

## ■ The *Zerrissenheit* of Subjectivity\*

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### Abstract

The paper opens with a small vignette regarding the production of calligraphy *at speed* on the Tokyo train network. This will serve as a focal point in considerations pertaining to the notion of *Zerrissenheit* or “tearing” and its intimate relationship with the complicated notion of the “abstract machine.” As both Gilles Deleuze and Martin Heidegger have used the idea of “tearing” in various ways, we shall think transversally across these two approaches in terms of disclosing the dangers and possibilities of technological relationships as in Heidegger, and, as in Deleuze (and his collaborator Félix Guattari), in the sense of how tearing impacts on writing and the articulation of calligraphy or what Deleuze designates the “Oriental line” in *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*. It will become clear that while technology tears the hand away from an essential relation to man and earth through disruption and disorientation, it also engineers “universes of reference” in unheard-of ways, as means to think, produce and live afresh. Man is essentially torn between these two poles. In entwining the aforementioned remarks with the art of Paul Klee (active, spontaneous lines), the notion of sobriety and Asian culture in general, the conclusion, which teases out the ramifications from the mainstay thesis that technology effectively disrupts the purity of style or the simplicity of becoming, suggests that in several ways Deleuze and Guattari’s sole and joint writings are an extension, radicalisation and complement of Heidegger’s thought.

**Keywords:** *Zerrissenheit*, abstract machine, calligraphy, capitalism, Japan

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## Vignette

It is barely six o'clock in the morning in Tokyo and an already jam-packed Soubu 総武 line commuter train is arcing its way routinely across the massively distributed metropolitan area. Exhausted passengers are jostling for a tiny modicum of personal space so they can play with their portable, piloting devices. Eyes downcast, bodies depleted of energy, yet a collective atmosphere of feverish concentration. While some of the lucky ones are seated, meditating or sleeping, the standing—the immobile desiring machines—are reading books and magazines. Fellow travelers are flailing their fingers across overexposed screens to enter text, read the news or mine information. One identikit *salaryman* ‘サラリーマン’ is racing through *manga* on his smartphone, swiping his fingers every few seconds to change the page. But it is a small school boy nearby who catches and commands my attention, for he is repeating traditional kanji drills but with a modern twist. Stretching out a finger, he twirls it to enter a string of letters on his hand-held tablet device that will help him find his way around Google Earth. His handwriting is immediately transformed into text which zips through databases of countries, place names, streets to find the desired search-string. It seems the boy sees this operation aloof, from a third-eye, seeing the earth distant and remote. Utterly engrossed, ripped away from his immediate milieu, he hovers above the digital earth, his hand a dismembered body part.

This vignette perhaps is rather mundane but a most *unheimlich* and thought-provoking one nonetheless. Given the processes involved in learning a language—mother tongue or otherwise—it has much to do with the *Zerrissenheit of subjectivity*. In an emblematic sense, the boy is ripped away from a material and affective relation with language. The boy learns but does so extraterrestrially. The earth is no longer his home as Heidegger was apt to say, as language is ripped away as a consequence. As we shall see, this is tantamount to a brutal deterritorialization of language. In learning to write, the boy's use of Google Earth is an example of *Zerrissenheit*. The question is whether one can engineer “movement” as such from this to discern sober lines of flight (*lignes de fuite*) and new forms of experimentation in this new form of calligraphy.

## Tearing

In very distinct ways, the thinkers Deleuze (and/or Guattari) and Heidegger address the issue of “tearing” and its relation to learning. Yet both parties present ideas suitable for cross-fertilization in their examination of a particular relation-

ship to calligraphy, writing and contemporary formations and deformations of subjectivity. Moreover, and importantly, they illuminate the construction and articulation of the “abstract machine.” From their ruminations, we can ascertain that machines emerging from the *machinic phylum*, that is to say the technological lineage of machines, may in some circumstances compromise the “processual opening” of plastic and incorporeal universes of references in semio-capitalism. In effect this may stall or petrify the operations of the diagram and of the abstract machine. The sense of tearing thus helps us to rethink the risks involved in what can be perceived as a violent deterritorialization of language, through addiction and obsession with technical devices. Sprawling megacities like Tokyo are a striking, excrescent instance of this tendency. It will be seen that changes in orthography, the art of writing words, fundamentally affect the purity of style in calligraphy and writing in general.

### Riss

Etymologically, in noting that *Riss*, used in a derivative sense for tear, cleft, crack is the root of *Zerrissenheit*, Heidegger indicates a painful originary schism. *Riss* is grasped in the sense of that which tears (fission) as well as in the sense of the fissure (rift) that the fission opens up. It describes the relation between thinking and poetry. Heidegger uses the term *Riss* in his lecture “The Origin of the Work of Art” to designate the strife between world and earth, and in “The Way to Language,” we find a description of the unity of the essence of language as the fission that tears open (*aufreissen*). The idea of circumspection reveals that relations with material as such are not relations of mastery *per se* but involve a sense of responsiveness to and care for tools and materials, so that they may operate and emerge in their own way. As this seems not to happen with the Japanese school boy and his device in a traditional way, let us at this stage ask the question whether technological changes to writing amount to a process of tearing (*Zerrissenheit*) or a tethering to the earth.

The trope of *Zerrissenheit* conveys a sense of tornness, with *Zerreissen* suggesting a tearing apart as in to tear, rend, dismember, or disconnect. In Hegel and Heidegger we find this sense of “dismemberment” and “disjointedness.” It is consistent with a sense of chaos, disorder, cataclysm, impulse and chance. *Zerrissenheit* is a term used by William James, who translates it as torn-to-pieceshood, a state of being broken or in disarray. A witness to the mental anguish which beset San Franciscans after the 7.9-magnitude earthquake devastated the bay area on April 18th, 1906, James (1842-1910), in analysing the psychosocial

effects of the earthquake, explored man's inner fragmentation in the wake of such a momentous natural event. In a chapter entitled "On Some Mental Effects of the Earthquake" in *Memories and Studies*, the American psychologist and philosopher noted a kind of kinetic empathy amongst the survivors, a "rapidity of the improvisation of order out of chaos" (91). Amidst the destruction that the earthquake unleashed, James found a strong sense of camaraderie and a renewed sense of hope, a universal equanimity, or what he calls *heroism* as survivors eked out a new beginning from the ruins. In himself and others, James found no trace of fear as such, but only a "pure delight and welcome" (87) as the earthquake unleashed its almighty natural power. Recording a sense of "nervous excitement" among those bearing witness to the tremor, he discerned "the passionate desire for sympathetic communication" (86). He found a universal sense of cheerfulness, a "steadfastness of tone." From the experience he spoke up for the commonest man, declaring that such men would go on thriving, "singly and collectively," displaying an "admirable fortitude of temper." In the latter days of his life, and despite the gravity of the devastation, James, according to his biographer Richardson in *William James: In the Maelstrom of American Modernism*, learned much from this experience, and adopted, in the last instance, a philosophy of life that affirmed "chaos, cataclysm, change, *Zerrissenheit* (brokenness), impulse, and chance" (477). His experience is pharmacological, both a poison and cure, a negativity pregnant with possibility.

### A Terrible Curettage

The sense of tornness here implies a wrenching and wresting asunder, a splitting and lacerating, a rupturing and militating—or in Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus* a terrible curettage (318)—which we shall designate as a machine of schizoanalysis which tears down the social field (Land 471-82), a machine which impersonally deterritorializes. In answering the question, "How do you make yourself a body without organs?" in *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari consider the ways in which it is possible to free *potential* from processes of subjectification and signification. They consider how the self can be unhooked from points of subjectification that affirm and are attached to a dominant reality (160). Dismantling the organism means opening the body to connections that presuppose an entire assemblage. The methodology is radical, twin-pronged, and crucially, brutal, as it demands the "tearing" of the conscious away from the subject in order to make it "a means of exploration." The tearing of the unconscious away from significance and interpretation is performed

to make it “a veritable production.” The process is comparable to the tearing of the body away from the organism: there is a destructuring of the organism. The *socius* is increasingly the site of dismembered body parts as Lingis says in his famous essay of the same title (1-19).

In *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze considers learning to be a singularity that repeats itself. Learning is founded in and through difference and repetition—a *voluptuous* apprenticeship of the senses. Learning a foreign language means “composing the singular points of one’s own body or one’s own language with those of another shape or element” (400). While this “tears us apart” it also propels us into a hitherto unknown and unheard-of world of problems. Such problems demand “the very transformation of our body and our language” (192). From this we can begin to appreciate more seriously the communicative (in)capabilities of the virtual lines of calligraphy in the example of the school boy on the busy commuter train.

### Infantilizing Subjectivity

Writing in the wake of McLuhan’s proclamation in *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man* of an imminent return of orality, Guattari in *Chaosmosis* conjectured that the era of the digital keyboard would soon be over. Presciently, as this is becoming commonplace day by day, Guattari believed that after its demise, humans would speak into their machines rather than type in instructions. A witness to the sweeping technico-scientific mutations underway in the early 1990s, Guattari envisaged the emergence of new social, political, aesthetic and analytical practices aiding the production of transversalist plural and polyphonic subjectivities, which could liberate people from the “shackles of empty speech” and the erosion of meaning. Opposed to the mass media’s “infantalizing” of subjectivity (*Three Ecologies* 272), and to what he termed the will to “neuroleptize subjectivity” (215)—to drug the brain—he argued that processes of subjectification permeate, work upon the “subject”—for better or worse.

For Guattari, “unprecedented” plastic universes offer both the possibility of different modes of living, as well as the risk of more dead-ends—more death-in-life, more of the same from the “steamroller” of capitalistic subjectivity (*Chaosmosis* 91). He spoke of the emergence of a post-media era, in which informatic subjectivity could break writing away from old script forms to inaugurate hypertextualities, new cognitive and sensory writings and a postmedia era that would enable “assemblages of subjective self-reference” to develop to their

fullest capacity (*Schizoanalytic Cartographies* 6).

For Genosko in *Félix Guattari: An Aberrant Introduction*, Guattari breaks fresh ground in thinking the shift from scriptural semiotics to hypertext and is thought-provoking in explicating the nature of a-signifying part-signs and how they function in relation to the machinic phylum. Through the prism of the ethico-aesthetic paradigm, Guattari foresees revolutionary potential in tearing asunder the relation of sign and signified, in deterritorializing the domain of signification on the plane of machinic consistency, in leaving behind free-floating signs adrift of context and territory. Whence coupled with other a-signifying signs he envisages the possibility to generate new creations through material flows and fluxes. Movement is all. Capturing this sense of flux, Deleuze describes Guattari's own writing style as "a schizoid flow that carries all kinds of things along with it" (Guattari and Rolnik, *Molecular Revolution in Brazil* 225).

In thinking through the ramifications of the machinic phylum, and forecasting the machines to come, Guattari argues that universes of reference pertaining to the word-processing machine *completely* change relationships to expression—whether in writing, the alphabet, printing, computing and so on. As new inventions inform incipient universes of reference, Guattari believes that children learning languages from a word-processor are thereby situated in universes of reference, which are distinct cognitively and affectively from previous formats. It follows that young children attuned to using new media and technological devices are learning in singularly new ways. Enthused by this idea, Guattari in an excellent short piece entitled "On Machines" suggests that the autopoietic and "hypertextual" position of the machine possesses a pragmatic potential to challenge the separation of the subject and things.

The notion of the machinic phylum is made clearer here by understanding the futural way in which different generations of machines open up lines of machinic alterity and virtualities of other machines. Computers and other technologies aid learning through connections. For example, a schizophrenic who struggles to express himself through ordinary speech, may in learning to drive find new modes of expression and productive machinic connections as a result. Here the schizophrenic forges a subjective composition according to the hold of consistency of different assemblages. Each new technical machine carries latent possibilities to transform existential territories and engender new universes of reference, new semiotics regimes, the possibility of "escaping" language. The mechanosphere constantly reengineers and is generative of effects of signification and subjectification, productive of proto or modular subjectivities (*Schizoanalytic Cartographies* 2). And to return to the example the school boy, on this account he is insinuated in modes of expression and thought itself in these

unheard-of noological universes of reference.

Writing in the late 1980s and early 1990s, Guattari goes so far as to claim that mankind, sited at an “unavoidable crossroads,” must confront its fetish with technology to extract the positive momentum from it or risk entering into cycles of repetition of a more-deathly variety, the being of the machine in inertia, a machine in nothingness. While balking at a romantic return to some form of pristine territoriality, he claims it is important think the mechanosphere through the prism of metamodelling as this method does not signify as such, but rather “diagrams.” Such a move aids the understanding of *agencements* in ontological heterogeneous universes, in which allopoietic—machines built from the outside in—and autopoietic—self-creating machines—“live together.” Comprised of ontogenetic—which pertains to the developmental history of an organism within its own lifetime—and phylogenetic elements—the evolutionary history of a species—technological machines are caught in a phylum that is preceded by some machines and succeeded by others. New ethico-political universes of reference can help reorganize existential corporeality and promote creative possibilities but they are equally at risk of being stifled by peddlers of “deadening influence” (*Chaosmosis* 5) in the mass media. For Guattari, the question is how to escape the repetitive impasses and invigorate a post-media era which affirms reappropriation and resingularization of the media. He writes of the necessity to find consistency and self-reference in the “third voice/pathway”—from the consensual to the dissensual era and beyond—an escape from the mass-mediatic pollution of subjectivity. He writes:

Only the taking consistency of the third voice/pathway, in the direction of self-reference the passage from the consensual mediatic era to a dissensual postmediatic era—will allow each person to take on fully his or her processual potentialities and perhaps to transform this planet, which is lived as a hell by four-fifths of its population today, into a universe of creative enchantments. (*Schizoanalytic Cartographies* 13)

While acknowledging that the refrain can indeed fixate the subject in front of the screen for long periods of time, Guattari argues that computers, expert systems and artificial intelligence also contribute to, assist and relieve thought of redundant or inert schemas. But he nonetheless warns of the “age of planetary computerization” (103) which may accelerate headlong into an era of “a monstrous reinforcement of earlier systems of alienation” (103).

### Typewriter

Now compare these observations with the work of Heidegger in the Par-

menides lectures (1942-43). Here Heidegger (*Parmenides*) is more pessimistic than Guattari in embracing a future of plastic universes of reference. In his ruminations on ancient philosophy, Heidegger launches an unexpected diatribe against the typewriter and says that through its use all men come to resemble each other; they suffer alienation through the “invasion” of the typewriter into the realm of the word and of the “destruction” and “degradation” of handwriting. If the written word is language exposed to the eyes, the typewriter in some way blinds or confounds this essential relation. With modern technology, there is a distortion of “the word.” Strokes of writing disappear. Somewhat oddly perhaps, Heidegger’s disquisition on the nature of concealment and forgetting asks the question of the identity of Dasein and the nature of the hand, an “altogether peculiar” thing. The hand entrusts to the word the relation of Being to man. Concealment, for Heidegger, hides the entire essence of man and “tears” man from the unconcealed. The oblivion of being as such “tears” things and man away from unconcealedness (88). On this account and returning to our example: the hand which entrusts to the word the relation of Being “tears” the boy away from unconcealedness. The hand’s drawing or *Zeichnen* in calligraphy is disrupted. Heideggerian *Zuhanden* (ready-at-hand) and indeed Merleau-Ponty’s *Praktognosia* both begin with the perception of instrumental objectives. Thinking through the meaning of the everyday object of the typewriter, Heidegger finds an “irruption of the mechanism in the realm of the word” (85). Cybernetics as such “tears” objects from their essential relation to the earth and reveals them as a resource to be exploited. The typewriter degrades the word to a mere means of communication (81). What is unearthed is a pervasive degradation of writing in Western thought. Or more cryptically perhaps, the typewriter veils the essence of writing and script. It withdraws from man the essential rank of the hand. But if man is torn away from the fabric of soil, from an *essential* relation to the hand, then what becomes of man and everyday being-in-the-world (*Lebenswelt*)? If the earth—no longer the place on which man lives—is an infernal machine, how does one make sense of the “tearing” away of the hand from the essential relation to the human? Like Weber, Heidegger links the invention of the printing press with the inception of the modern period but perceives that as word-signs become type, the writing stroke disappears (80). Modernity bears witness to the triumph of the machine or mechanism *qua* typewriter—a signless cloud—which veils the essence of writing and script through a signless relation (86).

In Heidegger’s *What Is Called Thinking?*, Derrida finds the notion of the *monstrosity* of the hand differentiated from prehensile organs such as paws or claws because it is an organ of *signing*, of pointing. The hand designs and signs,

because man is a sign. At root, man is a signing, signifying animal and therefore to speak of the hand one must consider the notion of technics as such. Etymologically, the indication and indexing of the hand is “monstrous” (Derrida 166). The work of the hand is rooted in thinking, with the Latin *monstrum* suggesting something of the “monster” in the *demonstrative*. Derrida claims that for Heidegger hands *think*. In *handiwork*, there is a process of creative engagement with the world. Craftsmanship like penmanship or calligraphy is an expression of thinking—a thinking with hands. The hand thinks before it is thought. It *is* a thinking. Indeed, for Heidegger, the profound relation of *Denken* to the hand is a genuine one, *Handeln* or activity (Parkes 120). But to understand the nature of the hand one must speak of technics and as we know, with Heidegger, the hand is imperiled by empty busywork, drawn from the manifestation of a maleficent modern technics—it *is* in danger. It is Heidegger who maintains that the unique physiology of the hand distinguishes man from other *Geschlecht* or species, especially the ape, for there is “an abyss” between the hand of the beast and the human. The move is to clearly demarcate the world of man from the world of the animal, for even though apes, too, have organs that can grasp, they do not have *hands* (Heidegger, *What Is Called Thinking?* 16) in which we find the word manifest in handwriting.

The loss of handwriting practices therefore is a loss of man’s essential relation with the hand. Technology “enframes” the world through an “ordering” of things that conceals humanity from modes of revelation. *Gestell*—the enframing of industrial technological systems—is a *destining*, a banishing of man into a kind of instrumentalism of destructive-revealing-ordering. When ordering holds sway, it drives out every other possibility of revealing. As such technology delimits the possibilities of poetry because enframing disrupts revealing qua *poiesis*, that is to say, that which permits a presence to come forth into appearance. Through the mediation of technology, in the *Gestell* or enframing, there is the emergence of a technological rationalization of vision. Here thinking is *torn* away from its orientation toward things, from the self’s ownmost relation to itself and its temporality, from its proper object, namely the thinking of Being in general.

However, in a discussion on the nature of the supersonic aircraft Concorde, Guattari (*Chaosmosis* 47) criticizes the Heideggerian idea that the “standing reserve” of the machine is in some way the prism through which eternal truths are revealed to the being of man. Rather, and in contradistinction to the overarching structure of Being undergirding the role of techné in Heidegger, he says instead that the ontological domains of the technical object are *singular and precarious*. It is this point which will later inform the notions of the abstract

machine and collective assemblage of enunciation.

If the hand is enmeshed in thinking, then is thinking not imperiled? If the machine “degrades” the word or speech, is there any way back from the abyss of nihilism? For Heidegger, there is. He finds it in the art of Klee—though not without certain caveats. It is with Klee’s method of *Gestaltung*—experimental, creative figuration (Purdom)—that we become conscious of the visible phenomenon before us. A great work of art is adjudged “the self-exceeding composure” of the movement in the work. For Heidegger it is with Klee that the truth of that which is withdrawn and unconcealed is an epiphany of the world. Such art not merely reproduces thoughts of the visible, but renders thoughtful those *invisible* forces (Petzet 146). There is a “revealing” and “showing” in art’s making which uncovers the latent or invisible forces in the visible. There is an interplay between the viewer and the viewed, a connection between oneself and Zen Buddhism. The point is found by Heidegger in *What Is Called Thinking?* who says in standing before a tree, the tree also stands before us. He writes: “We come and stand facing a tree, before it, and the tree faces, meets us” (41).

### Quiet Viewing

Yet, isn’t it the case that with tablet devices, smart phones, TV and so on, there is little of what Heidegger calls the “quiet viewing,” the thoughtful staying-with, or the “lingering thinking-after”? Indeed, Heidegger says from the site of the technologically-mediated, what is conspicuously missing is “the tenderness and intimacy that flourish between Klee’s lines” (Petzet 146). Technologically-mediated writing silences “the tension of emerging and not emerging,” of emerging and withdrawing; it erases the underlying structure hidden within all art. To put it otherwise, Klee’s late paintings preserve the phenomenological struggle of emerging and withdrawing, and so bring the usually inconspicuous tension between foreground and background itself to the fore, thereby offering us a glimpse of the underlying structure hidden within art. Creativity in Klee’s lines expresses the movement from Earth to cosmos; it brings forth, as Heidegger says, something visible never seen before. For Deleuze too, in-between Earth and cosmos—the “site of cosmogenesis”—the event readies itself (*The Fold* 16). Amid schizes and fluxes of the cosmogenesis, a nondimensional point, an in-between, an interworld. Yet if technology is an ordering of the world which conceals man’s essential relation to oneself, does not Heidegger begin to sound one-dimensionally Ludditic? Indeed, Lingis takes issue with this dogmatism because as he insists hands are much more than attachments, instruments

or appendages for tool-use, for rapacious seizing and acquiring (*Sensation* 69). Rather, hands are also “organs for exploration”: hands apprehend and are apprehensive (*Violence and Splendor* 127); they are affected with tact and tenderness. Lingis in *Abuses* on this point writes:

The hand that caresses does not communicate a message. It advances repetitively, aimlessly, and indefatigably, not knowing what it wants to say, where it is going, or why it has come here. In its aimlessness it is passive, in its agitation it no longer moves itself; it is moved by the passivity, the suffering, the torments of pleasure and pain, of the other. (31)

To return to Heidegger for a moment more, typographic mechanization as such destroys the unity and integral identity of the word. The typewriter dissimulates the word; it “tears” writing from the essential domain of the hand. The machine “degrades” the word or speech as the process of instrumentalization reduces them to a simple means of transport. They become vehicles of commerce and communication. This tendency hails from the revolutionary movement of the industrial revolution, where we find here a “tearing away” of man from land and organicity. The history of writing is one of the destruction of the ordinary word as the word no longer passes through the hand as it writes and acts authentically but operates through the mechanized pressure of the hand. The typewriter tears script from the essential realm of the hand. The hand is deterritorialized from the essential realm of the word. Incisively, in noting the technological changes underway in European societies, Heidegger finds that writing has become a way to process information retrieval systems, which *qua* resource, is designed to meet the planning needs of “a cybernetically organized mankind” (Heidegger, *Wegmarken* ii, Michael Heim’s translation). And, as we know, for him the ultimate question is whether thinking will serve the business of information processing or respond to the call of Being.

With “dismembered hands” is thinking possible as an “absolute disruption” (*Absoluten Zerrissenheit*)? With “dismembered hands” is originary thinking imperiled? Is there not a revealing of truth in the absolute disruption of subjectivity? If thinking is *handiwerk*, and if the hand and thinking are enmeshed in similar projects then to think is to do so with the hand. In other words, with “dismembered hands” there is a disruption to thinking but what comes from this is essentially something laden with fresh possibility.

Much like my thoughts on the ethereal learning experience of the Tokyo school boy, the earth it seems is no longer the home on which one writes. One writes from a non-place, from a spectral, disembodied eye, a mediating third. This divorce of man from an intimate role in things is explored elsewhere by Franco Berardi, who writes on the radical schism of cerebral language learning

and affectivity (9). Yet challenging this perhaps overly pessimistic stance, we can say at least that the “end” of writing may well be some way off. Indeed, in his book, *Does Writing Still Have A Future*, Vilém Flusser finds in the age of the machine a “stubborn intractability” of handwriting practices. He writes:

Those who write by hand find themselves on the outskirts of writing culture, where calligraphy and graphology, these ways of reading that seem medieval, hold sway. Handwriting is closer to ancient manuscript fragments than to computer programs. That people still write by hand, despite print and typewriter, may be attributed to the stubborn intractability of habitual gestures. It suggests that out of stubbornness, the gesture of writing will persist, like a useless appendix, for a long time into the informatic situation—a small consolation. (112)

It is in Walter J. Ong’s *Orality and Literacy* that Heidegger may find a kindred spirit as Ong demonstrates the way in which new technologies alter thought-processes, the sense of reality even, and foster a shift in the mentality of their users over time. Different historical epochs convey different ways of symbolizing, storing, and transmitting truths. Ong notes two main shifts in knowledge storage: the oral-to-literate and the chirographic-to-print shifts. The first accounts for how culture moved from oral-based society to one based on the written word. The second shift follows how handwritten (chirographic) texts are transformed into widely disseminated, mechanically produced printed books. Such transformations seem consistent with Heidegger’s history of Being, as Ong suggests the transformation of oral to literal societies has affected the role of poetry. Indeed, Ong draws the inference that the electronic age *is* the age of secondary orality because oral cultures flourish more readily when literacy is based less on abstraction and reasoned debate than on stories, images and audio-visual mnemonics.

In societies equipped with neither alphabet nor ideograms, the inscription upon the body is essentially unrelated to the voice. One learns by hand, led by the master’s hand. One emulates. There is a sense of immediate induction through manual dexterity. There is no prior explanation as one learns by doing, by emulating the demonstration of the demonstrator. The hand of the child reproduces the movements of the hand of elders in *monstrous* ways. Meanwhile, as the writing machine emerges with the birth of urban megamachines (Mumford) and as, historically, the tentacles of archaic empires covered and the planet, there is a change in the organization of the organs as the hand operates a grammatological arrangement aligned with the voice to become signs of words spoken. Writing supplants the voice. It is imperialistic and inscribes itself in territories. To subject oneself to the law of a written language is to subject oneself to the law and language of empire. Writing is thus a form of gramma-

tology—reproduced indefinitely in *tablets*, stones and books. Writing becomes an expression of a transcendent, impersonal, remote voice, a detached one, which no longer resonates with the original meaning of words. Deleuze and Guattari in *Anti-Oedipus* on this point write:

The arbitrary nature of the thing designated, the subordination of the signified, the transcendence of the despotic signifier, and finally, its consecutive decomposition into minimal elements within a field of immanence uncovered by the withdrawal of the despot—all this is evidence that writing belongs to imperial despotic representation. (261)

In the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, Marx claims that the processual tendencies of planetary capitalism accelerate the organic decomposition and dismemberment of the body, or more particularly the organic decomposition of the hand. Yet even the great 19<sup>th</sup> century critic of capitalism in his more youthful and affirmative moments imagined the reconstitution of species-being (*Gattungswesen*), the recomposition of limbs and organs attached to the full body of the earth. So here we ask: what are we to make of Heidegger's and Marx's comments and how do they connect them with Guattari and his ideas of a-signifying semiotics?

Mourning the historical decline of handwriting, Heidegger discerns the withdrawal of the hand, as the typewriter produces signless, unsignifying, a-signifying words. Here he shares a similar vocabulary with Deleuze and Guattari, echoing their claim that the production of knowledge and information capital requires a machinery for the production of stupidity to absorb surplus knowledge and ensure the integration of groups and individuals. Axiomatized stupidity! Despair indeed. In *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze and Guattari suggest that capitalism is essentially uninterested in writing as it is “profoundly illiterate.” For them, writing plays the role of an archaism in capitalism because language becomes concrete within the field of immanence peculiar to capitalism itself. As such, the technical means of expression such as the computer corresponds best to the generalized decoding of flows. There is no hierarchy among the flows of nonsignifying or a-signifying language—phonic, graphic, gestural, etc.—because, as Mark Fisher in a blog entry entitled “Reflexive impotence” explains that today's media, internet-savvy twitter generation have a radically different (read superficial) relation to language for they operate on a plateau of a-signifying semiotics. In a rather bizarre sense, they no longer need meaning. Young people process “image-dense data” without the need to read. Fisher writes: “slogan-recognition is sufficient to navigate the net-tabloid-magazine informational plane” (25). In the case of electric language, data processing rejects the ontological primacy of both the voice and writing.

## Sobriety

Taking a critical standpoint against the effects of a hyper-capitalistic work ethic upon the brain, and concurring with Deleuze and Guattari, who contend that the computer is a machine for instantaneous and generalized decoding, Berardi, following Christian Marazzi, claims young people are becoming increasingly dyslexic primarily because of attention disorders derived from excessive manipulation of technical machines (40-41).

The intrusion of technical machines does several things. It effectively disrupts the formation of abstract machines of drawing and writing, distorts the overarching “enunciative modalities” operative behind statements as Foucault discusses in depth in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, brutally fabulates and fabricates the virtual, and compromises the abstract machine’s existence and efficiency, or “power of ontological auto-affirmation” (Guattari, *Chaosmosis* 35). It is here that we begin to see the difference with the Guattarian-inflected critique of language and how this may challenge the Heideggerian conception of the relation of Being to man and of man to beings. With Guattari, we discern an interest in the playful and plastic, a-signifying nature of language. As Heidegger bemoans the production of signless signs, we ask: what does it mean to learn through an initial relationship with computers and other technologies? In *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze and Guattari reject a return to full plenitude—Marx’s youthful hope of a return to species-being is rejected—and refuse to mourn the delinking of the body parts. Instead they insist upon a further rampant, nay brutal, deterritorializing of body parts across the *socius*, a preparatory move to forge ever more diverse couplings of body parts. They demand more perversion, and more artifice “to a point where the earth becomes so artificial that the movement of deterritorialization creates of necessity and by itself a new earth” (*Anti-Oedipus* 321). They spell out the ramifications of this movement of force that stratifies the subject and tears at consciousness and claim that the freeing of lines of flight demands a meticulous relation with the institutional strata (178). Here, they promote an engagement with the deeper affective investments that are complicit with regimes of oppression. So what are the regimes of oppression that the contraptions and devices of modern capitalism produce? What lines of flight are bound for different, more perilous, trajectories?

Let us return to Japan. In his lengthy dialogues with Claire Parnet, Deleuze finds in the “famous” Japanese line drawings, lines so purified that what remains is nothing but little lines. Comparing the purity of these little lines, Deleuze remarks that he finds in Jack Kerouac’s writing an expression of sobriety, a style in pure form.

Writing carries out the conjunction, the transmutation of fluxes, through which life escapes from the resentment of persons, societies, and reigns. Kerouac's phrases are as sober as a Japanese drawing, a pure line traced by an unsupported hand, which passes across ages and reigns. It would take a true alcoholic to attain that degree of sobriety. (*Dialogues II* 50)

Here Deleuze considers Kerouac's prose as inhered with sobriety because everything which becomes is in some sense a non-representational "pure line" (74). This sense of sobriety or purity of form we can find in the wild cursive, style of Chinese calligrapher Huai Su (懷素), a style emulated to some degree in the mid 1950s by André Masson (1896-1987), a surrealist, modernist painter deeply influenced by Zen Buddhism as well as philosophers ancient and modern, Heraclitus and Nietzsche to name but two. In his last book with Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?* Deleuze attaches the task of asking the question what is philosophy to the notion of purity. Maturity in this respect attains a sobriety, a moment that only manifests late in life when one has done doing with work and labor and is left to ask *what is philosophy?* Perhaps then the question is whether technological relationships affect the construction of abstract machines in destructive ways which curtail the articulation of *sober lines of flight*.

For Deleuze and Guattari, Kerouac is a "French-American" writer who creates a minor language, a dialect or idiolect, and who engineers an agent through which major languages become minor. On this point, and according to Ginsberg in his dedication to "Howl," Kerouac's style is a "bop prosody" full of the motions of spoken language (quoted Miles 266). Kerouac's intensity conquers his own language, and in doing so, places it in a state of continuous variation. The intensity of his writing is set to the beat of jazz music. He writes on a pre-prepared 120-foot roll of tracing paper, so as to be able to type continuously without having to reload the pages. There are no chapters or paragraph breaks in this scroll. In *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze and Guattari state that Kerouac was the artist with the "soberest means," who took revolutionary "flight," and who later was immersed in dreams of a "Great America" (277). For them, Kerouac encapsulates the contradictions within American ideology, which envisions US society as "future-oriented," but whose values reterritorialize on nation, religion, and "order." Kerouac, who writes from several minority standpoints, (Mexicans, African-Americans, etc., and those whose precarity is "like fabulous roman candles"), uses a hybrid "we" in constant formation and deformation: the "we" French-Canadians, the "we" Catholics, the "we" Americans, the "we" Beat generation. He deterritorializes the "conventional English sentence" with the rhythms of his generation, with the tonalities and polyvocalities of different tongues and tribes. According to Park, citing Kerouac's *30 Essentials for Spon-*

*taneous Prose*, his procedure is to sketch language in the form of an undisturbed flow from the mind of secret idea-words, blowing (as per jazz musician) on the subject of image. Speaking of his own style, Kerouac writes:

I got sick, and tired of the conventional English sentence which seemed to me so ironbound in its rules, so inadmissible with reference to the actual format of my mind as I had learned to probe it in the modern spirit of Freud and Jung, that I couldn't express myself through that form any longer. (Park 486)

For Deleuze and Guattari, great style is a non-style; it becomes asyntactic, strained, and agrammatical. Great literature and language is no longer defined by what it says or signifies, but by what it causes to move, flow, and explode—the kind of a-signifying style of which Guattari affirms. Kerouac is anarchistic: a hammer blow to the laws of English grammar. His spontaneous prose style smuggles its way into page-long sentences where the rules of grammar are plundered. Speech is free-flowing and jazz-like, packed with spontaneity. Spontaneous prose style constitutes a literary machine that produces affects, non-signifying signs. Writing is a-signifying, non-representational and without need of interpretation. We can also detect this stream or flow of consciousness in the writings of Henry Miller, another favorite of Deleuze. In the *Tropic of Cancer*, the writer says: “I am a writing machine. The last screw has been added. The thing flows. Between me and the machine there is no estrangement. I am the machine” (28). In urging sobriety in the proliferation of lines and cautioning against the cult of the machine, Deleuze says that writers speak as someone or something else. Pre-individual, radical impersonal singularities speak through them. Writers are mobile singularities. They write in what the poet Lawrence Ferlinghetti calls the fourth person singular. So perhaps it is with pure lines that we connect with the fourth person singular, the immanence of the indefinite *a* life. Under consideration then is the question of what the nature of a Japanese line drawing has to do with sobriety or purity of style and whether something is lost in the transfer of writing from hand to mouth, from brush to virtuality, or from brush to electronic tablet.

## Calligraphy

Calligraphy is a question of speed and dexterity; concentration and detachment, an art of penmanship. The school boy on the commuter train is engaged in this ancient penmanship albeit quite differently and in some ways quite detrimentally. It demands an understanding of the material of the brushstroke. It is a question of walking, of walking at a slow pace: a movement never found

on Tokyo commuter trains. *Shodo* (書道) is the Japanese way of calligraphy: it is on the way to language. *Geido* (芸道) is the way of art. It shares an affinity with Klee's idea of art as being led by the materiality of the canvas, the ink, the hand and bodily comportment or the sensory-motor regime. Indeed, for Foucault, good handwriting demands a *gymnastics*—"a whole routine whose rigorous code invests the body in its entirety, from the points of the feet to the tip of the index finger. A disciplined body is the prerequisite of an efficient gesture" (*Discipline and Punishment* 152). Klee in his "Creative Credo" (*Schöpferische Konfession*) famously writes that art "does not reproduce the visible; rather, it makes visible" (5). The *telos* of form is not equal to the essence of the natural process of creation. Rather for the artist it is more a question of formative powers rather than *telos*. Yet one learns little by mere contemplation as understanding demands an entering *into* and a joining in the process of its production. Calligraphy is thus an art of rhythmic movement: a question of rhythm and movement of thought and the gestural comportment that sustains it. Lines and characters convey a power and dynamic of their own. For Yuehping Yen, the relationship between the person and handwriting is mutually generative (66). Handwriting and calligraphy treat the dynamics of the body as a vehicle for the mind. Yen describes how the traditional procedure for learning Chinese calligraphy, still adopted in Chinese elementary schools, is comprised of three stages. Novices first learn to copy a model work by placing translucent paper over the model, to then trace the shadows. Next, paper and model are placed side by side, forcing students to reproduce the necessary movements for themselves, rather than being guided by the shadows of the master (116-18). In the final stage of learning, the apprentice tears loose from the "hands" of the masters. In this final "de-shaping," at the culmination of the learning process, "all the learned rules are banished into oblivion and the heart becomes the only guide of the hand" (123). Poetically expressed, Lingis captures this free movement of form in a discussion about the body, kinesics and song.

Everything that is palpable, opaque tissue, is gone from his body, which is, I thought, like a mobile Japanese calligraphy: an instantaneously made swirl of strokes is so expressive that you no longer see the hair marks of the brush and the opaqueness of the ink. (*Abuses* 145)

No work is ever finished which would submit a line to a point, but is a pluralistic, a-signifying, distribution of lines and planes. Writing demands a habituation, a posture, a bodily composure and sustained concentration. For Klee the role of the artist is to join with matter-flow, to bring the form of the work into being. Deleuze and Guattari describe this procedure as *itineration not iteration* (*A Thousand Plateaus* 372): a correspondence between matter-flow and creative

form-giving: a question of following the lines. For Deleuze and Guattari artisans follow the matter-flow as “pure productivity” (411). So, on this point, it may appear too that the boy on the train is entwined within inaugural forms of itinerant subjectivity.

What is the relation of Deleuze to Chinese or Japanese calligraphy? Perhaps one might be right in thinking that the reference to “nothing but little lines” pertains to the Japanese style of ink painting called *nanga* (Lamarre, T. private email). These are paintings done in black ink, which consist of tiny brush strokes repeated—a style which comes from Chinese through its dissemination in Zen temples. *Nanga* was a difficult practice and it was said to demand much practice to master it. There is a sort of self-cultivation leading to the non-self. We find a sense of emptiness and purity, and the extinction of the self implied in the form, which lends itself to Zen Buddhism and to neo-Confucianism, an idea which the artist Klee talks about in non-Cartesian terms as “taking a line out for a walk.” Merleau-Ponty in *The Primacy of Perception* citing Michaux (“*laissé rêver une ligne*”) says of Klee and the nature of the line that no one before Klee had “let a line muse” (183). Indeed, Heidegger, in his interpretation of East Asian art, views painting as a “movement of the self.” In a seminar discussion with Japanese professor Shinichi Hisamatsu (久松眞一), Heidegger thinks of painting as a bringing forth of relations derived from the contact with materials (Schmidt 98). For example, in East Asian art, there is a conception that the line is movement and in Zen painting a concern with the bringing of formless self to us. The German master says it is in painting that one performs the movement *to* the self. Responding, Hisamatsu adds that he discerns in Klee’s work something resembling Japanese calligraphy (Schmidt 99). Although, for Hisamatsu, Western abstract art, despite seeking an obliteration of duality, remains steadfastly bound to the dyad of form and non-form, Zen, on the other hand, seeks a path beyond the binary of form and structure to let the movement emerge. In Copley’s *Listening to Heidegger and Hisamatsu*, we find suggestions that the notions of fluidity and paradox found in Taoism may yet challenge the rigidity of Western concepts. Indeed, for Klee, in his diaries (January 22, 1917), turns towards the East and says: “I am becoming increasingly Chinese.” In a seminar on the topic “Dualism, Monism and Multiplicities” dated March 26th, 1973, Deleuze says: “In the end we are all Chinese in Taoism” (97). From these remarks, the rather odd question arises: How does one become Chinese (or Japanese) through piloting devices? If it is the case as Guattari argues, that the concept of abstract machine reaches “far beyond” the technical machine, then to what extent does this latest gadget obstruct the unconcealment of *aletheia*, the truth of Being? A negative reading of Heidegger’s

critique would discern technology as fundamentally affecting autonomous expression of color and line, the vibratory and pulsatory nature of lines. On this stark reading, the running style of cursive script runs no more. Movement curtailed: Mark Tobey's "living lines" of calligraphy (Westgeest 49)—dynamic, mobile, animated—live no more. Flowing, sensitive, swift lines lose their agility and grace. Technologically-mediated calligraphy negates the true self. The essence of the line as action or movement is lost in symbolic repetition.

Inheriting a mistrust and critique of hylomorphism from Gilbert Simondon, Deleuze is critical of the traditional Aristotelean idea of the imposition of form (*morphe* or *eidos*) on inert matter (*hyle*). With this in mind, we can better understand the observation made by Klee that form or *morphe* is death. For Klee, rather it is *Gestalt* or form-giving that is intimate with movement and action (*The Nature of Nature* 269). In accounting for the ontogenesis of things, that is to say how a thing comes into being, Ingold—echoing Heidegger's examination on the thing—shifts attention away from the objectality of the object to the things themselves, to their material flows and formative processes (*Being Alive* 91-102). Ingold considers the merits of Simondon's idea of individuation in better accounting for ontogenesis or the generation of things. Here we find form as an emergent, expressive property rather than a preformed or preordained notion. Art concerns itself not with reproduction or representation but that which makes the visible visible (Klee, *Paul Klee Notebooks Vol. 1* 76). It enjoins with forces that call form into being. The line is already in motion, never a fixed point; it is a forward jutting vitalism (Zdebik 48). Contra the hylomorphic model of creativity, Deleuze and Guattari insist upon the idea that the essential relation is not between matter and form but in-between *materials* and *forces*. Their ontology grants primacy to processes of formation rather than teleological outcomes and to flows and transformations of materials as against states of matter. It is unpredictable flows and lines, and the tracing of lines of deterritorialization which offer the promise of the new. Matter is always a matter of movement, flux and variation.

Reflecting upon the nature of "automatic" spontaneous compositions derived from the workings of the unconscious, line drawings, and the search for a universal *écriture automatique*, Masson also finds in the Japanese aesthetic and Chinese ideograms the idea that one must evacuate the self, one must "tear" the line away from a compartment with the Western self. He exhorts in *Le plaisir de peindre*: "Make a void in yourself, primary" (147). Calligraphy therefore is not just about imitation and copy but a becoming intense, an evacuation of the shrink-wrapped subject, an emptying of interiority. Producing intertextual flow between texts, the painter learns not to represent, but to become the reality

under representation. In the 1959 essay *Une peinture de l'essentiel* and in a discussion on Chinese painting (*Le Rebelle* 173), Masson goes further and says that for the calligrapher his art is a way of existing rather than a way of acting in the Western sense (171). Considering his own art and the idea of the line, Masson describes the free juxtaposition of elements as a movement that falls in love with itself. Discussing concepts of Zen and the nature of Chinese painting, Masson in his *Le Rebelle du surréalisme* writes (quoted by Foljambe):

To “enter” such an art is useless if one does not understand first of all that the main point for the Zen painter has nothing to do with what the Western painter understands by this term. For the Chinese, as for his Japanese follower . . . it’s about a manner of existing (in a deep sense) and not, as for us, a manner of doing. For them, it is a manner of being based in universal life, and for us a way of summarizing. For the Asian a vital decision, for the European an aesthetic attitude. (107)

The idea of the “non-mental” can be taken as the sense of sobriety of which Deleuze speaks. Indeed, on the subject of writing, with ideas resonating with those of Klee, Guattari in *Molecular Revolution in Brazil* describes his conception of writing as follows:

Writing is a field of vibration in which words appear, combine with others, and then separate, combine with yet others, or disappear, according to the flows with which the text is connected. *Text is flow. Its movement is physical.* (225, italics original)

The troubling aspect for this paper is that, on the one level, it can be construed that Masson’s and Klee’s drawings are abstract machines in a very precise sense as they diagram futural possibilities. In the line drawings of Klee and Masson we find piloting devices which diagram a virtual of the real *yet to come*. The abstract machine relays between the real and virtual, it is real yet nonconcrete, actual yet noneffectuated—an in-between designating matters and functions. Deleuze and Guattari isolate proper names and identify the abstract machine working behind them: there is a Wagner abstract machine, a Webern abstract machine, a Riemann abstract machine, or an Einstein abstract machine alongside the proper names of Galileo, Bach, or Beethoven (*A Thousand Plateaus* 511). Explaining the point further Deleuze and Guattari add: “Not that they refer to people or to effectuating moments; on the contrary, it is the names and dates that refer to the singularities of the machines, and to what they effectuate” (511).

## Conclusion

From these ruminations, it can be seen that in some ways immanent and non-teleological abstract machines diagram the becoming-*monstrous* of the

human and chart the “tearing” of language away from man to serve cybernetics. They are complicit with fabrication of the virtual, and, sometimes work, if left unchecked, for unearthly ends. Intimately bound to the plane of immanence, the abstract machine takes concrete form as mathematical formula, in architectural designs, in the diagrams of philosophers, in the unruly, experimental sketches of writers, thinkers and sculptures of all kinds. They suggest something other, a beckoning directive, something futural—emergent in becoming—a preparation for those yet to come—for the people are “missing” as Klee says. They can be found in Masson’s chaotic and transformatory automatic line drawings and in Klee’s notebooks, which contain sketches and drawings that continue to influence artists, academics and designers. The Klee-machine grants us a premonition of a world to come as it operates upon a plane of immanence latent with futural becomings. But the question remains: if technical machines intervene or block the concrete articulation of abstract machines, then what does this mean for those *yet to come*?

We have examined the relationship of technology and the violence involved in the tearing away of the hand, the tearing away of the image and writing in calligraphy. In using new technological devices, it is clear that the hand is no longer subordinated to the eye as it once was in traditional means of expression. The hand is deterritorialized from the material of the earth to assume an extraterrestrial vantage point. In a very significant sense, this brutal *Zerrissenheit* of the hand leads to unpredictable outcomes for subjectivity such as the loss of the quiet responsiveness between hand, brush and paper.

Instantaneous communication between people at great distances through email and cell-phones “tears” subjectivity from the world. If the articulation of the abstract machine is no longer found in notebooks but transferred to electronic devices and electronic archive, which consequently takes the hand away from writing, then what becomes of the virtual? With the advent of light writing devices, the hand is piloted away from spontaneity and control that we find in calligraphy, away from the balance of empty and full found in Taoism (Cheng). In peering through the lens of Deleuze and Guattari’s philosophy it has been found that the “tearing away” of man’s essential relation to being can be both productive and positive, though not without its dangers: and it is these dangers that must be critiqued in full. The violence is a matter of matter-flow and form-giving—coming to and fro in assemblages—engaged in a process of constant variation and processual becoming. The meaning of the tearing away of man’s essential relation to being situates it in relation to collective *agencement*. The essential relation is not one of matter and form but of material and form-giving. The stripping away of the elemental relation of the hand to writing

opens up new ways to think and create in plastic universes of reference.

While the differences between the Heideggerian and Deleuze and Guattarian notions of “tearing part” have been highlighted, it is clear that both inadvertently inform their counterpart’s position. Moreover, while the intellectual traditions for the most part appear at odds, one emphasizing the phenomenology of being, the other schizoanalysis and becoming, they do nonetheless ruminate on a shared thematic of tearing and a-signifying signification. While Heidegger thinks that absolute disruption essentially *alienates* man from his authentic self and the primordial relation of the hand to language, with technology acting to close eyes and ears which see and hear the world, Deleuze and Guattari consider disruption or deterritorialization *as a process of invention, an opening of new possibilities*. While the mechanization of writing tears the unity of the word, this sheds light on the tearing of Dasein from the world. In the vignette of the boy googling earth, he is torn from the life-world to become a disinterested spectator.

Whence combined, the former perspective determines that subjectivity in *our* time is one of absolute dismemberment, a de-tethering of consciousness, the self and the other; the latter proffers a more timely and radical critique on how tearing itself affects the comportment of body in writing, how technology rips away anachronistic mechanisms to expose the potential for creative experimentation in incorporeal universes of reference. Such technology spins off a *machinic processuality* which, if operative in a fecund milieu, may engender mutant, revolutionary subjectivities to challenge and contest a *flattened* and deadening capitalistic subjectivity *deaf* to the other.

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## 主觀性的瓦解

### 摘要

本文以作者在東京火車上看到人類匆忙書寫的狀況為發想，進而探討「瓦解」(*Zerrissenheit*)或「分裂」(tearing)的概念，以及它「抽象機器」(abstract machine)之間緊密卻又複雜的關連性。德勒茲和他的研究同好瓜達里與海德格(Heidegger)多次針對「分裂」提出看法。雖然他們的描繪方式不同，例如德勒茲以「東方線條」的概念說明之，卻也都凸顯了科技可能帶來的危險和崩壞。人類身處於掙扎中；一方面是將科技視成自己認識這世界的媒介，科技提供了包羅萬象的世界資訊，使人類感到無限可能和期待；另一方面卻也造成了人類與世界的分離。保羅·克利提出的主動與自動線條(active, spontaneous lines)的藝術觀以及一般的亞洲文化都不約而同地點出「適度」的重要性，特別是當科技已經破壞了那份最純粹和最簡單的「流變」時。德勒茲與瓜達里的研究不僅成為海德格研究的延續，並補其不足，也更完整其理論。

**關鍵字：**分裂，抽象機器，書法，資本主義，日本