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MOBILE TECHNOLOGY AND THE ACTUVIRTUALI
ARTIFACTUAL SUBJECT

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Sylvia's mother says 'Sylvia's busy'
'Too busy to come to the phone'
Sylvia's mother says 'Sylvia's tryin'
'To start a new life of her own'
Sylvia's mother says 'Sylvia's happy'
'So why don't you leave her alone?'

CHORUS

And the operator says '40 cents more for the next 3 minutes'
Pie-ease Mrs. Avery, Ijust gotta talk to her
I'll only keep her a while
Please Mrs. Avery, Ijust wanna tell her goodbye

Sylvia's mother says 'Sylvia's packin'
'She's gonna be leavin' today'
Sylvia's mother says 'Sylvia's marryin' ,
'A fella down Galveston way'
Sylvia's mother says 'Please don't say nothin'
'To make her start cryin' and stay'

CHORUS

Sylvia's mother says 'Sylvia's hurryin' ,
'She's catchin' the nine o'clock train'
Sylvia's mother says 'Take your umbrella'

'cause Sylvie, it's startin' to rain'
And Sylvia's mother says 'thank you for callin'
'And, sir, won't you call back again?'

Those of us of a certain age will remember this song, written by *Dr Hook and the Medicine Show* and it deals with an aspect of technology that is a familiar trope in high and popular culture. In this song, the posited connection between the speaker and the eponymous Sylvia is mediated and obstructed through technology. The phone in question is owned by the Avery family, and controlled in this case by Sylvia's mother. It is the family phone, answered by the mother who controls the home and the phone, and it is in one single place - a locus of control - a centre, to use Jacques Derrida's terminology. The obstruction to communication is two-fold - Sylvia's mother refuses to tell Sylvia that he is on the phone to her, and the operator keeps insisting that the call will be terminated unless he pays fourty cents more. Here technology is connected with capitalism and the lack of money is an obstacle to the use of technology. Here, an instrument that should enable communication in actuality performs a retarding function. This song encapsulates the dual perspective that exists in terms of technology and the human: technology is both an emancipatory means of enhancing our freedoms, but can also exert control over those very freedoms.

In this respect, technology can be seen as what Derrida terms a *pharmakon*. In 'Plato's Pharmacy', Derrida traces the rejection of the god Thoth's gift of writing by the Egyptian King Thamus. Thoth claims that his invention of writing is a *pharmakon* for memory and wisdom and offers his gift as a cure, but King Thamus returns it as a poison. Derrida observes the problematic aspect of the translation of *pharmakon*, as it signifies two opposite meanings - it translates as both cure and poison, and thus has both positive and negative connotations (Derrida 1981, 71-2). Paul Virilio makes the same point with respect to technology, speaking of the accidents which are a necessary stage of technological development:

The accident is an inverted miracle, a secular miracle, a revelation.
When you invent the ship, you also invent the shipwreck; when
you invent the plane you also invent the plane crash; and when you
invent electricity, you invent electrocution ... Every technology

carries its own negativity, which is invented at the same time as technical progress (1999,89).

The pessimistic view of technology as poison has a long history. It has been seen as a very negative aspect of human development by various thinkers from popular and high culture. From Mary Shelley's monster through to George Orwell's Big Brother, to the nearly omnipotent Hal in *2001 A Space Odyssey*, to dysfunctional cyborgs in *Blade Runner* and *Terminator*, to the Borg of *Star Trek* and beyond, technology has often been seen as inimical to the development of humanity. Indeed, even the term itself can have negative consequences: we often say that we do not want to be 'too technical', or the term can be used as an argumentative escape clause: 'technically he was guilty but in actual fact he was innocent'. Indeed the irony is that while our lives become suffused with technology, the term itself is still pejoratively seen as a negative. In all of the cultural fusions we see of the subject and technology - Darth Vader, Robocop, the Terminator, in all of his (and her) incarnations - this fusion results in humans who move slowly, are robotic in their emotions and are somehow lesser than the norm. These technologically enhanced creatures are seen as less than human and are invariably undone by their problems in relating to the other humans in their cultural contexts. Hence, it is technology that keeps the singer in 'Sylvia's Mother' from talking to Sylvia - while the phone is a means of communication, and the operator 'operates' this means of communication, nevertheless, *pharmakon*-like, it acts as a means of exclusionary dominance and control and as such has negative consequences for the interaction with Sylvia.

This negative view of technology has a long history. In our culture, its ultimate synecdoche was the technologisation of death in the gas chambers, where instrumental rationality and the Fordist processes of mechanised capitalism were brought to bear on the Jewish problem. In these concentration camps, people became the product of the technological processes of train-transport, cataloguing of people as commodities and codification of identity and belonging. The bloodless gas chambers, where the dying, stripped of clothing, valuables and all marks of humanity, climbed on top of the dead in a pyramidal shape gasping for the last gulps of fresh air. This pyramid facilitated the gathering of the bodies and their transportation to the gas chambers where the human was reduced to ashes through the processes of technology. Such instrumental reason was what drove Adorno and Horkheimer to publish their *Critique of the Enlightenment*, and to

suggest and warn of the dangers of such technologisation of the human. Virilio, in his theory of technology and accidents, makes the point that now, with the advent of global technology, 'there is the risk not of a local accident in a particular location, but rather of a global accident that would affect if not the entire planet, then at least the majority of people concerned by these technologies' (1999, 92-3). At a further level of pessimism, Virilio cites the case of Bob Dent, who was suffering from terminal cancer and who used a remote-control suicide device developed by his doctor Philip Nitschke, and parallels this with the case of the Russian chess grandmaster Gary Kasparov, playing a game against a computer specially designed to defeat him (2000, 5). In these cases, the human is made less by the machine, just as the singer in Sylvia's mother is blocked from communication by the machine - the *pharmakon* as poison would seem to haunt our study of technology.

However, in the context of the *pharmakon* as cure, there is another perspective to be taken on the technical. Martin Heidegger, looking at the etymology of the term noted that

[t]o the Greeks *techne* means neither art nor handicraft but rather: to make something appear, within what is present, as this or that, in this way or that way. The Greeks conceive of *techne*, producing, in terms of letting appear. *Techne* thus conceived has been concealed in the tectonics of architecture since ancient times. Of late it still remains concealed, and more resolutely, in the technology of power machinery (1975, 159, italics in original).

This notion of 'letting appear' is important in terms of how technology interacts with the human. In his groundbreaking *The Political Unconscious*, Frederic Jameson urged the reader and thinker to 'always historicize' (1989, 9), and in the current historical context, our very humanity is in constant negotiation with technology. The word 'negotiation' comes from the Latin *neg-otium*, 'no-leisure'. Derrida sees this '[no]-leisure' as the 'impossibility of stopping or settling in a position ... establishing oneself anywhere' (2002b, 12). This process is typified by the image of a shuttle, going back and forth between different positions. But Derrida is at pains to stress that this shuttling is *not* a free play of undecidability, where anything goes; rather it is 'always a *determinate* oscillation between possibilities' (Derrida 1988, 148, italics added). And mobile technology, I would

argue, produces this negotiation by altering the very nature of what it means to be human. In different cultural contexts and historical periods, being human meant something very different from what it does today.

In the case of our song, in the current technological climate, Sylvia's mother would no longer be a problem in the communication between the lovers. The narrator of the song would be able to dial Sylvia's own mobile phone, thereby bypassing the control of the mother. But what if she chose not to answer? Well, he could text her, or send her a video of himself saying he was sorry, or send her a sound recording of the same message. Or if he was of a more flamboyant turn of mind, he could apologise to her on video and post this on YouTube - and then text her the web address. Or he could go onto her Bebo or Facebook page and post his apology for all to see. And if this did not work, and she persisted in marrying the 'fella down Galveston way', he could, if he so wished, use his GPS to locate her in Galveston and plead his case one last time. And because most information is now searchable on Google, he could access this on his phone to search for phone numbers, addresses or any other information. In other words, the feelings of frustration, disempowerment and lack of control that permeate the lyrics of that song are attenuated and deconstructed by the mobile technology of which we speak.

My core point is that when the phone in question is a house phone, located in a specific place in the house, it can serve as an instrument of communicative retardation. But when the phone is a mobile technological device, when it is in one's pocket, then all sorts of different behaviours accrue. We no longer call a place or location, hoping that the person will be in close proximity - we now call the person. The idea of 'staying in to wait for a phone call' is now largely redundant. In other words, the subject has become more nomadic due to the technology available, and the phone is now dictated by our location as opposed to vice-versa. In our song, in the symbolic order of the time, even if Sylvia wanted to answer the phone, she could not as the phone was in a fixed place in the house to which she had to come if she wished to answer it - and her mother controlled that space. In our symbolic order, she would just take the call in private in her bedroom or even in the bathroom. Or in the context of a textual conversation, this could happen in silence without anyone knowing. Mobility is both caused by, and helpful for, mobile phone interaction - it is a negotiation between them.

In the same way, if the singer wished to find out how to get to Galveston he needed a specific phone in a specific place or else he had to actually go to the station - thereby impeding his mobility. Now, he can just google the train or bus times. Before, if one wished to look up Google for information, one needed to be near a desktop or more recently, to have a laptop with an Internet connection or access to a wireless network. But now, Google is available in one's pocket, and a flow of information about the world in which we live is there for the clicking. Google and the self-publishing site YouTube are now available on our mobile WAP-enabled phones, and we can broadcast our own experiences and thoughts and actions and music to millions all over the world. So he could video his apology to Sylvia on his mobile phone, connect up to YouTube and upload the video from his mobile phone. YouTube hosts over six million videos, growing at about twenty percent every month. The videos take up forty-five terabytes of storage - about five-thousand home computers' worth. The total time spent watching YouTube videos since it started is 9.305 years! The number of videos on YouTube is as follows:

28 January 2008: 70 million
13 March 2008: 77.4 million
17 March 2008: 78.3 million

These numbers suggest that there are now between 150,000 to over 200,000 videos published everyday on YouTube, and some seventy percent of these are taken by mobile technological devices. I would argue that YouTube is another example of a completely altered sense of subjectivity as seventy million people have moved from being passive consumers of DVD and video to becoming producers, directors and actors in their own minute filmic texts. Before, only professional actors or sportspeople or journalists were regularly seen on TV or video, but now there is mobility in that we can all be on YouTube and have our fifteen minutes of fame.

In this technologised and globalised Ireland of today, we are in the process of a rapid technologisation process and it is my contention that this process is one of negotiation, in a Derridean sense, whereby our very sense of being human in space and time is being altered by the mobile technology that has become part and parcel of our lives. Culturally, spatially, temporally and politically, the self of contemporary Ireland is radically different to that of the previous decades or

historical periods. I would cite Rosi Braidotti who talks about the feminist subject of knowledge in a way that parallels my own thinking. She notes that

[t]he feminist subject of knowledge is an intensive, multiple subject, functioning in a net of inter-connections. It is non-unitary, non-linear, web-like, embodied and therefore perfectly artificial. As an artifact it is machinic, complex, endowed with multiple capacities for inter-connectedness in the impersonal mode. It is sexed, but it's all over the place. It is abstract and perfectly, operationally real and one of the main fields of operation is sexual difference. The "feminine" at stake in sexual difference is neither one essentialized entity, nor an immediately accessible one: it is rather a virtual reality, in the sense that it is the effect of a project, a political and conceptual project of transcending the traditional subject position of Woman as the Other of the Same, so as to express her as the multiple other of the Other (2007).

The inter-connected subject that Braidotti adduces is a function of our mobile technology revolution. In his book, *The Transparent Society*, Gianni Vattimo, the Italian media philosopher, advocates the 'hypothesis' that 'the intensification of communicative phenomena and the increasingly prominent circulation of information, with news flashed around the world (or McLuhan's "global village") as it happens, are not merely aspects of modernization amongst others, but in some way the centre and the very sense of this process' (1992, 14).

Worldwide there will be nearly three billion mobile phone users by the end of 2009, which means a penetration rate of fifty-one percent. There will be 931 million new users over the next five years. Of the almost seven-hundred million mobile phones sold last year, some two-hundred-fifty millions had built-in cameras, while, significantly, only some eighty million digital cameras were purchased. These numbers, impressive enough by themselves, reflect some fundamental conditions and changes in the very nature of the individuals who use them. Today there are eight mobile phones for every one-hundred people in Africa. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, the figure is two. These figures appear to be low, but in the poor world phones are widely shared. And the economic benefits of the spread of the mobile are double what they are in the rich world. As recent British research suggests, in a typical developing country an

increase of ten mobiles per one-hundred people boosts GDP growth by 0.6 per cent (Waverman 2005).

The whole area of *mnenotechnics*, the ways in which we recall, record and remember the experiences we have, is interesting. And it is my argument that such mobile technology becomes a part of our subjectivity to such an extent that it has altered the way that we define that subjectivity. I argue that we now live in a negotiated relationship with the world and with the other which is mediated through our mobile technology. Pictures are visual recollections, tapes and audio are also ways of capturing the past. However, the digital camera and video recorders in most mobile phones have resulted in an exponential increase in the number of images that have been created and printed in the last two years - the figure, and it is impossible to be accurate, of twenty billion images and videos from mobile phones has been preferred. However, the reification of the image has also been deconstructed. With my camera I can take fifty photos and delete forty-nine of them - there is a new mutability about the image and we are less keen to protect or reify the image as we can always take more. It is as if digitisation has made us less protective of the image and this also has implications for our concepts of selfhood and time. They also have implications for the way in which we act in space and time. We are now able to archive our experiences effortlessly and that means that we are far more inclined to take pictures and images of occasions. We are able to commit to our phone memory images, people, experiences and this can often shape the way in which we react to the same.

So my scopic drive is redesigned, and I see the space which I am in both in the present and as the source of an image which I can then observe. So my memories of a trip to France are now less my images of France, but images of me in France, and visual images which I can send to people not with me on their phones. So even at a banal level, the ordeal of 'looking at my holiday snaps' has been transformed into an ongoing series of images sent from the place while I am still in that place. The temporal sequence of my being in a foreign country, then coming home and relaying my images to those at home is now deconstructed - I can now share my holiday snaps while still on holiday. I can now contact people from whom I am absent. Basic human experiences like memory, loneliness, love, presence, absence are all transformed, as indeed are our notions of space and time. Indeed Lyotard has made this very point, noting that 'in digital form

[thoughts] become telegraphable - independent of their initial space and time' (1991,50).

In a real sense, we are no longer locked within our bodies as we have a somatic connection with the other through our mobile. The sensation of being alone is ours no longer. We are always contactable - even walking has now changed as the ability to walk, talk and text is now a necessary social skill (one alas that like two-thumbs texting, I still have not actually mastered!). Perhaps the most obvious change wrought by the mobile phone is mental and emotional connection. When my phone vibrates and I open the text, I now know, for certain, and without doubt, that someone has been thinking about me in the last two to three minutes and wants to communicate with me now. That means that we are connected to the other, albeit intermittently and albeit sporadically, and this has changed the experience of being human in the third millennium. And this connection has nothing to do with where I am or with my location - it has everything to do with me as a person. The SMS text or the call is focused on me. So when I am speaking to someone, and simultaneously texting someone else, my relationships with the real and the virtual are in negotiation - and there seems to me to be a need to classify this new sense of subjectivity. This change in signification needs to be enunciated through new signifiers.

As has been his wont, when Derrida looks at a new concept, he looks for a neologism to voice that concept, and in *Echographies of Television*, the 'portmanteau nicknames' that he outlines at the beginning of the book, 'artifactuality' and 'actuvirtuality' (2002a, 3), suggest how technologies create the world as much as reflect it. These two terms take in the Heideggerian connection between *techne* and *poien*, between revealing and making, and they both gesture towards the constitutive and transformative role that mobile technology has both on the subject and on the subject's negotiation with his or her world. Both terms are originally used with respect to television, with 'artifactuality' describing how public speech is produced in the maintenance of actuality. 'Actuvirtuality' suggests that with the 'actuality effect' of live television (ibid., 5) the virtual has infiltrated the event to the point where the rhythm of the event, its temporality, has changed (ibid., 7). However, Derrida should not be seeing this as agreeing with the almost developmental progression from the original to the simulacrum that is to be seen in the thought of Jean Baudrillard. In *Symbolic Exchange and*

Death, Baudrillard argued that Western societies have undergone a 'precession of simulacra' in the form of orders of simulacra, from

the era of the original
to the counterfeit
to the produced, mechanical copy, and through
to the simulated "third order of simulacra", whereby the copy has
replaced the original (1993, 50-7).

Artificiality and actuvirtuality do not attempt to 'deny' the reality of the event. Rather they aim to deconstruct actuality in order to be attentive to what might be untimely, spectral or specific to the event as an arrival: to remain open to 'the fact that something happens only once' (Derrida 2002a, 20, 21). In *Echographies*, Stiegler pushes Derrida to make explicit the links between writing and television (ibid., 36), particularly in terms of presence and absence, which he looked at in *Speech and Phenomena*. Television, for all its claims to 'liveness' and presence, invariably falls to the side of writing. But there are some important distinctions to be drawn out between his commentary here on television, and his earlier work on writing and telecommunication, particularly as laid out in 'Signature, Event, Context' (1977), or *The Post Card* (1987). Stiegler and Derrida discuss the significance of the 'live' as a 'live effect': one that is mediated, framed, interpreted, never *direct* in the manner that we believe it to be. Nonetheless, Derrida grants that the technological possibility of the live changes 'our understanding of the entire field': as soon as we know, 'believe we know', or quite simply believe that the alleged 'live' or 'direct' is possible, and that voices and images can be transmitted from one side of the globe to the other, then the field of perception and of experience in general is profoundly transformed (ibid., 40).

He suggests that these same tele-technologies accelerate the speed of democratization, and indeed 'have done more for what is called democratization ... than all the discourses on behalf of human rights' (ibid., 71). In one of the final sections, 'Spectographies', Stiegler brings up the figure of the spectre that Derrida investigates in *Specters of Marx*, and inquires as to the place of 'technics' in this inquiry (ibid., 126). Following on from Derrida, Stiegler asserts that 'history itself is an effect of spectrality', that it belongs to a deferred time that is markedly different from and 'incommensurable with' the spectrality we experience when we watch events 'live' or in 'real time' (ibid., 128). Not surprisingly, Der-

rida responds by stating that real time is never pure, it is a real time effect, 'a particular effect of difference' (ibid., 129).

Technology becomes part of the shaping of time and of space, and as humans experience their being in the realms of time and space, I would argue that technology, and specifically mobile technology has become a core element of the human experience - there is an epistemological experiential dimension to this technology. For example if my mobile phone has GPS capability, every place that I go becomes a 'smart' place, inscribed in electromagnetic grids which can then be used to tell me where I am and where to go. Developed by the United States' Department of Defense, GPS is officially named NAVSTAR GPS. The satellite constellation is managed by the United States Air Force 50th Space Wing. The cost of maintaining the system is approximately seven-hundred-fifty million dollars per year, including the replacement of aging satellites, and research and development. Following the shooting down of Korean Air Lines Flight 007 in 1983, President Ronald Reagan issued a directive making the system available for free for civilian use as a common good. Since then, GPS has become a widely used aid to navigation worldwide, and a useful tool for mapping, land-surveying, commerce and scientific uses. GPS also provides a precise time-reference used in many applications including scientific study of earthquakes, and synchronisation of telecommunications networks. A typical GPS receiver calculates its position using the signals from four or more GPS satellites. Four satellites are needed since the process needs a very accurate local time, more accurate than any normal clock can provide, so the receiver internally solves for time as well as position. In other words, the receiver uses four measurements to solve for four variables: x , y , z , and t . These values are then turned into more user-friendly forms, such as latitude/longitude or location on a map, then displayed to the user.

Each GPS satellite has an atomic clock, and continually transmits messages containing the current time at the start of the message, parameters to calculate the location of the satellite (the ephemeris), and the general system health (the almanac). The signals travel at the speed of light through outer space, and slightly slower through the atmosphere. The receiver uses the arrival time to compute the distance to each satellite, from which it determines the position of the receiver using geometry and trigonometry. Cyber-space and real space coalesce and my current location becomes a plane of technological inscription for

this global information system, and the individual human becomes a series of location zones, an evolving piece of data whose information events are fed back into this digital retention system. It is as if the world is now covered in a layer of *virtual graffiti* to use a term coined by Howard Rheingold (2002).

This virtual graffiti mediates the new through the familiar - our experience of the new is always slightly fearful, and one of the best examples of this is finding one's way in a strange city. As already noted, the grids of visual graffiti mean that I no longer have to worry about finding my way through streets. I no longer have to wonder if there is a restaurant, a hotel or a shop to be found because my web browser on my mobile will allow me to access all of this information at the touch of a thumb - and indeed, the opposable thumb, often seen by evolutionists as the defining creature of humans as toolmakers, has now, in the third millennium become one of our most important indices of communication - as through it we now access the world of text. Of course at another level, I have become part of the digitised web of visual graffiti because my GPS phone is emitting a signal to the satellite which can then orient me from where I am to where I want to go so I have become a spectral mobile subject in this sense as I exist as a being in the world but also as a series of digitised images. So every beep of the device sends my location to the network which then collates this information and points me back a new destination. So my record on this planet is now being recorded on another medium. As well as my carbon footprint, there is also my digitised and triangulated footprint which is saved in various archives. So my sense of selfhood has been changed: it is now both actual and at the same time actuvirtual and artifactual. The human, traditionally shaped by the concepts of space and time, is now also shaped by those of cyber-space and virtual time.

Part of this change in selfhood is due to the interconnectedness between self and other and between self and place. The spatial relationship works on two levels. Firstly, as I travel through the city I leave other traces too, traces which will be incorporated into the global digital retention system. Every ATM I visit and every credit card transaction I make will be recorded, with an electronic trail called a 'footprint' (Barnet 2005). But my mobile device is a *nomadic object*; it literally locates me within an electronic reproduction of the territory I walk over. And it is this mobility that is the key to the negotiating powers of mobile technology. The postmodern subject can be seen as *nomadic*, to use Rosi Braidotti's term,

The nomadic subject according to Braidotti's definition is 'post-modern/industrial/colonial; (1994,4), and is a subject that moves against settled and conventional ways of thinking. Contrasting the characteristics of the nomad with those of the migrant and the exile, Braidotti argues that the migrant has a clear sense of destination, travelling from one place to another with a definite purpose, which is reflected in a literature of nostalgia and 'blocked horizons' (ibid.,24). The exile, on the other hand, is marked by a sense of loss or separation from home, which is shown in a literature of memory and recollection. Contrasted with these two categories of displacement, the nomad is one who does not suffer from compulsive displacement but travels because s/he wants to. Braidotti advocates the cultivation of a 'nomadic consciousness' which she describes as follows: '[t]he nomadic consciousness combines coherence with mobility. It aims to rethink the unity of the subject, without reference to humanistic beliefs, without dualistic oppositions, linking instead body and mind in a new set of intensive and often intransitive transitions' (ibid., 31).

Thus the nomadic sense of time is active and continuous, and metaphors associated with the state of the nomad are those of open space, the *noumos*, which is the etymological root of the word *nomad* (ibid., 26). One thinks of Glen Patterson's wry comment that Irish writers no longer emigrate - they go on lecture tours. One thinks of Irish emigrants and the way they have changed - three or four generations ago, the Irish went to America and Britain to build the cities of the second industrial revolution - one thinks of U2's resonant song 'The Hands that Built America' - but now, their sons and daughters go to work in those very buildings with a strong sense of making money and achieving the flexibility to return to Ireland when they so desire. What is at stake here is a negotiation, in the Derridean sense, as opposed to a stasis.

For Braidotti the nomadic subject is a utopian figuration that is not about displacement but about a discursive freedom from dominant narratives: '[the nomadic subject is] a figuration for the kind of subject who has relinquished all idea, desire, or nostalgia for fixity. This figuration expresses the desire for an identity made of transitions, successive shifts, and coordinated changes, without and against an essential unity' (ibid., 22). These changes in space have already been examined in terms of how mobile technology changes our perceptions. The same is true of my attitude to space. As I drive from Limerick to Dublin, I look at roads and streets on my GPS receiver and the images I see are almost cartoon-

like images of the actual places. So rather than look at the actual space, I look at the virtual space in front of me, and my relationship with signage is also different. Instead of looking at a map, and waiting until I come to a specific street to take a turn, I now look at the GPS screen which tells me to turn left in five-hundred metres. It is important here to stress that the real is not replaced with the virtual mapping of the street - instead, the subject looks at both and negotiates between the two, now looking at the screen and now looking at the real world outside the car - my relationship to the real place is artifactual and actuvirtual at one and the same time. The real streetscape is haunted by its two-dimensional image on the screen just as the two-dimensional image is also haunted by the real street over which and through which the car is travelling. One could see the connection as a haunting or even as a Lacanian *meconnaissance*, a misrecognition that is a recognition. The added fact that the GPS image of the street speaks to us makes the identification clearer. The voice of the satellite navigator will tell us that in five-hundred metres, turn left, or will advise us that at the upcoming roundabout, we need to take the second exit. The more advanced systems will also tell us of traffic alerts and of holdups on roads. One could see the interaction of the two ideas as an example of Derrida's idea of *hauntology*. In *Specters of Marx*, Derrida discusses what he terms *hauntology*, in answer to his question: '[w]hat is a ghost?' (1994a, 10, italics in original). In this book, he discusses the spectrality of many areas of meaning, seeing ghostly hauntings as traces of possible meanings. This haunting is part of our visual relationship with GPS (itself a technology predicated on our mobility as subjects). But it is also clear in our relationships with others in terms of presence and absence as mediated by our mobile phones - the artifactual and the actuvirtual are also to be found in our interpersonal relationships.

When our mobile phone rings, we no longer ask, or at least very seldom ask, 'hello, who is it?', because the name has already popped up on the screen which has it registered in its address book. But the first thing I ask is 'where are you?' Until just a few years ago, the question would have seemed absurd: 'where do you think I am? I'm here, just where you called me'. The mobile phone has changed all that. Messages can reach us anywhere and we can be anywhere to receive them. This is the most far-reaching change as between the landline and the mobile phone, and it brings in its wake a range of other modifications that it is worth our while to scrutinise.

If both the fixed phone and the mobile ring, which do we answer first? One person might say the mobile, because the call is surely for me, while on the fixed phone it might be for anyone. Another might object that the fixed phone should be answered because we can always text the person on the mobile to tell them we will call them back later. Indeed on some phones, an automatic text is sent when we hit the 'reject' button. The act of calling actually affects the body of the caller. Vibrating alerts tingle in our pockets and we feel the artifactual and actuvirtual presence of the other along our skin. The other can now evoke a physical reaction in our bodies while physically absent or even from another continent. The sense of touch is traditionally an index of intimate communication, and in the case of the vibrating mobile phone, the other touches us suddenly. There is always the possibility and desire for that instantaneous communication. As Belinda Barnett describes:

a mobile device is a promise: the constant *potential* for communication, even if this communication never arrives. My device is always on, always connected, there is always the possibility that a message may have arrived since last I checked (or not). I worry that I may miss something or that someone may miss me, and this possibility haunts me. I feel compelled to check the device several times an hour, like someone obsessively washing their hands. I am sensitive to its vibrations through several layers of coat pockets, and scramble madly for it when I feel the slightest movement. Every so often I put my hand in my pocket just to check it is still there. My perception is altered in advance by its comforting presence; was that my ringtone I just heard, was that my message alert? Sometimes I have minor hallucinations; when I hear a mobile ring nearby I glance instinctively at my screen - was that for me? (2005, italics added)

Or to take another example, two men are walking and talking in the street. At a certain point the mobile phone rings and one of the two starts talking to a third person with all his gestures directed at the absent third party and not at the person next to him. Here presence and absence are in negotiation - the person on the phone is actuvirtually present to both his interlocutor and the person with whom he is walking. Or two women are having coffee and the mobile phone of one of them vibrates or beeps to indicate that a short message service text or SMS, has

arrived. Immediately the woman begins texting in reply while still maintaining a presence in the real conversation. One can ask, is she present to her companion or to the distant texter on the phone? Of course the answer is not that simple - there is a negotiation going on here between the real and the virtual, the present and the absent, the artifactual and the factual, the actuvirtual and the actual.

So, I would conclude by looking at the effect of the mobile phone on our subjectivity and would, like Derrida and Braidotti, suggest that we need to redefine our subjectivity in the light of the influence of the nomadic, spectral actuvirtual and artifactual negotiations that are created by tele-technology. And to this end I would offer the formula SMS - Spectral Mobile Subject - as an apt description of how we relate to our historical context in the twenty-first century. This signifier has the ability to stand for Spectral Mobile Subject, or Short Message Service and I am reminded of the Vodafone advertisement where a woman was passed along a crowd like a text message. I see the subject as spectral because of the manner in which notions of presence have been deconstructed by mobile phones, text messages and virtual reality - my image can be on video giving a talk in New York, whereas I can be texting someone from my office in Limerick at the same time while also engaged in a conversation - where, exactly, am I 'present'? And this technology also contributes to the 'mobile' aspect of my term which derives from the way in which information and knowledge are all available to us on a mobile basis - no longer do we go to a place to make a phone call or use a computer to access the Internet - all of these are now available to us in our pockets.

In terms of the song, the problem for the narrator was that Sylvia was not in contact with him and that he had no way to bypass her mother and contact her. As we have noted, the mobile phone allows for almost continuous contact via calls or SMS messages, so this situation is no longer problematic: indeed it has been rendered almost obsolete. In terms of self and other, the SMS service means that relationships are now altered in terms of their symbolic order. This changes much of our sense of self, and of how that is transmitted in literature. For example, the synchronous suicide of Romeo and Juliet could be ameliorated through SMS messages - a series of texts would immediately solve the problems. In fact a lot of literary dilemmas are about lack of communication and isolation and the actions that ensue from such isolation, and in a contemporary context that just could not happen because we are now in immediate and embodied contact with

the other through our phone. Most phones now have a vibrate function wherein there is a physical vibration of the phone to denote an incoming text message. This means that the other is able to physically affect our bodies through contact. In a real sense, we are no longer locked within our bodies as we have a somatic connection with the other through our mobile. The sensation of being alone is ours no longer. We are always contactable - even walking has now changed as the ability to walk, talk and text is now a necessary social skill. Perhaps the most obvious change wrought by the mobile phone is mental and emotional connection. When my phone vibrates and I open the text, I now know, for certain, and without doubt, that someone has been thinking about me in the last two to three minutes and wants to communicate with me now. That means that we are connected to the other, albeit intermittently and albeit sporadically, and this has changed the experience of being human in the third millennium. And this connection has nothing to do with where I am or with my location - it has everything to do with me as a person. The SMS text or the call is focused on me. So when I am speaking to someone, and simultaneously texting someone else, my relationships with the real and the virtual are in negotiation - and there seems to me to be a need to classify this new sense of subjectivity. The other is in connection with me and yet spectral and mobile because s/he is obviously somewhere else. So the need to address Sylvia's mother is no more - the narrator can now have a negotiated relationship with Sylvia - it may be artifactual or actuvirtual but it is interpersonal and it has changed the nature of connection and relationship in the song, and this serves as a synecdoche of how mobile technology has fundamentally altered our sense of subjectivity.

Afterword

A version of this paper at the conference Otherness and the Arts was delivered via video-link. I recorded the paper about a week before and on the date when the paper was given there is a photograph of the conference room which illustrates my point about how our subjectivity has changed. The photo shows a colleague texting while my image, in disturbingly large format, hovers hauntologically in one corner of the photograph. The interesting thing here is that my colleague is texting me to let me know that the DVD has worked and that the lecture is going well. So I am actuvirtually present in Aarhus on the screen, talk-

ing in the seeming present, while in reality I am present in Limerick in Ireland, but I am also negotiating cyber-space textually - a spectral mobile subject indeed. This new signification of the SMS - the spectral mobile subject - captures the dimensions of the relationship between our negotiations of the real and the virtual, self and other, mobility and stasis, but most of all, of the hauntings of the one by the other and the one by the all. Just as *techne* involves revealing what was there, this term reveals the importance of technology to the mobility that defines our subjectivity in the artifactual and actuvirtual Ireland of 2009 and beyond.

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