recognizing the situation and drawing upon his rhetorical training to locate the kind of discourse that should be used. The rhetor does not actually create anything but matches what he has learned to what the moment calls for.

To Plato’s points, Aristotle adds the ingredient of the “situation,” an element Kinneavy that explained shows up in Aristotle’s definition of rhetoric, 2,300 years before Lloyd Bitzer’s (1968) classic essay, “The Rhetorical Situation.” The definition of rhetoric that Kinneavy uses from Aristotle is “its [rhetoric’s] function is not so much to persuade as to find out in each case the existing means of persuasion” (p. 66). Kinneavy explained that the phrase “in each case” accurately captures the Greek *peri hekáston* or “individuality of the situation.” He went on to discuss the individuality of the rhetorical situation in a number of Aristotle’s contexts, including the types of rhetoric (deliberative, forensic, epideictic), the three appeals (*ethos*, *logos*, *pathos*), and the canons of style and arrangement. Kinneavy’s reading of Aristotle is that the “individuality of the situation” gives rise to the discovery of the existing means of persuasion, making *The Rhetoric* (for Kinneavy) a treatise based on *kairos* (i.e., the situation).⁸

Essential in these understandings of Plato and Aristotle, as Kinneavy and Smith have suggested, is how *kairos* is defined. Here that the traditional sense of *kairos* understands the concept as a critical point that arises out of a number of material factors that are gathered

⁸One who studies the ancients may wonder why I have omitted Isocrates who also grounded his rhetorical *padiea* on *kairos*. Because the different versions among the three share common ground concerning the concept, I omit Isocrates simply for economy’s sake. For more on the relationship between Isocrates, Plato, and Aristotle concerning *kairos*, see Philip Sipiora, 2002.

together by *chronos*. The rhetor (or wine grower) intervenes at the critical moment in order to respond to the situation (Plato) or to find the means to respond (Aristotle).

STAGE 2: THE POSSIBILITY OF RADICAL INVENTION: COSMOLOGICAL *KAIROS*

Classical scholars Untersteiner (1954) and Rostagni (2002) have argued through close textual analysis of the fragments that Gorgias based his rhetorical approach on a conception of *kairos* that was consistent with and likely influenced by a Heraclitean worldview that gave profound importance to the *logos*.⁹

G. B. Kerford explained that rather than the everyday meanings of “logic” or “discourse,” Heraclitus was not alone in intuiting at least three intertwined meanings associated with the principle of *logos*. These meanings include *logos* as language (speech, discourse, argument, etc.), thought and mental processes (imagining, thinking, reasoning, etc.), and the cosmos (natural laws, seasonal cycles, universal principles, etc.) It is important to keep in mind, however, that these meanings were not distinct; according to classical scholars, *logos* meant all three at the same time, and that “whenever we see the term in the pre-Socratics, Aristotle, or the sophists, it always carries elements of all three meanings” (Hawk, 2004, p. 840; see also Consigny, 1991, p. 227; Kerferd, 1981, p. 83; Schiappa, 2003, p. 92).

Kirk and Raven (1984) explained that Heraclitus did not recognize a distinction between abstract concepts and concrete things (pp. 188–189). Because *logos* carried with it these three intertwined meanings of speech, thought, and nature and because Heraclitus did not have the Parmenidean influence that would lead to the thinking of an eternity or a source beyond the apparent world, the *logos* was not seen to be something that belonged solely to humans but that contained a sort of animistic, immanent principle where the *logos* was the force that moved all things and was internal to all things.

As such, it is believed that Heraclitus saw the *logos* as being immanent to all things because all things had their own manner of movement and speaking (Kahn, 1981, p. 134). Although moderns typically think of language belonging to humans, there is also the language of storms, lightning bolts, trees, birds, and so on. The language of nature. The world, if you will, *linguaging*. It was not until much later with Aristotle that humans became defined as the “rational animal” (*zoon logon echon*) whose being was determined different from the rest of life based on the ability to speak. For Heraclitus, all things expressed the *logos*.¹⁰

Because the *logos* was seen to be such a powerful, cosmological force—one that might be said to be the expression of the flux/becoming of life, the *logos* and all things were seen to be in a state of war or tension that leads to all things continuously undergoing a state of differentiation from themselves. One of Heraclitus’s most famous fragments reads, “Men do not know how what *is at conflict agrees with itself*. It is an attunement of opposite tensions, like that of the bow and the lyre” (Fr. 51). Imagine a bow, Guthrie (1960) requested, leaning

⁹These arguments have been corroborated by several contemporary rhetorical scholars including Bruce McComiskey (2002), Scott Consigny (2001), Edward Schiappa (2003), Susan Jarratt (1991), and Eric Charles White (1987).

¹⁰George Kennedy (1998) made a similar turn in his renewed conception of rhetoric in opening two chapters to *Comparative Rhetoric*.

against a wall. It seems in perfect balance and harmony, two opposite forces keeping them in a state of equilibrium. But we do not notice that a battle is being waged between the string and the bow, as we see once the string is cut that the bow springs to stretch itself. Hence, “what is *at conflict agrees* with itself” and “rest is change.” As such, Heraclitean unity is continual tension and disagreement, forces that are always differentiating themselves from themselves. I am always becoming, sometimes in two or more different directions at the same time.

Turning from *logos* to *kairos*, it is for this reason that all things undergo transformation that any manmade creation such as truth is contradictory and temporary, undergoing a state of transformation as we speak. Like iron, truth rusts. While man imposes logic, measure, rationality, and thought onto the *logos*, the cosmic *logos* contains all of that within as well as dreams, imagination, irrationality, contradiction, paradox, fantasy, rage, tenderness, love—the multiplicity that is life itself.

Kairos is merely the current moment that is being expressed by the (cosmic) *logos*, manifesting itself as human speech. What is *not* being expressed is the rest of the abundance, the multiplicity of *logos*. As Victor Vitanza (1997) and Eric C. White (1987) have noted, the *kairos* that opens up to the moment of the cosmic *logos* is a moment that is consequently irrational and leads to the possibility of something new being created. Anything can happen at the kairic moment because all of the *logos* is capable of being expressed. Concerning this *logos*, Vitanza (1997) wrote,

Logos here functions as a super nova. Express! Let me emphasize that it is this dispersion/scattering of the antitheses that leads to “something new, irrational,” something revolutionary here; and for me, this is a Third Sophistic Moment (Occasion), and one based on a particular Gorgian notion of *kairos*. And it is this “moment” that tells us something about the nature [*physis*] of the Gorgian “subject”—namely, that the “decision” is not the subject’s, but is “willed by [*kairos*]. Here we have a view of the subject as a function of *logos/kairos*. (pp. 242–43; Vitanza’s brackets)

When the “opportune moment” arises, a sophist such as Gorgias or Vitanza who is attuned to the cosmic *logos* does not look simply to match his stock answers to the propriety of the situation. She or he recognizes that human speech and thought is infinitesimal in comparison to the multiplicity of the *logos*; whatever she or he says now only expresses a fragment of truth since other occasions will allow the possibility of truths presently denied (White, 1987, p. 16).

STAGE 3: RADICAL INVENTION TAMED: NOMOLOGICAL *KAIROS*

Where cosmological *kairos* is an opening toward the irrational unknown and toward a future to come that sees the present expression of the *logos* as a single moment in a never-ending cosmic flow of time, *nomological kairos* turns back that potentiality in order to ground it into the here and now. Although *nomological kairos* welcomes variation, it recoils from moving invention into the future and toward the unknown.

The major champion of this version of *kairos* is Eric C. White, who has had significant influence on our present discourses concerning the concept, an influence that has had the result in compromising both the disciplinary territory and the creative potential of rhetorical

invention. White (1987) titled his book *Kaironomia* because insofar as *kairos* is the opening into the irrational novelty and experimentation of the moment, the present moment cannot leap beyond its present situation or its particular historical emplacement. *Nomos*, what has traditionally been translated as “norm,” “law,” and “culture,” is fused to *kairos* in the title to White’s book in order to designate the impossibility of the production of the truly new. Although cosmological *kairos* looks at the present moment as a mere instance of the multiplicity that comes from the future, that multiplicity cannot be accessed because the present moment, *every* moment, is historically determined by its time and place. White wrote,

Modernism in the arts has often been said to represent a desire to invent not on the basis of received knowledge but in response to the irrational novelty of the moment. According to this view, the modernist would even abolish tradition in order truly to be present, forever engaged in the process of conferring meaning on the world. But the aspiration for modernity very soon discovers that speculative invention can never be freed once and for all from the burden of the past. . . . On the one hand, there is the desire for ceaseless change; on the other, the recognition that any act of invention is historically determined, part of the very tradition it seeks to transcend. (p. 64)

White’s argument for fusing *kairos*—and its important potential for the work of invention—with *nomos* is grounded on his theory of communication. Working from Nietzsche’s early period, White explained that the irrationality of the unknown that is expressed through the cosmological *kairos* is another way of speaking about the Dionysian sublime, a sublime that needs to be beautified in order to be made accessible, communicable. White wrote, “Were it not for the Dionysian principle of irrational exuberance, Apollonian rationality and purposiveness would freeze,” but on the other hand, “if the Dionysian were permanently to displace the Apollonian, it would suicidally live out the strife of opposites in nature” (p. 40). To counter the sublimity of the irrational and unrecognizable multiplicity associated with the cosmological *kairos*, it needs to be packaged in the illusion of what is ordinary and orderly; in short, the beautiful. “That is,” White wrote, “the experience of sublimity must be musicalized, must appear in the guise of the beautiful, must dissemble itself if assent is to be secured for difference . . . as a positive virtue” (p. 40). Because what is unknown—the irrational exuberance of the cosmological *kairos*—cannot be communicated, it must be disguised by what *is* known—the rational and orderly customs and laws of *nomos*.

Because such a *kairos* or *kaironomia* takes part of both the sublime and the beautiful, it must operate at the level of the hybrid, of the fusion between the two. It is for this reason that White went on to argue for an invention of the middle voice, borrowing from Roland Barthes’s (1972) “To Write: An Intransitive Verb,” where Barthes put forth the idea that modernist literature writes in the space of the in between.

This blending of the irrational novelty of cosmological *kairos* and the situatedness in time and place has led a number of commentators in rhetorical and writing studies to focus on the primary spatial aspects of *kairos*, which is, in the final explanation, a conceptual takeover of *nomos*. What this means is that *kairos* loses its orientation toward the irrational novelty of the unknown possibilities that lie in the future and favors instead an invention that springs purely from the present situation. From this perspective, ecological *kairos* is closer in orientation to the traditional form of *kairos* associated with Plato, Aristotle, and Isocrates than it is with pushing the concept to its inventional limits.

STAGE 4: RADICAL INVENTION GROUNDED: ECOLOGICAL *KAIROS*

In “Kairotic Encounters,” Debra Hawhee (2002) picked up where White left off by using the middle voice to reframe our ideas concerning rhetorical invention. Hawhee framed her application of the middle voice by locking into the long-standing debate concerning whether invention is something found (a discovery in the world) or “created” (mysteriously, as in the vitalist tradition). Although the “discovery model presents a subject that looks outside itself to ‘find’ arguments,” she wrote, the “creative model assumes that the subject need only look inside itself for things to say.” Although they may seem opposed to each other, they actually both depend on the same epistemology concerning a “particular model of subjectivity.” For Hawhee, whether one creates or discovers is irrelevant. Doing either posits “an active, sovereign subject who sets out either to ‘find’ or ‘create’ discursive ‘stuff’” (p. 16).

Consequently, Hawhee followed White by positing a subjectivity that has shifted from either active or passive to in the middle, where the subject makes and is made by the encounter: “A consideration of invention-in-the-middle presses on the issue of subjectivity from a slightly different angle than approaches that suggest rhetors either discover or create” (p. 17). In the middle voice, “I invent” becomes “I invent and am invented by myself and others.” All of our relationships are two-way streets in the middle voice: “one invents and is invented, one writes and is written, one constitutes and is constituted” (pp. 17–18). Along with the subject, discourse and the seat of rhetorical invention exists neither in the self nor world but between the two. Hawhee wrote,

The movements and betweenness of *kairos* necessitate a move away from a privileging of design or preformulated principles. . . . Kairotic impulses can therefore be habituated or intuitive—even bodily—and are not limited to a seat of reason or conscious adherence to a set of precepts. (pp. 24–25)

From the perspective of the rhetor-as-autonomous-agent, Hawhee’s account of the improvisational rhetor is both valuable and necessary, but from the perspective of the sublime force of cosmological *kairos* that functions, as a “super nova. Express!” (Vitanza, 1997), this knowledge does not come without a price. The introduction of *nomos* into the concept of *kairos* is what White would consider a *necessary* reduction or beautification of the sublime force of becoming. Hawhee’s essay works in the middle. From one angle, the tenor is that she is radicalizing a concept, but from another, as White’s book reveals, the introduction of the middle voice reduces the sublime force of the cosmological *kairos*.

Like Hawhee and Eric White, who see a problematic at work between the subject/object divide, Thomas Rickert (2004) went furthest in attempting to dissolve that boundary. Where others (such as the quote by Hawhee just presented) advocate a sort of cunning, improvisational adaptability to what life throws at us (*metis* for the Greeks), Rickert seeks to use *kairos* as a way to transform the concept of the middle voice so that the self and world “dissolve” into an ambient between-space. Rickert wrote, “I want to pursue as far as possible the implications that obtain from dismantling the interior/exterior opposition, which perhaps means that the concept of the middle is transformed, or perhaps even effaced . . . as another permutation of the ambient” (p. 913). Although humans typically experience themselves as beings capable of a

certain degree of self-determination and separation from their environments, Rickert's ambient orientation toward *kairos* would choose to perceive self-determination as illusory—a product of the human's ecology largely responsible for the development of subjectivity. The metaphor is effective: We shouldn't see a strong boundary between subject and object, self and world, or even a middle point between the two. Rather, ambience occupies the space between the two in a way that indicates that self and world blend, each maintaining and losing its identity in the other.

Rickert's discussion of ambient *kairos* is consistent with the shift from rhetorical situation to rhetorical ecologies. Rhetorical scholars have been making the argument that both writing and the subject are parts of an ecosystem “whose fundamental tenet” is that “a person is continually engaged with a variety of socially constituted systems” (Cooper, 1986, p. 367). In this model, the struggle between an autonomously acting subject and a subject produced by a variety of forces is obviated through an ecological model that “postulates dynamic interlocking systems which structure the social activity of writing” (Cooper, 1986, p. 368). There are quite a number of important benefits for thinking of writing and the subject in this manner, not the least of which is that the subject is seen to be part of a milieu where multiple forces beyond the subject's context contribute and influence the formation and expressions of that subject. But although an ecological appreciation has refined our modern understanding of the interrelations in the lifeworld, an ecological understanding of the rhetorical situation expands the situation into a more comprehensive whole, effectively spatializing the temporal concept of *kairos* by locating it within the ecological milieu.

FIRST COMMENTARY (ON THE MIDDLE VOICE)

By the time we arrive at an ecological *kairos* that locates the moment of invention as a middle space between self and world where we each partake of and are cocreated by the other, the discussion has undergone two shifts. First, the discussion is no longer about *kairos* as a moment of invention but about the *position of the subject*. (Is she located in the self, world, or both?) Second, *through this shift*, the temporal quality of *kairos* has been lost. With the self, *kairos* is located somewhere in the ecology, grounded by *nomos*. In other words, we stopped talking about *kairos* in order to talk about subjectivity.

Part of the reason Barthes brought up the middle voice in his conference presentation at the 1966 John Hopkins Conference on the “Languages of Criticism and the Sciences of Man” was to show that linguistics stood to learn something from the examples of modernist literature which had begun to use a *style* of the middle voice in their narratives.¹¹ In the Q&A afterwards, Pierre Vernant pressed Barthes, asking him whether he believed that an unlikely event would happen—namely, did Barthes believe that the lost grammatical construction of the middle voice would be recovered due to the influence of modernist literature. Barthes's reply was simply that he believed that one of the duties of “militant literature” was to “compensate for the falling away of linguistic categories.” His desire was to assist in that work by making the lost category known at the level of discourse and thought (Barthes, 1970, p. 152). Barthes

¹¹Barthes referenced Camus, Robbe-Grillet, and Proust. An English speaker could just as well add Woolf, Stein, and Joyce.

admitted that the only way the middle voice could actually be recovered would be at the level of the sentence if the *form* of our grammatical constructions were overturned. “The writer,” he said, “cannot act directly on the forms of language. He cannot invent new tenses. He has enough trouble inventing new words; he is reproached for every one he invents” (Barthes, 1970, p. 152). The best one could hope for was to use the middle voice as a “metaphorical model” in order to talk *about* the lost space between subject and object. The message was that stylistic vestiges of it may appear in experimental literature but it was lost as a grammatical structure.

There was good reason to advance this concept, not the least of which is to be done with the self-willing autonomous subject, a concept the aforementioned authors convincingly account for. When the autonomy, power, and individuality of the ego is venerated and fetishized, it begins to take on the characteristics of a power or agency that it does not possess. The arrogance associated with this particular *image of thought* (to borrow phrasing from Gilles Deleuze), with a Western notion of man as conqueror, creator, and ruler of being has had, we all admit, effects that are unspeakable, unthinkable, and too often real. The middle voice takes back some of that arrogance by helping situate “man” back into the world and the environment. From this view, the resuscitation of Heidegger was necessary, whose beginning point of being is that humans are Beings-in-the-World. As Beings-in-the-World, humans are already in an environment and that environment both gives and strips power. By attempting to recognize a condition that the subject is acted upon as it acts, influenced as it influences, written as it writes, the middle voice is, finally, a lesson in humility, a lesson we can never forget, “never again” (despite Heidegger’s own failure to abide by that lesson).

I find it important to honor the important discourses against the subject. But it is important that certain discourses remain distinct, and so we should not confuse a discourse against the autonomy of the subject on the one hand with a discourse on the potential for invention on the other. This slippage, I believe, has occurred beginning with nomological *kairos*. As a result, we’ve gained a better version of the subject but we’ve lost the explosive power of invention associated with cosmological *kairos*. I hope to regain some of that explosive power by turning to the untimely after the next section.

SECOND COMMENTARY (ON KAIRIC DISCOURSES)

The move of introducing *nomos* into *kairos* initiated by White has had a significant impact on the way that rhetorical studies has come to think about the inventional aspects of *kairos*. Traditional *kairos* posited a temporal relation to invention. It was a timely and opportune moment that arose from a rhetorical situation that determined the timeliness to use rhetorical skill. Cosmological *kairos* largely turns its back on the rhetorical situation and posits a *kairos* that opens to the multiplicity of the logos, an irrational, unpredictable, and possibly sublime moment of invention that comes from the unknown. In a conservative turn, nomological *kairos* argues that the sublimity of the irrational logos must be tamed and beautified in order to be communicated. It also posits that the human cannot tap into the truly novel (i.e., the *logos*) because it is a being historically determined by culture, resulting in the “fact” that “speculative invention can never be freed from the *burden of the past* [emphasis added]” (White, 1987, p. 64).

The effect of nomological *kairos* is as though someone had sneaked up to the sleeping god *Kairos* and chained his winged feet. From now on, *kairos* will no longer be concerned with invention or with time. Locked into a nomological ecology, it will be separated from the irrational multiplicity of a temporal logos and flux of becoming. It may look but may not *leap* into the future, not able to risk or chance the sublime for fear of being misunderstood.

The versions of *kairos* that currently hold sway in the discourses of kairic invention are difficult to change, however, and one important reason is that they are processes of what Deleuze (1986) called an *image of thought*. Rhetoricians in particular are in a unique position to read Deleuze because rhetoric, broadly speaking, can be said to hold images of thought—the presentations and effects of discourses in their various forms and media—as a central concern. Likewise, one of Deleuze’s primary philosophical objectives was to reinvent the images of thought that philosophy had engendered for itself and others. The *image* is of paramount concern for Deleuze, for it comprises and determines the encounters beings and things have with one another.¹² Not only does the image comprise experience, it functions to remake experiences; it works machinically, that is, intentionally. It is a creative power, malleable and adaptable. Deleuze attributed the same ontological status to images as to things themselves, and it his insistence on both the force and malleability of the power of the simulacrum where new—even nonhuman—images of thought can be invented.

As such, Deleuze posited a number of different strategies to change prevailing images of thought. In contrast to *nomos*, Deleuze and Guattari (1987) invented a frequently heard concept: the body-without-organs. The organization of human bodies, the manner in which we humans—quite literally—have been formed, both as a species and as individuals/subjects, has determined that humans are organized and “put together” in a particular way. Had we each been “put together” differently, we would not be the humans we are; vision, food, physicality, thought, relationships would be experienced differently. Joy, suffering, images of thought, social maladies, are all, at least in part, consequences of the ways in which each human is currently “organized.” For Deleuze and Guattari, becoming a body-without-organs means putting oneself together differently, or not being put together at all (at least for a period of time). It means continually reorganizing one’s own assembly and configuration. Becoming a body-without-organs is not an effortless task, but people stop smoking, lose hundreds of pounds, run marathons, complete dissertations, escape poverty, create new systems, and dismantle governments. It is often said that a person cannot *know* what it is like to experience the pain and suffering of another because cultural and gendered identities cannot be left at the door. But one of the ways Deleuze seeks to change how humans might become organized differently is by illustrating how the body-without-organs *is* possible through his investigations into non-philosophy. Deleuze turned to other domains because he recognizes that different areas of human inquiry have evolved along different tendencies, potentials, and technologies, and so they are not bound to the same shackles of representation in the same self-reflexive way

¹²I never experience the other in its entirety but only an image of the other. A bird does not experience the entirety of the sky but only its encounter with it. . . . Because Deleuze attributes the same ontological status to images as to things themselves, he shares a strong affinity with the sophistic tradition, especially with the so-called third sophistic. Indeed, it is *that* recognition of the status of the simulacrum that helps to place Deleuze into a counterphilosophical tradition that often serves as a source for rhetoricians and other counterphilosophers. See Vitanza (1997, 2002) and Ballif (1998).

as philosophy. Deleuze turned to the cinema to learn how it evolved as a body-without-organs so that we, too, might learn to put ourselves together differently.

To begin to rethink invention on a more productive path, it is necessary to revisit the juncture where White fused *doxa* and culture (*nomos*) to *kairos* (irrational novelty). If humans are beings locked into time and place the histories and cultures of which largely determine what can be invented, then either there is no possibility for invention or we do not understand how the new can be produced. DeLanda (1999) put the matter like this: “Clearly, if all the future is already given in the past, if the future is merely that modality of time where previously determined possibilities become realized, then true innovation is impossible” (p. 34). I hope to suggest in this article that those working in the field of rhetorical invention—indeed, anyone who thinks that academics should be more creative in their thinking—can refuse to accept these limitations.

It may be true that humans are “historically situated,” but this does not mean that we do not have the power to deterritorialize from our environments. One of the problems, then, with a *kairos* of the middle voice is the way that time is perceived and conceptualized. The assumption that grounds the arguments that stem from *nomos* is the chronological (and commonsensical) model of linear, historical time (*chronos*). A particular irony shows up here: Even as it attempts to remove the human from the center of the rhetorical situation, the arguments from *nomos* still rely on a human-centered perspective—one that has already organized time and culture according to its own narratives! A branch that bends around a brownstone and stretches towards the light . . . a fire hydrant knocked over by a car . . . broken glass of a storefront window . . . the grumbling rails as the N train crosses the Manhattan bridge . . . what do these scenes have to do with *nomos* unless they get inscribed into human stories? A tick about to land on a rabbit knows nothing of *nomos*. Even in its efforts to draw us away from a human-centered perspective, *nomos* continues to place the human in the center of the rhetorical situation. Such a positioning attempts to prevent the possibility of recognizing or imagining ways to side step these so-called limits of rhetorical invention. The good news is that rhetoricians can change how temporality is habitually thought in order pursue the question of invention further; along with Henri Bergson (1889/1960; 1896/1988), Deleuze has gone perhaps the furthest in challenging how we philosophically think about time and its relationship with invention. In his books on cinema, Deleuze showed how the linear model of time is complicated by the apparatus of cinema and the perception of the machinic vision of the camera. As we move into this discourse, I hope to show that *kairos* plays an essential role. Opening up toward different philosophical conceptions about time may indeed allow us to think about invention differently.

THE UNTIMELY

Deleuze analyzed the technology of the cinema to show that the cinema shows dimensions of lived experience that we have not been able to witness prior to its invention. More specifically, Deleuze saw in the cinematic eye the capacity of the cinema to add to human perception and to allow us the experience of perceiving in nonhuman ways. This difference in perception gives us a different experience of being a part of life. By changing how we perceive and experience life, one consequence is that we can begin to rethink concepts such as *kairos*.

There are two primary movements to Deleuze’s cinema books, the “movement-image” and the “time-image.” Although the books are incredibly dense and complex, the underlying

thoughts are straightforward, and we should be able to draw upon them in a way that should allow us to reconsider *kairos* with more innovative potential. The idea behind the movement-image is simply that the machinic vision of the camera loosens itself from the fixed perspective of the human. As a consequence, human perception loses its connection to the “sensori-motor apparatus,” or the human way of organizing objects in space and time. The camera is able to show a multitude of different perspectives, thus liberating human perception from its own way of perceiving things. The idea behind the time-image is that the cinema is able to loosen the ordinary way that chronological time is organized by and for the human. Rather than showing an overarching, dominant chronological flow of time, the time image is able to show multiple different durations, sometimes occurring simultaneously. I wish to locate another way of thinking about *kairos* here, in Deleuze’s time-image. For Deleuze, chronological time is able to open up to another dimension of time that goes by a variety of names (the Open, Pure Duration, the Being of Time, the Outside, the Untimely) through what he calls “irrational cuts.” (It is important to note that this other duration is not abstract. As we see, it is just as “real” as chronological time.) These “irrational cuts” work as a “crack” or “fissure” between chronological time and the untimely. It is here where I choose to locate *kairos*, for it seems to me that as an innovative, inventive potential, a *kairos* of the untimely accesses a creative force that comes not from the historical and cultural forces of *nomos* but from a virtual plane of elsewhere. Becoming aware of the time-image “throws [linear] time out of joint,” an opening beyond the will of the subject that, as Colebrook (2001) stated, “seeks to expose an inhuman time that will open up thought to a future, a future that is no longer grounded on the unfolding of human history” (p. 65).

THE MOVEMENT-IMAGE

Deleuze have given us two ways to think about movement—one conventional and, unless we are familiar with Bergson, one novel. The common way of thinking about movement is that we have a tendency to subordinate movement to objects. When we see movement, we typically see a thing moving. If I look at two people passing a ball back and forth, I see the ball begin at point A, move to point B, stop, move again to point A, stop, and so on. If I see a runner, I see the runner first and the action of running second. When we consider time from this perspective, we have the tendency to measure the time it takes to get from one point to the next. In the cinema, this perspective is seen through a fixed point of view demarcated by the frame. Similar to watching a play in a theater or our habitual “phenomenological” experience, the perspective is fixed. The movements we see from a camera’s fixed position contribute to a continuity and linearity of the narrative unfolding within the frame.

The movement-image reverses this relationship. Rather than seeing the object first, we now see the movement first. Rather than seeing the ball move from point A to point B, I now see the movement of the ball as a continual flow that passes through these points. If I keep my mind concentrated on the movement, on the flow of the ball, I begin to see that even when it is “at rest,” it is in movement. If I only see the movement, then I cannot measure the time it takes for the ball to travel from point A to point B because those points are what Deleuze called “any space whatever,” not privileged instants. If we begin to see movement-in-itself, it follows then that our own perspectives are not fixed, that they too are in continual movement.

The cinema provides an example of the movement-image in the famous tracking shot of the “Farewell to Babs” scene in Alfred Hitchcock’s (1972) *Frenzy*. In this scene, the camera tracks Babs and the “Necktie Killer” up to the killer’s apartment. We know that once they enter, she will be killed. They enter the apartment; the killer says, “Babs, you’re my kind of woman”; and the door closes. The movement-image, a direct portrayal of movement-in-itself (not the movement of a thing) occurs in what the camera does next. The camera hovers for a moment and begins to back away along the side of the wall until it reaches the staircase. Still focused in the direction of the apartment door, the camera descends the staircase backwards, moves through the hallway downstairs, backs out of the building, crosses the sidewalk, and moves across the street. It widens its frame and takes in the apartment window where the murder is taking place. The camera leaves its subjects behind and moves of its own accord. Unanchored from a fixed position in space, we see a direct image of movement. As Deleuze (1986) looked at the movement-image in classic cinema, it is filled with similar examples, those that are dislodged from the sensory-motor apparatus (such as this one in Hitchcock) as well as those that give us a perspective to a nonhuman sensory-motor apparatus. For Deleuze, freeing the camera from human perspective is a little difference that goes a long way. Deleuze wrote,

What counts is that the mobile camera is like a general equivalent of all the means of locomotion that it shows or that it makes use of—airplane, car, boat bicycle, foot, metro. . . . In other words, the essence of the cinematographic movement-image lies in extracting from vehicles or moving bodies the movement which is their common substance, or extracting from movements the mobility which is their essence. . . . This is not an abstraction *but an emancipation* [emphasis added]. (pp. 22–23)

Deleuze called the machinic movement of a camera freed from human perspective an emancipation because the organizing perspective is either nonhuman or completely unhinged from any anchor, as when a camera moves of its own will or “when a camera leaves a character, and even turns his back on him,” for when it does, “it is always a great moment in the cinema” (Deleuze, 1986, pp. 22–23). Hence, the camera has liberated human perception from human perception, a way of perceiving that “does not possess any privilege” (p. 57). As Deleuze went on to show through expansive scope in both of the cinema books, movement freed from the human’s sensory-motor apparatus yields a sense of movement that is

a state of things which would constantly change, a flowing-matter in which no point of anchorage nor centre of reference would be assignable. On the basis of this state of things it would be necessary to show how, at any point, centres can be formed which would impose fixed instantaneous views. It would therefore be a question of “deducing” conscious, natural or cinematographic perception. (pp. 57–58)

We watch as the camera pans around Trinity as she suspended in air about to deliver a kick, and we are arrested by a perception we have never seen before. We watch dreams nested in dreams four levels deep in Christopher Nolan’s *Inception*, and we wonder how so much could happen in the time it takes for a van to hit the water. Movement freed from sensory-motor perception “teaches” us that human-centered perspectives are one among a multitude of nonhuman perspectives and yields a subjectivity that has no subject, an I that is a “gaseous state.” Deleuze (1986) wrote, “And can I even, at this level, speak of ‘ego,’ of eye, of brain and of body? Only for simple convenience; for nothing can yet be identified in this way. It is

rather a gaseous state” (p. 58). What would it be like to see through the eyes of a horse? A crab? A bowling ball? Any of these centers would have to be “deduced” or “subtracted,” as Deleuze said, from an “open whole” that has no center or anchorage. From this multiplicity, even cinematic perception would need to be subtracted.

It might appear to us that the movement-image may not have a direct relationship to *kairos* in that it does not directly challenge any of the versions of *kairos* that we have so far discussed. It does, however, have an indirect consequence, and that is, the movement-image allows us the possibility of perceiving the world from perspectives that are not properly human. The movement-image makes possible the concept that a noncentered, unanchored perception precedes any center and any way of seeing. In this sense, the movement-image does challenge our ideas concerning *kairos*, especially in the way that the new has been held prisoner by *doxa* and common sense. Such a view only comes from a human way of seeing, but, as Deleuze showed, we are not *bound* to see *only* as a human. In the cinema, human perspective is unanchored, unmoored.

THE TIME-IMAGE

Our embodied and interested perspective also organizes how we tend to see time, as a linear whole with a series of connected “nows” organized into a past, present, and future. The problem of *nomos* that we have been discussing does not bother to interrogate the conventional manner in which time is spatialized into a line. It places us and our present environments into the present of a buildup of the past that has itself been on a trajectory that has led up to the current moment.

Take a moment to think about the concept in terms of academic research. The line of chronological time by which we order our lives is also a line by which we typically organize our thought. We have seen that when cosmological *kairos* “turned its back” on the rhetorical situation in order to look at the irrational *logos* of the future, it did not begin with the tradition and extend it, but cut into it and took it in a different direction. White’s *Kaironomia* cut back into that trajectory and reset the research of *kairos* again on the traditional line. A deterritorialization followed by a reterritorialization. In this example, each innovation operates by a cutting into the flow of research. In ecological *kairos*, we have been extending White’s work, a development that has to some degree been predetermined by the immediate past. This pattern is typical of the assumption of academic research in general, that one begins with and extends the tradition. Doing so is an act of recognition of the research that has gone on before and that leads to further coherence and continuity.

The way that we organize chronological time and the way that we organize academic research both follow what we might call an “orthodoxy of continuity.” Deleuze himself recognized a similar limitation in the classic cinema of the movement-image, specifically that any deterritorialization of the sensory-motor apparatus is reterritorialized for the sake of continuity and recognition. Even though Hitchcock’s camera deterritorialized momentarily and freed itself from human perception, it returned to Richard Blaney, the protagonist being hunted for crimes he didn’t commit. Although common to most films, this identification with character results in a containment of the possibilities the movement-image offers. Deleuze argued, however, that the orthodoxy of continuity gives way in the modern cinema to what Deleuze called the

“irrational cut” or the interval, a space that opens linear time to the time-image. This is a great achievement for cinema, as breaking with linear time allows the cinema to start thinking toward the capability inherent in the cinematic apparatus, that is, it begins to *create*. Colebrook (2006) explained, “Thinking is not a coherent grasp and recognition of a set of facts. On the contrary, recognition is to a great degree a failure to think. . . . Thinking, for Deleuze, is not coherence, continuity and recognition, but the interval” (p. 78). Before we discuss the “irrational cut,” the time-image requires some explanation.

Badiou (2000) called Deleuze’s time-image “the being of time” (p. 62). At risk of being overly reductive, it is important to explain Deleuze’s distinction between the virtual and the actual.¹³ Consider the mathematical exemplar of irrational numbers. An irrational number (such as the square root of 2) cannot be plotted along a number line, because it extends its decimal places infinitely without a pattern. It exists. It is real, but it cannot be plotted on the line. We can “sense” its approximate existence (or value), but its specific existence is beyond representation; it does not exist actually but it does exist virtually. For Deleuze (1989), this virtual dimension exists alongside the actual dimension, parallel to those numbers we can plot and those things we can touch. But life is full of things and durations that exist *beyond the actual*. Memories, the past, the future, intuition, déjà vu, dreams, the rhythms of individual durations (such as the experience of time for a fly or a fish), unactualized genetic tendencies (such as the potential for a man to be a woman), and geological potentials (such as the potential for an earthquake or volcanic eruption) all occupy the virtual or untimely dimension of time. The untimely does not follow the markings of the clock or the dials of the sun. Virtual time is open, unHINGED. Chronological time is but a section of it.

One way modern cinema seeks to show this power of the untimely is by disrupting the orthodoxy of continuity; it does this in a variety of ways: through conflicting narratives that are not reconciled, through paradox, by confusing chronological time with memories or dreams, through identity confusion, or by portraying images that exist only on a virtual plane. Cinema, for Deleuze, is no longer concerned with the absurdity of presenting a narrative that reflects the truth. It has learned that its ability lies in being able to present images of timely and untimely durations so to present a fuller version of life. Deleuze (1989) wrote, “Description stops presupposing a reality and narration stops referring to a form of the true at one and the same time. . . . The new wave deliberately broke with the form of the true [narration], to replace it by the powers of life” (p. 135). One might consider a film such as David Lynch’s (2001) *Mulholland Drive* to be just one example of a film that shows an image of time filled with the “powers of life.” As stated earlier, it is through the irrational cut where linear time meets the untimely.

Although we could easily say that the whole of *Mulholland Drive* shows time unHINGED, allow me to draw your attention to just one moment in the film.¹⁴ There is a scene toward

¹³The best way, of course, to get a sense of the time-image is to engage Deleuze’s cinema books and his work on Bergson directly. Here one finds the concepts of the “Open,” the “Outside,” “pure duration,” “sheets of past and peaks of present,” and the “crystal image of time.” These are all complex concepts that deserve full explanation in themselves. I add this note because I present only a modest introduction in the short amount of space I have, and I encourage those interested in the ideas presented here to take up their study. The field of rhetoric has much to learn and benefit from investigations into Deleuze’s work.

¹⁴Particularly in Lynch’s film, this is not a privileged instant. As with the Hitchcock example, I choose it for ease of illustration. The anomalies of the film continually illustrate its being out-of-joint.

the end of the first half of the film (before the Betty–Diane identity reversal) where the two women have gone to a late-night theater of strange performances. With great bravado, the master of ceremonies tells the crowd that everything that they will hear has been electronically reproduced, that none of it is live. A singer comes onto the stage and begins to sing a beautiful Spanish song a cappella. The camera closes in on the singer’s face, and we see that up close she appears quite beautiful, though expressing the wear of a difficult life. The experience of listening to the music must be described as intensive and affective, a mixture of love and pain. The beauty and impressive range of the singer’s voice along with the movement of her facial expressions as she forms the notes entrance the viewer. The music builds, filling the theater with emotion. Soon we become enveloped by the singing, wave upon wave of power. Betty and Diane both begin to sob from the fullness. As it continues and we begin to accept the awe, Betty and Diane look up from their seats. We cut to the singer, who, vibrant and beautiful in the close-up, now appears exhausted and weary in the longshot. She suddenly wobbles on her feet and collapses. As she is laid out on the floor and we gasp, the first thing we notice is that the singing continues. Two men come onto the stage and carry her off; all the while we continue to hear the beautiful voice. Betty and Diane stop crying, get up, and leave the theater. We eventually recover from this disorienting moment as we remember that the MC told us that the whole performance was a sham, a taped recording that the singer was lip syncing. And yet for those few moments we find it impossible, irreconcilable that the intensity of such a powerful experience could be faked.

This moment between the sound image and the visual image is a small example of what Deleuze called the “irrational cut.” Between the sound image and visual image, an interval is opened that does not join those two images together but rather pushes them away from each other. What we know on one hand (the power of the singing) is thrown “out of joint” with what we know on the other hand (the singing is a reproduction). Between the two images is a gap that opens to the untimely, an experience that we receive as new. Though it works in many different ways (much of Lynch’s work could be analyzed according to the irrational cut), this is just a simple example of it functioning as an interstice between a sound image and a visual image. The untimely seeps in through this interstice, shocking us out of our habitual way of accepting the flow of time. Deleuze (1989) wrote,

In the first place, the question is no longer that of the association or attraction of images. What counts is on the contrary the interstice between images, between two images: a spacing which means that each image is plucked from the void [the untimely] and falls back into it. . . . [but] it is not a question of association. Given one image, another image has to be chosen which will induce an interstice between the two. This is not an operation of association, but of differentiation, as mathematicians say, or of disappearance, as physicist say: given one potential, another one has to be chosen, not any whatever, but in such a way that a difference of potential is established between the two, which will be productive of a third or of something new. (pp. 179–180)

The power of affect that is experienced in a scene such as this is intensive rather than extensive. This intensity floods in through the crack or the fissure from the outside, forcing something new.

It is the contact with the “outside” that makes invention possible. Like an irrational number that cannot be plotted along a number line because it extends its decimal places infinitely, the irrational cut that Deleuze recognized in the modern cinema is not actual but is rather

virtual (yet real). It is not part of the space–time continuum that we typically experience but it is part of existence. In the modern cinema, irrational cuts can be imagined and produced. But unlike classic cinema, they cannot be assimilated, rationalized, or narrativized. They are impossible but appear nonetheless.¹⁵ In his excellent study of Deleuze’s cinema, Bogue (2003) explained while citing from *The Time Image*,

In the classic cinema, the collision of images shocks thought, jolting thought into action and forcing it to think the whole. Eventually, thought and image come together in a union of mind and world made possible by the sensori-motor schema. In the modern cinema, images also shock thought, but without thought being able to assimilate that shock within a coherent set of rational coordinates. Logical thought breaks down and experiences its own times, its “unpower” or “impotence.” . . . What the modern cinema forces thought to think is the outside, that dispersive, spacing force that passes into the interstice. Thought experiences the outside as a “fissure, a crack,” both in the external world and within. Thought, “as power that has never existed, is born from an outside more distant than any exterior world, and, as power that does not yet exist, confronts an inside, an unthinkable or an unthought deeper than any interior world.” (pp. 176–177; Deleuze, 1989, pp. 167, 278)

The fissure or crack that Bogue mentioned is the version of *kairos* that we have been working toward, but when the sensory-motor apparatus breaks down, we are faced with the intolerable and the unthinkable. When I am confronted with an image or set of images that are too great for me, when I encounter the sublime, rather than beautifying it, the ego experiences a “crack.” It is just then, when the sensory-motor schema has broken down, when we cannot continue to narrativize, and when time is unhinged; in short, when we have reached our limit, it is then, in that gap, in that *kairos*, that invention becomes possible, even necessary.

CONCLUSION

Before his death, James Kinneavy hoped that the time would come where the concept of *kairos* would be opened up and explored to its fullest extent. Because it deals with temporality, whether in a timely or untimely version, *kairos* is perpetually concerned with the flux and becoming of life. As is well known, Deleuze, like Nietzsche and Bergson, was a thinker of becoming and saw in *kairos* (though he did not call it that) an opening into a fullness of life that allowed access to the power of the irrational and untimely. It is when we are confronted with our own limits, when time appears “out of joint,” that we are forced into engaging our relationship to our own thought and to the world. When we are confronted with a work such as Lynch’s or when we watch the opening to Werner Herzog’s (1976) *Heart of Glass*, for instance, we are thrown into a situation where our relationship to time and to the world is put into shock. Bogue (2003) put the matter this way: “With the breakdown of the sensori-motor schema, the bond between humans and the world collapses. . . . The world seems alien; its certainties and

¹⁵Impossible: Following Leibniz, two or more contradicting worlds that simultaneously exist. Such as a person who is dead and alive at the same time. We might think of *The Sixth Sense*, but Greg Harrison’s (2004) film *November* is a more extreme example. In this film, the heroine comes to discover by the end of the film that she has always been dead. Unlike in *The Sixth Sense*, however, there is no liminal boundary between the living and the dead.

verities seem hollow parodies of themselves, no longer credible and believable” (p. 179). But Deleuze wants us to strengthen our bond to the world, not a future utopian world or in some other world, but in *this* world. When the way that we experience time is thrown out of joint, we are brought to our personal limits. To constitute our relationship to the world anew, to, in Hamlet’s words, “set it right,” requires that we be creative in our thinking. “Experimenting with thinking,” as Braidotti (2006) said, “is what we all need to learn” (p. 187).

It is for just this reason that viewing *kairos* as a product of the everyday flow of time that is limited by history and culture is so dangerous to creative thought and the possibility for expanding the scope of rhetorical invention. Nomological *kairos*, that version that has put *kairos* on a track of the middle voice, good intentioned as it may be, in the end only gives us the burden of common sense. Essentially, it flows from a humanist idea that we need to conform to a preexisting nature and that our practices unfold from a preexisting subjectivity, but such a concept is fundamentally opposed to human creativity. Falzon (1998) spoke eloquently on the matter. He wrote,

Creative activity is precisely, by its very definition, that which is not in conformity with any pre-existing standpoint or principles, which does not merely follow ready-made rules, but is instead the transgressive activity that cannot be prescribed in advance, the process of experimentation with different possibilities, the invention of something new and unexpected which goes beyond existing limits. It is out of this imprescribably creative activity that new forms of thought and action are able to arise and to be, in their turn, transformed. (p. 55)

A *kairos* of the middle voice is not merely a blending of the self and world in a rhetorical ecology. Rather, by placing *kairos* into such an environment, *kairos* becomes spatialized and determined in advance by what is possible. Indeed, whatever ingenuity is possible through the human capacity to imagine, through the human capacity to project what it could be if it were *inhuman*, is truncated. Nomological *kairos* says: the new can never be produced because it is not possible to leap out of the time you are trying to transcend. But this view is *only human*, and it only sees time linearly, and it only sees one flow of time. More, we do not need to “leap” or “transcend” our time. As the cinema shows, our time is filled with multiple durations. Indeed, each object, creature, and being goes through its “life” at different speeds, slownesses, and movements. Imagine following a dollar bill throughout the course of its life, every time it changed hands, sat in a purse, was dropped, written on, stepped on, kissed. Imagine following its every single movement over the course of its history. It would go through an experience of time quite different from yours. Open this meditation to every object around you. Imagine tracing each one of each object’s singular movements in the span of its life. Now open this meditation up to every thing, plant, creature, being, planet, star, and galaxy, each with its own unique durations, each with its own unique speeds and slownesses. It is a hard exercise to maintain, and we have not even mentioned the virtual time: memories, dreams, potentials, and so on. The point is that life is full of times, and as Deleuze’s (1989) *The Time-Image* shows, the cinema has allowed us to experience them directly; when the untimely invades the timely, it forces us to confront our own image of thought, and consequently requires that we be creative in order so we can believe in the world again.

All this belief requires, I think, is reimagining what it means to be human. As Deleuze and Guattari (1987) said,

You are longitude and latitude, a set of speeds and slownesses between unformed particles, a set of nonsubjectified affects. You have the individuality of a day, a season, a year, a life (regardless of its duration)—a climate, a wind, a fog, a swarm, a pack (regardless of its regularity). Or at least you can have it, you can reach it. A cloud of locusts carried in by the wind at five in the evening; a vampire who goes out at night, a werewolf at full moon. (p. 262)

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