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重複中的靈光乍現：《餘物》與《10:04》中的自動行為邏輯

Epiphanic Repetitions:

The Logic of Automatism in *Remainder* and *10:04*

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“If you still believe in the possibility of change, that there is still hope of change, you cannot avoid talking about questions of form. The problematic of form might be the primary topic for contemporary scholars and writers to deal with today.” Sitting in Professor Chun-yen Chen’s seminar “Special Topics in the 21st Century Novels” on a November afternoon, I was deeply moved and inspired by her observation and commitment to deliberating upon the role of literary criticism in contemporary culture. The next year, I found myself once again in Professor Chen’s seminar “Digitality, Imagination, and Experience,” which further motivated my academic interest in the place of humanist research, literary production, and contemporary theories in current society. Exciting ideas and refreshing perspectives sparked through the stuffy seminar room, as Professor Chen shared her insights into diverse texts and debates with us. Those afternoons were the direct inspiration for this thesis. Many profound thanks to Professor Chen’s guidance, patience, and timely and constructive criticism. Without her, I would never have been able to accomplish this journey.

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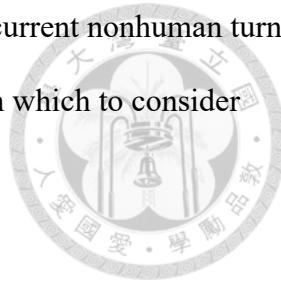
Finally, I dedicate this thesis to my family. Their unconditional love and support grant me the luxury of pursuing what I love and keeping faith in what I write.

Abstract

This thesis explores the logic of automatism represented by the motif of repetition in Tom McCarthy's *Remainder* (2006) and Ben Lerner's *10:04* (2014). It argues that the representation of repetition in these novels lays bare the digital nonconscious which shapes the contemporary subjectivity and which challenges the hierarchical superiority of consciousness. This study examines the impact of algorithmic repetition on contemporary experiences and seeks to intervene in conversations over the nonhuman turn in recent literary criticism. Chapter One introduces a series of literary studies that are attentive to the interplay of nonhuman forces, particularly algorithms, and human cognition and to their role in shaping our embodied experiences in the digital society. Chapter Two addresses the theoretical approaches of this thesis. It explains Bernard Stiegler's idea of pharmacology and related concepts with a view to illustrating the role of repetition in casting the contemporary subject and its quotidian activities. This chapter also looks at N. Katherine Hayles's understanding of nonconscious cognition, explicating how this type of cognitive operates in the future anterior tense that frames both human and technical activities. Chapter Three asks how *Remainder* captures the characteristics of digital humanity with the narrator's reenactments of past experiences. By emphasizing the narrator's obsession with material details and looping patterns, the novel presents reenactment as the extension of the narrator's cognitive nonconscious that helps establish connections with the material surroundings. Chapter Four reads "repetition with a difference" articulated through prolepsis in *10:04*. It analyzes the narrative structure of prolepsis that opens the present to a spectrum of projected possibilities and, hence, a new paradigm of meaning making. In addition, prolepsis reveals the correspondence between the nonhuman worlds and human experiences with a temporality identical to the future anterior tense of the cognitive nonconscious. Chapter Five

concludes this study with reflections on the role of digital humanity in the current nonhuman turn.

It also proposes several key propositions that provide crucial lenses through which to consider digital humanity.



Keywords: repetition, digital humanity, pharmacology, cognitive nonconscious, automatism,

Tom McCarthy, Ben Lerner

摘要

本論文探討麥卡錫的《餘物》與勒納的《10:04》中以「重複」此一主題所呈現的自動行為邏輯 (the logic of automatism)。本研究認為，小說中對「重複」的描述揭示了數位非意識如何影響、形塑當代主體性，挑戰意識向來被賦予的優越性。論文探討演算法重複結構對當代經驗的影響，此一命題，呼應了近年文學批評的非人類轉向。論文第一章回顧一系列文學研究論述探問非人類力量（例如演算法）與人類認知間的相互作用如何建構我們在數位社會中的體現經驗。第二章闡釋論文的理論框架，首先介紹史提格萊的藥理學和相關概念，以說明重複在形構當代主體與日常行動時所扮演的角色。本章亦闡述海爾斯對非意識層認知的理解，試圖申論，人類與技術認知系統的運作，皆奠基於以未來完成式所表達的非意識時間邏輯之上。第三章探討《餘物》如何藉由敘事者對過往經歷的重演，刻畫數位人性的特徵。透過強調敘事者對物質細節與循環模式的癡迷，小說中的重演成為敘事者的非意識的延伸，建立敘事者與外在物質環境之間的連結。第四章分析《10:04》中以預辯法修辭所表達的「重複中的差異」，探問預辯修辭的敘事結構如何使當下蘊含向未來開放的可能性，並提出一種新的意義範式。此外，預辯法通過其與非意識未來完成時態相同的時間性，揭露了非人類世界與人類經驗之間的照應。第五章總結本論文，並反思數位人性在非人類轉向中的角色，並提出未能在前面章節中討論的幾個有助進一步思考數位人性的關鍵命題。

關鍵字：重複，數位人性，藥理學，認知非意識，自動，麥卡錫，勒納

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Chapter One

Introduction



The Nonhuman Turn

This M. A. thesis seeks to examine the ways in which literary realism in the last two decades or so responds to what Peter Childs calls “the human question”—that is, “the place of human meaning in the light of decentralizing of significance” in an age where the pervasive infiltration of digital technologies transforms imageries of humanity, challenging traditional distinctions between human and other-than-human beings coexisting in and co-constituting the modern cultural landscape (366). This study intervenes in conversations about this “human question” by focusing on the motif of repetition in Tom McCarthy’s *Remainder* (2005) and Ben Lerner’s *10:04* (2014). This thesis will consider the materiality of automation and its impact on humanity, examining how forms of repetition point to what I propose to call a logic of automatism characterizing contemporary life. While the term *automatism* refers to the faculty of originating action at a non-thinking level independent of conscious control, the sense of it being a kind of *logic* suggests that it serves as a systemic mechanism, particularly a machinic operational mechanism which may affect our actions.¹ Such a logic constitutes the foundation of consciousness, prescribing how consciousness navigates our actions and interpretations of experiences. My argument is that this motif of repetition is telling of an epistemic mode particular to the digital age. In this mode, human reason and consciousness are no longer superior to non-thinking processes, which are equally crucial to our cognition of the world. For

¹ It may seem contradictory to describe non-thinking or automatic processes as a form of “logic,” for the concept of logic often invokes the function of conscious reasoning. However, we may argue that machines, without human consciousness, also operate in some kind of logic, in the sense of an ability to perform tasks through certain systematic rules. For more information about machine logic, see Priestley, *A Science of Operations: Machines, Logic and the Invention of Programming*.

instance, a specific structure of machinic intelligence surfaces to guide and collaborate with rationality to help us construe the meaning of quotidian experiences.

Both *Remainder* and *10:04* feature a first-person narrator-protagonist suffering from proprioceptive deficiencies resulting in weak neurological connections between the body and the mind. Hence, the neurological damage impedes regular meaning-making processes performed by consciousness. The protagonists' confusion about and difficulties making sense of their immediate sensations show that it is impossible to simply rely on the reasoning of consciousness to work out meaning and have it inscribed actively on one's lived experience. Instead, the physiological faculty inaccessible to mental processing also contributes to orienting sensory inputs into discernible patterns for conscious interpretation.

To compensate for the loss of proprioception, the protagonist in each novel begins to acquire behavioral or narrative patterns amounting to repetitive loops. Their action, in different ways, takes on various structures of repetition ranging from monotonous duplications to complex recursions. These repetitive constructs enable the characters to re-establish preliminary connections between the body and the environment, helping them to process affective inputs associated with these connections through an elongated mechanism. In *Remainder*, the unnamed narrator resorts to carefully staged reenactments of simple actions or intricated scenarios to capture and revive the supposed authenticity of past experiences. Similarly, in *10:04*, two identical hurricane experiences overarch the narrative in a convoluted looping structure; within the loop, the narrator Ben becomes absorbed in reiteration of either events or compulsive actions that allow him to negotiate his identity in the world. The prolonged processing in the form of repetitive bodily actions or narrations problematizes the superiority of consciousness and human

reason, foregrounding the role of the body and the irrational in shaping contemporary experiences.

My discussion of repetition and the logic of automatism through McCarthy's and Lerner's novels follows the debates concerning interrelationships between human and nonhuman entities raised in recent literary studies. Many prominent journals have helped to initiate these debates, inviting scholars to explore what we may call the nonhuman turn and its manifestation in the twenty-first century.² For instance, in the special issue *Narrating the (Non)Human* (2022) in *Textual Practice*, scholars contribute to topics including contemporary techno-culture (Childs; Colombino), animal studies (Sparks; Ventura), and mythical inhumanity (Walezak; Bingham), challenging the privileged status of human beings over other forms of existence. *New Literary History* also dedicated an issue, *Animality/Posthumanism/Disability* (2020), to questioning the definition of "human" from biopolitical perspectives, considering the political possibilities of posthumanism with a view to amending the discontinuity between humans and other biological organisms. In addition, articles such as Héctor Hoyos's "A Tale of Two Materialism" (2018) and Maria Christou's "Kazuo Ishiguro's Nonactors" (2020) published by *Novel* illustrate a theoretical interest in the translatability between humans and objects as technical apparatuses in the post-industrial society. These publications demonstrate approaches to rethinking the nature and position of humanity in the current era where geobiological realities, technological infrastructures, and affects as embodied information significantly inform our existential and cognitive conditions.

More closely related to the topic of this thesis, Peter Childs and Laura Colombino perceive an interest in the extension of consciousness from human beings to nonhuman entities

² For more material related to the nonhuman turn in the twenty-first century, see Richard Grusin, ed., *The Nonhuman Turn* (U of Minnesota, 2015).

that is prevailing in contemporary literature (359-60). They contend that contemporary fiction consciously represents consciousness with “a ‘degrees’ model,” in which both humans and nonhumans may develop faculties of consciousness in various degrees (360). This model illustrates the continuity between humans and nonhumans, suggesting possibilities of nonhuman agency. However, as Childs and Colombino observe, it also provokes worries about an emerging predicament—that is, it has become harder and harder for “individuals or ordinary citizens to find a place of agency, fulfillment, or voice” (360). Many contemporary writings present this continuity as a threat to humanity, exemplified by “the replacement of the human by algorithmic forms of decision making” (360).

To understand the recurrence of such anxiety in contemporary fiction, James Draney adopts the idea of the cybernetic hypothesis to inquire about the aesthetic and political dilemmas created by digital technology. The cybernetic hypothesis connotes a pessimistic suspicion that the logic of computation infringes upon human subjectivity with a sense of “obstructed agency” and subjugates individuals to algorithmic systems by “enclos[ing] human possibility into a closed set of predetermined probabilities” (406, 407). By the same token, Jaime Harrison questions how twenty-first-century fiction portrays ubiquitous algorithms and responds to their interference in human subjectivity and identity in the digital culture (1876). In his literary analysis, Harrison reads depictions of the literary aspects of algorithms in a collection of contemporary novels as indications of the discrepancy between algorithmic systems and human subjects. That is to say, even though algorithms are shown to operate through narrative (i.e., through data-driven inferences), their narrative derives from a language model based on mathematic certainty, which forecloses the contingency of meaning fundamental in human language (1879).

Harrison's argument highlights the cognitive gap between humans and machines implied by the narrative principle of algorithms and, thus, echoes N. Katherine Hayles's reflection on the underlying distinction between human cognition and artificial intelligence such as GPT-3.

According to Hayles, human beings speak from "a model of the world" through which humans use language to articulate embodied experiences embedded in given social contexts whereas algorithms speak from "a model of language" lacking in the ability to represent the world (258).

In the model of language, words are simply tokens, representing mathematically correlated outputs that inform the probability of certain syntactic combinations. To Hayles, the gap between these two linguistic models presents a crisis for literary criticism. She suggests that literary criticism today must come up with interpretative strategies that are attentive to this cognitive gap.

The goal is not only to contemplate the distinct quality of human creativity but, perhaps more importantly, to consider how algorithmically generated texts may help enrich given literary canons and representations of the world (258).

Respectively, these scholars pay attention to how digital technologies impact contemporary literary production and how they prompt writers to conceive of formal means to represent algorithmically diagrammed reality and to re-map cognition. This thesis participates in their debates by sharing the focus on the continuity between human and nonhuman entities established on corresponding cognitive structures. While these scholars concentrate on the extension of consciousness that renders algorithms "human" and consequently disturbs human agency, this study approaches the continuity from the angle of the non-thinking, exploring the extension of nonconscious cognition from algorithmic apparatuses to human beings. Rather than pondering the "threats" brought forth by the correspondence, this thesis probes into the curative implications entailed in moments when the nonhuman aspect embedded in our cognitive faculty

surfaces in the novels. The purpose is to problematize the unease about the rise of inhuman features in imaging contemporary subjectivity. Instead of centering on the role of consciousness in thinking about possibilities for machine agency and about predicaments facing humanity, I attempt to analyze how the chosen novels envision the possibility of a new epistemic paradigm originating from the overlapping autonomous nonconscious in both technical and human cognition.

Repetition

The curative possibility of algorithmic structures is captured by the motif of repetition through which the novels connect the operative logic of machines with human experiences. McCarthy takes a particular interest in repetition and its relation to the mediality of economic life in the neoliberal age. In his novels, repetition often reveals an impossibility of transcendence or of authenticity in the logistic process undergirding quotidian activities. Coupled with his concern with mediated lived experience is a tendency to accentuate material or technological surroundings instead of subjective interiority, a conception of humanity that suggests the reciprocity of techno-culture and neoliberalism. Scholars including Seb Franklin, Pieter Vermeulen, and Emma Volk read repetition in *Remainder* as an ontologizing gesture casting the characters as part of the network of subjects/objects enmeshed in the digital milieu.

Franklin questions how repetition constitutes the violence of digitality, meaning the traumatic experience of living in a network society where everything is conceived as already embedded in automatic loops (167-68). Vermeulen argues that the representation of repetition in the novel departs from its usual association with modern psychology. He notices that the narrator's repetitive behavior unfolds in an impassive dedication to material resources as he

reenacts certain experiences or memories of particular situations. In this case, the novel reverses the focus from subjective interiority to objective materiality when writing about trauma, refusing the tendency of what Vermeulen calls psychological realism to impoverish the world (261). The narrative replaces descriptions of psychological depth with “a different realism that is more true to the materiality of the world” (261), paying attention to details of the material settings that structure the character’s embodied experiences. Volk extends Vermeulen’s argument from the angle of speculative fiction and contends that the novel’s realism renders the subject comparable to objective materiality through a cognitive estrangement caused by repetition (9). In addition, according to Volk, the novel describes such objective materiality with a language “one might use to describe an alien or automation” (7).

According to these critics, *Remainder* departs from the tendency of trauma fiction to focus on subjective interiority by shifting the core of representation from inner psychology to external agglomerations of entities. In this regard, McCarthy’s concept of repetition challenges the appropriation of Freudian repetition in trauma writings that associate the forming of subjectivity or identity with one’s subjective perception of loss (Vermeulen 254-55). Instead, *Remainder* showcases how repetition constitutes the biological, material, and cultural experiences in the age of digital automation. Nevertheless, while these readings highlight the significance of the interplay between human and machine cognition, they fail to pay attention to the performance of automatism embedded in characters’ corporeality. This thesis will analyze how the narrator’s spontaneous reflexes to external stimuli indicate the logic of automatism is not simply a prosthetic mechanism to human cognition but also a constituting part of it.

On the other hand, Lerner’s *10:04* engages with issues of art, literary institutions, and the climate crisis while conflating these elements with a recursive temporality in the narrative.

Similar to McCarthy, Lerner conceives of repetition as an epistemic construct containing human and nonhuman actors (e.g., including climatic phenomena) while rendering them comparable with one another. Despite the fact that the novel also represents the motif of repetition with instances illustrating the protagonist's compulsion to repeat, Lerner puts more effort in emphasizing the recursivity of time implied by circulations of specific events. The temporal order of repetition suggests how meaning becomes uncertain when the present serves as a placeholder where projections of future possibilities are suspended. Without the arrival of futurity speculated from the past, the present is rendered teleologically indeterminate.

Critics including Ben de Bruyn, Alison Gibbons, and Jacqueline O'Dell note that such a temporal order defamiliarizes ordinary encounters with things and people, for the protagonist can no longer depend on the linear temporal model of consciousness to work out coherent comprehension of these encounters. The sense of dislocation in time creates an uncanny affect that compels the protagonist to apprehend lived experience through nonhuman parameters including animals (rats), objects (instant coffee), nature (snow), and technology (sonography). In other words, the recursive temporality entails de-anthropocentric potential by turning to other-than-human interventions that help the protagonist envision possible meanings of experiences outside the scope of human rationality.

However, these studies fail to notice that human cognition also operates in this recursive temporality. I will examine how the protagonist discovers a visceral correspondence with the nonhuman forces through this recursive temporality that marks the logic of automatism in his pathologized body. Complementing existing studies of the novels, this thesis concentrates on how they display the logic of automatism as part of the human disposition today. I will refer to this integration of automatic characteristics into humanity as “digital humanity” to contravene a

modernist notion of the subject (corroborated by many realist writings) predicated on reason and individuality (McCarthy and Critchley “New York Declaration on Inauthenticity”).³ While the term *digital humanities* in the plural form generally designates a transdisciplinary approach to humanistic research with the application of technologies, this study adopts the singular form to suggest specifically the machinic characteristics underlying human existence, that is, the logic of automatism embedded in patterns of non-thinking bodily tendencies manifest in our behavior in the digital era.⁴ One of the reasons why I choose the term *digital humanity* instead of *posthumanism* or *cyborg* to discuss the novels is that both *posthumanism* and *cyborg* encompass a wide range of debates associated with diverse boundaries between humans and other species or entities. Although posthumans and cyborgs offer constructive lenses through which to question critical parameters such as gender, emotions, and intelligence traditionally applied to human subjectivity, this study will consider how a machinic rationale (especially in the mode of digital automatism) already serves as the basis of action even without involving external or prosthetic technical devices. Moreover, the concept of digital humanity explores what happens to human cognition when algorithmic programs gradually supersede the operation of rationality. Instead of observing how humans collaborate with technical cognition to perform deliberative tasks, this study examines how human actors register and interact with their situated contexts by mobilizing the body in a state of unthought.

³ While debates about the concept of subjectivity in modern philosophy have complicated and problematized the dichotomies of mind vs. body or subject vs. object, this thesis mainly converses with the idealist framework which centers on the role of human reason, consciousness, and individuality in shaping identity and subjectivity, a framework that has arguably extended to literary realism. For more information about alternative understandings of subjectivity in modern philosophical discourses, see Dietrich Jung and Stephan Stetter, eds., *Modern Subjectivities in World Society: Global Structures and Local Practices* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2019).

⁴ For more information about digital humanities, see Berry, “What Are the Digital Humanities?”

Theoretical Framework

To highlight the logic of automatism embedded in contemporary humanity, this thesis will read McCarthy's and Lerner's novels alongside Bernard Stiegler's proposition of pharmacology and N. Katherine Hayles's posthuman understanding of the cognitive nonconscious. In many of Stiegler's works on contemporary techno-culture, he identifies digital automation as the *pharmakon* entailing simultaneously transformative and entropic proclivity in and of contemporary society. According to Stiegler, *pharmakon* is the pivot technics (or what he calls *tertiary retentions*) underpinning individual and collective becoming in each era. A *pharmakon* contains both therapeutic and detrimental possibilities leading to either protentions gesturing toward cultural transformation or lethargic equilibrium expressed through ubiquitous nihilism. In *The Neganthropocene* (2018), Stiegler diagnoses the problem of the Anthropocene as an epistemic and ontological crisis of disbelief in change and in deprivation of reason. As individuals become accustomed to confiding intellectual tasks to algorithms and hence withdraw from active reasoning, they slowly lose the rational power to envisage metamorphoses of society associated with the use of digital technology. As a result, a sense of futility and the loss of faith in the future permeate contemporary society and confines it to the present dispossessed of volition to move onto the next historical phase.

Responding to such a crisis, Stiegler advocates the exigence for the contemporary subject to re-engage reason in deliberative activities coupled with digital automaton, so as to disturb the non-thinking stagnancy and to redeem the dynamics of becoming at the moment. In this case, not only does Stiegler's pharmacological approach offer incisive critiques of algorithmically maneuvered lifestyle, but, more significantly, it touches on the possibility of construing transformative practice of technology in the digital era. As the development of digital technology

seems irreversible in terms of its continuing influence on contemporary society, Stiegler's theory may guide us to reconfigure the relationship between humanity and machinic systems, informing our contemplation on ways to advance the transformative potential of this relationship.

This thesis will infer from the curative power of *pharmakon* proposed by Stiegler to analyze the epiphanic realizations resulting from repetition and the working of the logic of automatism in *Remainder* and *10:04*. By emphasizing the irrational aspect of these epiphanies, this study will suggest Stiegler's critical attitude toward the implementation of automatons based on his insistence on human rationality presented in his later works (e.g., *Age of Disruption*) may undermine the redemptive potential of automatic mechanism, as contemporary *pharmakon*, already implied by his understanding of technology.

In addition, to inquire about the non-thinking recognition of lived experience via repetitive structure in the novels, this thesis will turn to N. Katherine Hayles's idea of the cognitive nonconscious. In *Unthought* (2017), Hayles advances the necessity of introducing the scientific or technological perspective to literary criticisms so that humanist research may establish effective vocabulary for discussing the influence of digital technologies on contemporary culture represented in twenty-first-century fiction. Exemplifying such vocabulary which enables transdisciplinary debates is *the cognitive nonconscious* that functions at a realm and speed incomprehensible to human consciousness. The cognitive nonconscious helps organize raw sensory stimuli into palpable forms of information that are less overwhelming to the consciousness, allowing the consciousness to interpret and act upon these inputs.

Hayles believes that by incorporating the cognitive nonconscious in debates pertinent to contemporary humanity, humanist studies challenge and triangulate the categories of the conscious/unconscious which are unable to contain the ontological realities in the digital era.

Examples including urban planning, smart devices, financial derivatives, etc. reveal a trend of individuals or social organizations outsourcing complicated intellectual assignments to automatic apparatuses. The emphasis on the cognitive nonconscious, therefore, raises critical awareness of cognitive assemblages dependent on nonhuman cognitive operations and problematizes the epistemic hierarchy valuing human consciousness over objects, the body, or the irrational.

One of the goals in this thesis is to extrapolate from Hayles's understanding of the cognitive nonconscious to examine the nonconscious sector of human cognition represented by the characters' behavior or narration, asking how it functions in ways corresponding to digital machinery. Moreover, as Hayles observes that the cognitive nonconscious functions in the recursive temporality of the future anterior tense, this thesis also seeks to analyze the time of repetition in the novels, questioning how the logic of automatism unfolds in temporal loops and how these loops open the present to indeterminant meaning bypassing the grasp of human consciousness. Furthermore, I will explain why the ways *Remainder* and *10:04* demonstrate the nonhuman potential of digital humanity go even further than Hayles. While Hayles aims to envision forms of collaboration between human and technical cognition that will not sacrifice our intellectual control, the novels peripheralize the role of consciousness and highlight the narrative power of the unthought.

Chapter Overview

In the following chapters, I will first give a more detailed explanation on Stiegler's and Hayles's thoughts in the chapter of theory, introducing the methodology employed to interpret the motif of repetition and the machinic aspect of digital humanity in the novels. I will first demonstrate Stiegler's philosophy of technology, organology, and pharmacology, examining how

his critique of digital automation portrays the cultural atmosphere or the forms of becoming in the digital age. Aside from Stiegler, I will also illustrate N. Katherine Hayles's understanding of the cognitive nonconscious and how her conception of cognition transforms the approach of liberal humanities to thinking and meaning. Converging these two thinkers' ideas, I hope to establish an analytical framework that is able to illustrate the rationale behind the motif of repetition, showing how it resembles the ways the cognitive nonconscious, as well as the automatic apparatuses, function. Furthermore, based on the temporal model of the cognitive nonconscious proposed by Hayles, I attempt to show how the logic of automatism represented by repetition makes generating meaning from the perspective of nonhuman entities possible.

The third chapter delves into McCarthy's material-oriented writing in *Remainder*. The goal of this chapter is to give an overview of the pharmacological potential, both therapeutic and detrimental, represented by the motif of repetition in the novel. I will first review previous researches on the novel which analyze the themes of materiality, technology, and trauma. These researches help illustrate the departure of repetition from twentieth-century psychology to twenty-first-century technicity, marking the dividualistic features of the contemporary subject and experiences. Based on these studies, I argue that the narrative captures the characteristics of digital humanity and the cultural logic of contemporary society with its elaborate depictions of the narrator's obsession with patterns, positions, and passive stasis in his search for authenticity. The narrator's compulsion to reenact and his inclination for passive objectivity can be explained by Hayles's rendition of the cognitive nonconscious, which advances the state of unthought overlapping human and technical cognition. Sharing the impersonality of the technical cognition, the narrator becomes what Stiegler understands as *tertiary retentions* in the form of automatons,

who exists as part of a larger structure of repetition (i.e., the reenactments) that brings forth both destructive consequences and epiphanic realizations.

The fourth chapter concentrates on the temporal scheme of repetition represented in Lerner's *10:04*, exploring the therapeutic potential of digital repetition as *tertiary retention* to foster an enlarged spectrum of possibilities. Continuing the discussion in the previous chapter, I argue that the protagonist's narration abides by a principle of prolepsis that is identical to the temporality of the cognitive nonconscious. The prolepsis produces the structure of "repetition with a difference," projecting multiple horizontally branched out possibilities of the future refracted in the present. In this sense, the prolepsis suggests an alternative paradigm of meaning making, in which the retrospection of anticipated possibilities renders present experiences significantly indeterminate. I attempt to illustrate how representations of the narrative temporality and the structure of repetition evoke the protagonist's visceral awareness of the correspondence between his embodied experiences and the nonhuman events unfolding in the same temporal order. The correspondence intimates the curative potential of the logic of automatism to transform the impersonality of the nonconscious into a kind of transpersonal relationality converging human experiences with realities of nonhuman entities beyond mental comprehension. Moreover, I propose that this correspondence calls forth a de-anthropocentric perception of the world, as it makes nonhuman timelines tangible to human historicity through the cognitive lens opened up by the nonconscious mechanism in the narrator's body. In other words, the impersonal repetition fosters epiphanic realizations about the becoming of collectivity, which acknowledges the fundamental role of the nonhuman forces in shaping the protagonist's comprehension of experiences.

Finally, the last chapter concludes this study with a brief reflection on the role of humanity in the nonhuman turn of this century. I will suggest several keywords that may be helpful for understanding digital humanity and describing contemporary culture which are also implied in the novels. Although this thesis cannot go into details about how these keywords shape the contemporary lifestyle due to the limit of scope, I will briefly mention their connection to digital humanity and how they may inspire further studies on the cultural logic of the digital age.

Chapter Two

Methodology



This thesis will draw on Bernard Stiegler's conception of pharmacological technology and N. Katherine Hayles's explanation of the cognitive nonconscious to analyze the motif of repetition and the implied logic of automatism in *Remainder* and *10:04*. I choose these theoretical approaches not only because previous studies of the two novels have engaged with said thinkers and their ideas. More significantly, I will explore the relevance of their ideas with the digital humanity shown in the novels, a topic that has not yet been fully developed in existing studies. In the following paragraphs, I will first explain what *pharmakon* is in Stiegler's philosophy and how digital automatism and repetition serve as the key *pharmaka* shaping the contemporary culture. Next, I will discuss Hayles's posthuman rendition of the cognitive nonconscious and how her understanding unravels the mechanical details behind the function of automatic apparatuses. With these accounts, I attempt to show how these propositions demonstrate an affirmative way of approaching the logic of automatism in contemporary life. On the other hand, I will also examine an even more radical aspect of Stiegler's and Hayles's theories that they might have failed to pursue. The goal is not to discredit their insights on digital automatism and the ways its rapid growth changes how humans live as a collective. Rather, the purpose of engaging their work is to better understand how the selected novels illustrate the potential implied in Stiegler's and Hayles's theories.

Stiegler, *Pharmakon*, and Automation

The interpretation of Stiegler's philosophy in this thesis is mainly based on the English translation of *The Neganthropocene* (2018), in which Stiegler condenses his past thoughts to

unpack the particularity of the Anthropocene. In this collection, Stiegler proposes to conceive of the Anthropocene as a distinctive organological epoch characterized by its self-conscious and self-expressive acknowledgment of organology as pharmacology (45). By *organology*, Stiegler means an account of life that comprehends forms of being as not only biological but also technological. To Stiegler, three levels of organs interact and co-shape the advancement of history and the becoming of individuals and society: a) biological or *endosomatic* organs, b) artificial or *exosomatic* organs (i.e., technologies), and c) social organizations or institutions (“Elements of Pharmacology” 86). Considering the function of artificial organs closely affiliated to the mnemonic faculty of the biological brain, Stiegler refers to artificial organs as what he calls *tertiary retentions*, an idea designating the inscription of meaning and externalization of knowledge on material instruments that preserve and distribute information and affect spanning different time and space.⁵

Stiegler believes that the becoming of individuals or society is never complete and that such becoming is articulated through the act of personal or collective remembering. Without the innovation of artificial organs enabling long-circuit memory, the transition between states of being or generations cannot be animated and realized as personal or collective history. As a result, it is inevitable that humans create technical objects and develop corresponding social institutions to en-form and to stabilize the *savoir-faire* of how we apply and incorporate these objects in everyday situations. In addition, as social institutions structure and navigate our learning and practice pertinent to the fundamental technical organs in each period of history, the technical

⁵ Extending Edmund Husserl’s thoughts on primary and secondary retentions, Stiegler seeks to broaden the understanding of consciousness by examining the process of memory involving both inner faculties and exterior mechanisms. For more on tertiary retentions, see Stiegler, *Technics and Time. Vol. 2: Disorientation*, translated by Stephen Barker (2008).

organs intimate specific rationale that substantially instantiates the modes of living in each epoch (Daniel Ross “Introduction” 19-20).

Based on the transitional nature of organology, Stiegler defines the organ as *pharmakon* and the intermediary condition created by the practice of organ as *pharmacological* (*On Pharmacology* 3). Since organology entails the never complete process of becoming, the idea of pharmacology implies the personal and collective will to strive in given living conditions with the development of organs. Focusing on the case of artificial organs, Stiegler argues that “technics constantly compensates for a *default of being* . . . by *constantly bringing about a new default—always greater*, always more complex and *always less manageable* than the one that preceded it” (*On Pharmacology* 15; italics in the original). In other words, the continuous evolution of technology prompts the process of becoming by always situating states of being in an intermediary position unsettling the status quo. Such a mechanism is pharmacological because the new default may project curative and/or poisonous possibilities at the same time. With the advancement of each default comes an adaptation of the *savoir-faire* leading to different cultural atmospheres that might cause individuals to feel life either meaningful or meaningless. Drawing from Donald Winnicott’s psychoanalytical approach, Stiegler considers *pharmakon* as the psychic apparatus constituting the fundamental conditions for individuals to acquire “a trust in life” and a “feeling that life is worth living” (*On Pharmacology* 3). Stiegler’s statement about the Anthropocene being self-conscious of organology as pharmacology, therefore, refers to its self-critical application of digital automaton as *pharmakon*, that it keeps close inspection on the effects of its practice on cultural affect.

Aligned with cybernetics’ predilection for thermodynamic analogies, Stiegler’s organological reading of the contemporary world identifies “the transformation of entropy into

negentropy” as the key issue of this century (*Neganthropocene* 43). More specifically, he urges society to contrive strategies to overcome the inert state of being brought forth by digital automatism in this epoch. While organology overarches the evolution of human history, what makes the organ as *pharmakon* unusual in the digital age is the unprecedented speed and scope of technological advances. Stiegler describes the Anthropocene as a reticulated society generated in and by the network facilitated by the computer. As the characteristic exosomatic organ of the twenty-first century, the computer serves as the primary *pharmakon* and “produce[s] an *automatic performativity* that channels, diverts, and short-circuits individual and collective protentions” by transposing rational capacities to high-speed mechanisms (46; italics added).⁶ In this sense, digital automatism turns individuals from beings with reason into non-thinking individuals dispossessed of active commitment to the development of human culture. The outsourcing of the reasoning faculty precipitates what Stiegler calls “the loss of reason” (*Age of Disruption* 3), rendering the Anthropocene a toxic age arriving at an entropic standstill.

Aside from *The Neganthropocene*, Stiegler also shows similar concerns with digital automatism in other works. On the one hand, he thinks that digital technology “is the unavoidable path we must follow”; therefore, it is imperative that we come up with “a therapeutics that places the digital becoming of the world at the very center of what must be decided” for the continuation of the human civilization (*Neganthropocene* 43, 43-44). On the other hand, he consistently expressed anxiety about the toxicity of digital automatism giving rise to an anti-intellectual culture. In *Taking Care of Youth* (2010), Stiegler observes that technology of the numerized (i.e., digitized) world transforms the structure of intelligence. Superseding conscious reasoning with automatic repetition, new digital technologies weaken the cultural

⁶ Stiegler defines protentions as the “desires, expectations, volitions, will and so on” that forms the basis of transindividuation (*Age of Disruption* 7).

apparatus accounting for cultivating forms of responsibility and long-circuited (i.e., sustained) attention (33-34). Since Stiegler takes intelligence as the key for individuals and society to ward off the destructive tendencies of *pharmakon* while fostering its curative power, he is suspicious of automatic repetition that impedes active participation of human reason. Similarly, in *Automatic Society* (2016), he investigates the “proletarianization of sensibility” made possible by automatic mechanisms that “short-circuit the deliberative functions of the mind” and subject “everyday life . . . to reticular standards and calculation” (25). More specifically, he equates contemporary behavior to a pathological expression of the digital culture, maintaining that “[b]ehaviors, as *ways of living*, are being replaced by *automatisms* and *addictions*” (15; italics in the original). To Stiegler, actions deprived of rational interventions diminish into motions without meaningful ends. By turning human actions into simple behaviors, automatic apparatuses render these actions pathological due to their machinic compulsivity, which in turn indicates deprivation of transformative impetus.

Stiegler’s antagonism against automatic repetition may be derived from his understanding of *episteme* rooted in what he terms the “Kantian schematism” (*Neganthropocene* 44). In this model, human reason is postulated to take charge of how we inscribe meaning on individual or collective experiences and is thus the linchpin of societal evolution. For Stiegler, this means that the organological thrust of individual and collective becoming is predicated on the intimate collaboration between thinking and organs, as thinking makes it possible to “cause bifurcations by *disautomatizing repetitive regularities*” and consequently prevents entities from falling into the state of entropic stagnancy (*Neganthropocene* 41; italics added). Invoking Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer’s *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Stiegler compares automated and reticulated

networks of information to the “new kind of barbarism” that constitutes an ambiance of nihilism and disbelief in the modern cultural industry (*Age of Disruption* 6).

In addition, Stiegler also notes that digital automation helps to orchestrate what Thomas Berns and Antoinette Rouvroy call “algorithmic governmentality” consolidated by neoliberal capitalism (*Age of Disruption* 12). The regulatory power of algorithms over contemporary life culminates in the ultimate proletarianization of sensibility and knowledge which elicits “a negative teleology . . . [and] end without purpose” (*Age of Disruption* 12). Stiegler adopts the term *proletarianization* to indicate “the loss of knowledge (savoir)” and “a machinic turn of sensibility” caused by “canalization and reproduction of perception” made possible by the complicity between technology and consumer culture (“Proletarianization of Sensibility” 6, 5). In this case, the idea of proletarianization connotes a negative form of collectivity in which knowledge and feelings become reproducible commodities external to subjects while subjects turn into beings without ends of their own, with their motivation subjected to the manipulation of the market (*Neganthropocene* 43; “Proletarianization of Sensibility” 6). Inasmuch as automatic repetition strips the digital epoch of rational projections of protentions (i.e., the generation of anticipation with active reasoning), the Anthropocene will remain a “toxic period” of stark stupidity where individuals are incapable of producing and mobilizing knowledge or perception according to their own agendas (*Neganthropocene* 45).

When echoing Adorno and Horkheimer’s foreboding tone, Stiegler’s critique of digital automatism can easily overshadow his Benjaminian theorization of digital technology as the unavoidable path we must follow. To pursue the curative potential of digital technology implied in Stiegler’s philosophy more thoroughly, we can turn our attention to something less heeded in his writing: a lack of connection between repetition and the toxicity of digital automation in his

argument. Despite his premonition for automatic repetitiveness, Stiegler's angst over algorithmic apparatuses is not really derived from its recursive structure. Instead, he usually foregrounds the overwhelming speed of computational calculation as the pivotal factor giving rise to the current anti-intellectual culture (*Neganthropocene* 44; *Age of Disruption* 7, 21-22). To Stiegler, it is our reliance on high-speed computers outperforming humanity in accessing information and decision-making that subjugates humans to systematic stupidity.

Contrary to his criticism of speed, Stiegler's contemplation on repetition at times suggests how it unsettles certain preconceptions of experience and advances a shift in *episteme*. Quoting Gilles Deleuze's contention that "if we die of repetition we are also saved and healed by it" (qtd. in *States of Shock* 67), Stiegler reads Deleuze's theorization of repetition as a pharmacological problematic delineating the twentieth-century thought from the Enlightenment philosophy. He argues that the allusion to repetition's capacity to generate both difference (i.e., curative transformation) and indifference (i.e., simple duplication or entropy) in Deleuze's understanding presupposes a process or mechanism alien to the consciousness. It either bypasses the consciousness to initiate something different and outside the scope of rational reasoning through chances opened up by the self-returning structure, or it perpetuates monotonous reproductions that do not require the contribution of active thinking.

Either way, Stiegler believes that Deleuze's pharmacological approach to repetition leads to a matter of "thinking time no longer on the basis of consciousness, but on the basis of a passive synthesis carried out by repetition" (*States of Shock* 70). Serving as the groundwork feeding forward to perception, the operation of repetition displaces time from consciousness to a realm transcending the reach of human reasoning. By translating repetition into the fundamental tertiary retention in the post-industrial society, Stiegler bridges Deleuze's writings on repetition

together with his own philosophy and emphasizes the technological externality of time unfolding through repetition (*States of Shock* 71, 74). This new comprehension of time disrupts the chronological ordering of conscious interpretation and projects a mode of thinking and being in realms beyond subjective reasoning.

Stiegler's analysis of repetition points toward a temporal order outside the function of human rationality and acknowledges the potential of repetition in disturbing existing epistemic regimes. Noting that Deleuze's thought on repetition corresponds to Sigmund Freud's insight on repetition, repression, and particularly the unconscious, Stiegler contends both thinkers broach and introduce questions about the terrain of the non-conscious which the Enlightenment could not conceive of and thereupon address critically (*States of Shock* 71). His affirmative understanding of repetition in effect evokes his audacious remarks in the first volume of *Technics and Time* that "Technics is the unthought" (ix). By this Stiegler means metaphorically that technics is "the repressed" that has not come fully into the view of philosophical debates but has nonetheless supplemented or even preconditioned activities of philosophical thinking throughout the history of western philosophy (Dominic Smith 39). Paralleled to the role of the unconscious or non-conscious in broadening the Enlightenment concentration on subjective consciousness or human reason, Stiegler's rendition of technics suggests the possibilities of repetition (i.e., tertiary retentions or artificial organs) to enlarge the epistemic scope and to grasp the connection between humanity and the world without gravitating around human rational faculty.

Unfortunately, Stiegler does not takes on this idea of the unthought further but instead urges "the rearmament of thinking" as the way to "rethink the *pharmakon* [repetition] itself as . . . weapon" for solving the current epistemic crisis (*States of Shock* 74). In this thesis, I will respond to this underdeveloped insight of Stiegler's. I will elaborate on how repetition serves as the

technological unthought capable of fostering the transformative potential of digital automatism and, thus, unsettling the entropic lived experience today. Another thinker who helps with my argument is N. Katherine Hayles. Her conception of the cognitive nonconscious is illuminating in helping us to understand how the non-thinking agency works in contemporary techno-culture.

Hayles, Unthought, and the Nonconscious Temporality

Whereas Stiegler contends that the unconscious is “the true break between classical philosophy and twentieth-century thought” (*States of Shock* 71), Hayles turns even further to the realm of the *cognitive nonconscious* to delineate posthumanism or digital humanities from traditional liberal humanities. In *Unthought* (2017), she introduces an understanding of cognition from neuroscience and related disciplines that is less familiar to literary studies with her literary analyses of contemporary fiction. The objective of initiating this interdisciplinary approach is for her and future literary critics to explore the possibilities and stakes of living in contemporary society that only become fathomable after they take into account the reality of the *nonconscious cognition*.⁷

Similar to Stiegler’s definition of technology as artificial or exosomatic organs, Hayles compares technical cognition with human cognitive nonconscious and infers that the systematic similarities between the two mark the evidence of “the exteriorization of cognitive abilities” in the digitized society (11). Hayles justifies the commensurability between these two forms of cognition with their functional (structural) correspondences, which include: a) processing

⁷ The terminological choice between “the cognitive nonconscious” and “nonconscious cognition(s)” in *Unthought* is based on different emphases Hayles wants to make in regard to its role in a cognitive assemblage. “The cognitive nonconscious” refers to the systematicity of human-technical assemblage, while “nonconscious cognition(s)” emphasize their transformative capacities (11-12). Since this thesis focuses on the nonconscious versus conscious dispositions embedded in humanity rather than the precise architecture of cognition, the terms will be used interchangeably in my writing.

information at a speed far surpassing human consciousness, b) cohering disoriented somatic markers into consistent body representations, c) synthesizing while rendering sensory inputs intelligible for the consciousness across time and space, d) providing the interpretative groundwork prior to the conscious inscription of meaning, and, finally, e) serving as the filter preventing consciousness from being overwhelmed by massive information streaming too complicated for the human brain to perceive (10-11). In other words, the cognitive nonconscious, whether technical or human, designates the operation of cognitive faculties preceding and “inaccessible to the modes of awareness but nevertheless performing functions essential to consciousness” (10).

Capturing “the systematicity of human-technical interactions” (11), the idea of the cognitive nonconscious provides a de-anthropocentric measure for remapping the position of humanity in posthuman situations or the digital culture. Indeed, Hayles points out that in contrast to the definition of thinking as the “high-level mental operations . . . associated with higher consciousness,” the word *cognition* is more extensive and able to incorporate a wider range of cognitive capacities shared among various biological life-forms and technical systems (14). Therefore, the concept of cognition presents a more effective approach than thinking to address the increasing “epistemic complexity” of the Anthropocene onticity (15-16).⁸ Under the framework of cognition, the idea of cognitive nonconscious foregrounds the aspect of the unthought as the biological and technical conditions formulating the living strategies of contemporary beings.

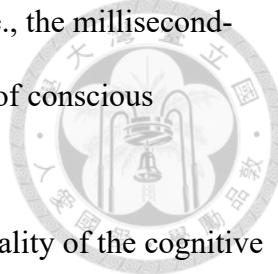
By unveiling the de-humancentric potential of the cognitive nonconscious, Hayles’s discussion offers a helpful theoretical lens for re-examining the toxicity of digital automatism

⁸ Here, Hayles borrows Ladislave Nováč’s idea of onticity to describe the technicity of digital life. Nocáč defines onticity as “the engagement of a life-form with its environment” (qtd. in Hayles 15).

proposed by Stiegler. Drawing instances from ASTAC (the Automated Traffic Surveillance and Control system) to financial derivatives, or HFT (high-frequency trading) (121, 142), Hayles notices the prevalent incorporation of the nonconscious cognition in automatic installations nowadays. The operation of these automatic installations feeds forward into higher conscious performances, such as decision-making and action-taking, with the data generated and circulated by the algorithmic routes (24). According to Hayles, the particularity of the algorithmic feedback loops is that they function in the future anterior tense (i.e., the future perfect tense) and, as a result, contravene the chronological ordering of human consciousness (142).

This specific temporality creates a discrepancy between human and digital cognition and, consequently, constitutes a realm of what Hayles calls “punctuated agency,” referring to the autonomous and active status of automatic mechanisms as technical cognizers. Within the gap, the technical cognizers “draw inferences, analyze contexts, and make decisions in milliseconds” preceding the slow uptakes of consciousness (142). Hayles argues that by portraying automatic systems as active cognizers, her theory can demonstrate the “machine agency” of the technical nonconscious—something that Stiegler overlooks in his print-centric rendering of artificial organs (170). Whereas Stiegler tends to presume artificial organs to be the external storage devices associated with mnemonic capacities and attentional forms, Hayles criticizes Stiegler’s presupposition for its lack of metaphoric efficacy for covering automatic apparatuses that usually work and act beyond the scope of information storage. More accurately, Hayles suggests that Stiegler’s understanding of technics contextualizes artificial organs in a human-machine interactive model where the technical agency is “converted from a passive possibility into an actuality only because a human is involved” (171). On the other hand, she observes that the automatic apparatuses have evolved into a machine-machine interactive model independent of

human agency. This is because what Hayles terms the microtemporality (i.e., the millisecond-temporal discrepancy) of the cognitive nonconscious precludes the chance of conscious interventions (171).



Extending her critique of Stiegler's philosophy based on the temporality of the cognitive nonconscious, Hayles also reframes Stiegler's idea of long-circuit history with a nonhuman perspective. While Stiegler considers long circuits as the intergenerational force facilitating individual and collective becoming across eras, Hayles redefines the concept as the narrative power of digital automatism that enables the machines to develop their own version of history with the capabilities of self-correction and speculation based on learned knowledge. Rather than being an essential force particular to the development of human civilizations, long circuits now account for the evolution of algorithmic intelligence as well (171). In this case, the long-circuit history of the cognitive nonconscious gestures toward de-anthropocentric protentions generated from a machinic perspective that does not necessarily cater to human interests.

Although Hayles's discussion about the cognitive nonconscious opens up the feasibility of "systemic machine ecologies" (170) confronting Stiegler's outmoded and limited comprehension of technics, similar to Stiegler, Hayles's writing is preoccupied with the pernicious inclination of automatic apparatuses. Specifically, in the case of HFT, Hayles notes the alarming effect of the increasing application of algorithms in financial speculations in the stock markets. According to Hayles, the operative rationale behind automatic speculation bolsters what she terms *vampiric capitalism*—an emerging type of hyper-capitalism that manipulates while exploiting high-speed transactions of information and, in consequence, lapses from the appointed goal of protecting individuals and private enterprises in the stock markets (159). Recalling Stiegler's insistence on the rearmament of thinking, Hayles advocates the

exigence of re-introducing rational interventions alongside the working of technical cognition “so that humans can exercise greater decision powers and machines have a more limited scope for autonomous actions” (143). In other words, Hayles also prioritizes the role of human deliberative faculties in rectifying the financial and ethical injustices brought about by the algorithmic-driven economics.

Despite the fact that Stiegler’s and Hayles’s incisive observations point acutely toward certain crises coming along with the pervasive implementation of digital technology in contemporary society, this thesis attempts to go on another direction to reflect on the curative power of the unthought implied by Hayles’s understanding of the nonconscious temporality. This is not trying to undermine both Stiegler’s and Hayles’s concerns for the impacts of digital automatism. Rather, it endeavors to explore where their reasoning about technology or the unthought can take us if we focus on the less debated topic of repetition and suspend the recourse to human rationality when contemplating the epistemic conditions at the moment.

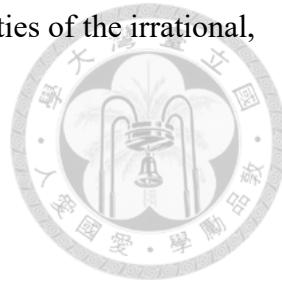
In her attempt to think about some potential spaces for interposing rational control in the cognitive activities of automatic devices, Hayles draws on Mark B. N. Hansen’s concept of atmospheric media, an idea referring to means of mediation that “flies under the radar of consciousness and influences actions, behaviors, affects, and attitudes before consciousness” (172). Under this definition, the atmospheric media embodies a form of the cognitive nonconscious. Furthermore, because the atmospheric media operates at a level unattainable for consciousness, it creates a room for the manipulation of affective capitalism (or what Hayles calls the vampiric capitalism) that subjugates individuals to the ways automatic apparatuses orchestrate and distribute affective information or knowledge. One of the reasons why Hayles finds Hansen’s idea of atmospheric media contributive for envisioning healthier forms of human-

machine synergy is because this idea emphasizes the “incommensurability of their [human and technical] cognitive timelines” (173). This incommensurability highlights the 100-millisecond discrepancy as a site for negotiation, where Hayles believes we may configure a balance between human and technical cognition and their authority over our decisions and actions.

Notably, Hayles’s approach to the problem of digital automatism aligns with Stiegler’s concern for its speed. Her focus on the “micro” nature of the nonconscious temporality manifest by the millisecond gap tends to overshadow her insightful observation about the recursivity (i.e., the functioning of the feedback loops entailed in the future-anterior pattern) of the cognitive nonconscious. In addition, by questioning how the contemporary subject can re-assert control over algorithms, Hayles pays more attention to the exterior technical apparatuses than to the nonconscious cognition embedded in the corporeality of human beings. As a consequence, she fails to pursue and inquire about what we can make of this nonconscious mechanism to develop a set of living strategies tailored for the digital era.

This thesis aims to redirect our attention to the looping structure of the nonconscious temporality embedded in digital humanity. As Hayles states in her writing, the verbal expression “will have been” not only epitomizes the recursivity of the cognitive nonconscious but, more significantly, opens the present to a virtual pool of possibilities projected through the act of speculation (144). This speculative characteristic of the cognitive nonconscious transforms the ways we value experiences, turning incidents into narratives whose meaning is contingent on the actualization of indeterminate situations in the future. It is thus “a form of extrapolation cut free . . . to float where the winds of chance blow it” (147). While the volatile coupling between values and instances suggests susceptibility to neoliberal capitalization, the indeterminacy also

undoes the logical coherence of rational thinking to accommodate possibilities of the irrational, problematizing the human-centric horizon.



Chapter Three

From Psychic to Technology: Repetition and the Logic of Automatism in *Remainder*



What can a story about post-trauma repetitions tell us about some possible significance of living in the digital age? Originally published in 2005, *Remainder* provides an early diagnosis (if not prognosis) of contemporary life that is ever increasingly fragmented, mediated, and arguably homogenized by the use of digital technologies. Following its unnamed narrator in the wake of his not-quite-complete recovery from an unspecified accident, the narrative illustrates a series of noticeable changes in his behavior and temperament, such as the compulsion to reenact, the obsession with patterns and diagrams, and an intense interest in telecommunications. The novel highlights the material and technological basis of the narrator's post-trauma mannerisms and experiences. The narrative concentrates on the material world instead of the psychological depth, seeing repetition as the underlying structure of society rather than the subject's psychological response to the accident.

In what follows, this chapter examines how the novel's representations of repetition channel what appears to be the narrator's response to a traumatic event into an affirmation of a logic of automatism characteristic of digital humanity. The first section looks into how McCarthy relocates repetition from the rendition of Freudian psychology to discussions of how the network society functions through reliance on the repetitive structures of technological systems. I aim to examine how the novel's reframing of repetition helps reveal the technological nature of the contemporary world and presents dividuality as one of the key aspects of experience nowadays. The second section focuses on how the narrator acts like a digital automaton. Reading the narrator's reenactments with Hayles's theory of the cognitive nonconscious, I compare the

narrator's cognition to the digital nonconscious based on their similar temporality functioning in the future anterior tense. In addition, I adopt Stiegler's idea of tertiary retention to interpret the characters and their behavioral patterns as technological mechanisms, seeking to demonstrate the correspondence between the human characters, the material and technological settings, and the larger social apparatuses shown in the story. The chapter concludes with an inquiry into the possible implications of taking repetition as the manifestation of the logic of automatism. In the light of Stiegler's pharmacology, I argue that the novel captures the epiphanic potential and the possible dangers of the narrator's irrational maneuvers when he organizes his reenactments.

Reforming Trauma: From Metaphysical Tragedy to Dividualistic Comedy

Remainder opens with the narrator's blunt disclaimer explaining why he is in no position to tell the reader about the unspecified accident to which he fell victim. On the one hand, he doesn't remember the event:

About the accident itself I can say very little. Almost nothing. It involved something falling from the sky. Technology. Parts, bits. That's it, really: all I can divulge. Not much, I know. (5)⁹

The severe crash sends him into a months-long coma, causing serious damage to his cognitive capacities leading to poor memory and proprioceptive performance. On the other hand, he receives an 8.5-million-pound financial settlement from the corporations (or "bodies," as the narrator refers to them) held accountable for the mishap (5). In return, the narrator is inhibited from discussing the matter "in any public or recordable format" (5). With the money, he launches a series of reenactments in which he re-stages certain scenes of past experiences with

⁹ Hereafter, when quoting the novel, it will be referred to as M.

encompassing details. Within them, the narrator seeks to retrieve what he believes to be the authentic or natural flow of action—something he no longer possesses due to proprioceptive injuries. Having a loose grip on memories of the past and unable to move his limbs according to his intention, the narrator feels an uncanny sense of estrangement from himself and reality. As a result, he finds himself becoming fake and secondary and feels compelled to re-learn how to move his body, re-map his position in the world, and re-distribute the meaning of his actions.

Already, the opening scene contains possibly the most important thematic clues informing the entire novel: trauma (responses to the accident), the impact of technology (the material dimension of technology and the technology of recording), and capitalism (the financial settlement). With these clues, the novel offers a glimpse into the idiosyncratic form of life at a time when technology and capitalistic economic systems combine to shape our perception of reality.

Seb Franklin aptly explains the novel's framing of themes as a "historical intervention" addressing several strands of thought—particularly trauma theory and theories of flat ontology—prevalent in recent critical debates (158). Throughout the novel, each project of reenactment follows a similar trajectory: a particular object or scene (e.g., a crack on the wall or the windshield-wiper fluid of a car) evokes hallucinating *déjà-vu* and triggers the narrator's impulse to reenact the "original" scene or the "authentic" encounter with the object; the narrator hires actors ("the reenactors") and a crew of staff members ("the facilitators") to materialize the reenactments under his command and modulations; and, finally, the reproduced situations becomes well-choreographed systems set on loops which the narrator can switch on and off to his liking.

Franklin notices that the way the reenactments are motivated conforms to the trauma model proposed by Cathy Caruth. That is to say, the reenactments come across as “a response to ‘an overwhelming experience of sudden, or catastrophic events, in which the response . . . occurs in the often delayed, and uncontrolled repetitive occurrence of hallucinations’” while the event “can be recalled and represented ‘at best indirectly’” (Franklin 160). Nevertheless, the novel’s representation of trauma is at most “diagrammatic” (Franklin 160) without any in-depth exploration of the psychological processes working between the obstructed memory and the act of repetition. Foreshadowed by the deadpan tone of the opening monologue, the narrative oddly pays little attention to the character’s psychological struggles in the aftermath of the accident. Instead, it elaborates on the procession of meticulous logistics behind the formulation of actions and reenactments, describing how the narrator assembles and reproduces them with paranoid insistence on minute details. In this sense, the narrative encourages what Franklin terms “a reductive reading” of the novel as a literary expression of trauma theory (160). The novel is presented not as an aesthetic contemplation of how a traumatic event affects the character but as an attempt to reconceptualize trauma and its repetitive figuration in the socioeconomic context of the network society.

Indeed, *Remainder* departs from what Pieter Vermeulen calls psychological realism (261) prevailing in contemporary trauma fiction by eradicating the psychic complexity supposed to substantiate the self-repeating pattern of trauma. Forced into amnesia not simply by the accident itself but also by the legal settlement, the narrator is denied the legitimacy of subjective interpretations of his own experience. Put into a passive state, the narrator directs his attention to the material and technological milieu and translates such attention into a kind of awareness of his position in specific environments:

[W]hen you're injured and immobile, you have to go exactly where the doctors and nurses put you. Where they put you becomes terribly important—your *position* in relation to the windows, the doors, the TV set . . . *Position* has been important to me ever since. It's not just hospital: it's the accident as well. I was hit because I was standing where I was and not somewhere else . . . (M 57; italics added)

The narrator recognizes himself through a spatial awareness that helps him map where he is in relation to other entities in his surroundings after the accident. This spatial awareness stays significant after the narrator is released from the hospital. It becomes the footing for him to rationalize decisions in a given social activity and to envision his projects of reenactments. For instance, when advised by his stock broker to invest the money from the reimbursement in various sectors, the narrator rejects the recommendation of diversifying, and, instead, insists on only purchasing shares from telecommunications. He wishes to have a “position” instead of being “everywhere and nowhere, all confused” in the stock market (M 44).

The narrator’s exclusive interest in telecommunications derives from his obsession with wires, or more broadly, with technologies enabling connectivity, developed after the accident. The wires, as the narrator contends, serve as the “mark” (11) that reveals the existence of technological systems grounding the practice of communication. Whether it is the phone wire, the wires connecting “the [subway] rails . . . to boxes and to other wires above the ground that ran along the streets” (16), or the looped escalator systems (17), these diverse forms of wiring mechanisms situate the narrator in relational networks where he is moved not only *by* but also *within* a systematic network. In this regard, the attentiveness to position brings forth an epistemic framework under which the narrator recognizes himself as part of a larger structure. This

framework renders the narrator a passive participant in quotidian experiences who makes sense of the world and his state of being by correlating himself with other material entities in the graphic arrangement of loops. As the narrator neglects the affective attachments these loops may produce, the loops maintain the self-repeating pattern of trauma repetition but relocate it from subjective interiority to the exterior.

By the same token, the attentiveness to position in looping repetition plays an important role in the narrator's reenactments. Invited to a party at a friend's flat, the narrator wanders around the place observing all the wires, switches, and routes of electric circuits in the house, indifferent to the party itself:

I was heading down the hallway back towards the main room when I noticed a small room set off the circuit I'd been following up to now. I'd moved round the kitchen each time in a clockwise direction, and round the main room in an anticlockwise one, door-sofa-window-door. With the short, narrow corridor between the two rooms, my circuit had the pattern of an eight. This extra room seemed to have just popped up beside it like the half had in my settlement: off-set, an extra. I stuck my head inside. It was a bathroom. I stepped in and locked the door behind me. Then it happened: the event that, the accident aside, was the most significant of my whole life. (M 57-58)

Similar to the wires, the bathroom, described by the narrator as "an extra," highlights the existence of a circuited structure.

The distinction in this case is that the bathroom is not a component of the circuit but a surplus area adjacent to it. The configuration creates a tension between the perfect shape of the number 8 and the off-positioned room, provoking an intense response from the narrator while

sending him into a trance of *déjà-vu*. In the hypnotic state, the narrator recalls/imagines a scene consisting of a reality constituted by specific details of its material setting. He envisions himself becoming “merged with them” without any space in between (M 60). The scene will later become his first reenactment, in which the narrator exhausts every means of resourcing at his disposal to rebuild the complicated setting.

In this episode of reenactment, the tension resulting from the design of the space suggests an interplay between a designated order and what cannot be contained by this order. While the narrator relies on the structures of loops to experience the world after the accident, the extra falling outside of the circuit (“the remainder”) is presented as a disruption to the epistemic framework. The disruption induces reactions analogous to the effects of trauma, as if the narrator is traumatized by the extra as a “bug” interfering with the functioning of the loops. Consistent with the repetition (i.e., the new epistemic order) lacking in psychic depth, the reenactment (which functions as the response to the “traumatic” disruption) spares no attention to psychological activities. As Vermeulen notes, by focusing on the orchestration of material resources in the reenactment, the narrative turns the trauma model into “a mere structural device” and “a detour” through which the novel circumvents subjective explorations of emotional nuances (261, 262). As a result, the novel escapes “the temptation of melancholic self-centeredness” illustrated in many trauma novels while redeeming “the nonhuman significance that such self-centeredness obstructs” (262). The emphasis on material precision allows the narrative to break away from the Freudian antithesis of mourning *vs.* melancholia and, hence, enables the novel to conceive of new perspectives about relationality and identity through the impersonal aspect of repetition.¹⁰

¹⁰ As Vermeulen explains, the notion of melancholia developed from discourses of critical theory, feminism, identity politics, etc., subverts the superiority granted to the ritual of mourning in Freud’s antithesis of mourning *vs.*

Similarly, Zadie Smith also celebrates *Remainder*'s affect-less style of writing which, she argues, "deliberately refus[es] the self-mythologizing grandeur of the tragic" ("Two Paths for the Novel"). By this, Smith means a kind of minimalist writing that rejects excessive usages of decorative adjectives and shows the narrator speaking, acting, and interacting with his surroundings unsympathetically. Without signs of internal torments, the protagonist's attention to materiality reveals the artificiality of experiences and human feelings, exposing the narrator's quest for authenticity as false and impossible. Although the narrative can be summarized as a story of "a man who builds in order to feel" (Smith), the narrator's goal to attain the bliss of authenticity through reenactments is frustrated by the linguistic simplicity focusing only on the material procession. On top of that, the only feeling he ever gets is a kind of vague "tingling" stimulated by a series of carefully schemed undertakings; hence, the feeling can only be artificial and secondary.

Smith names the narrative's apathetic characterization as "an extreme form of dialectical materialism" that opens to questions broaching the (im)possibility of genuine being in the current hypermediated culture. Like Vermeulen, she is concerned about the tendency of contemporary fiction to conceptualize reality from the narrow scope of subjective interiority, particularly

melancholia. Whereas Freud understands mourning as the healing process through which the traumatic subject learns to let go of lost objects and to enter new social relationships, critical theorists and activists alike criticize this healing process for its function as "a hegemonic normalization strategy" that enlists experience of loss to the regulation of given social norms (256). By contrast, they celebrate melancholia (what Freud deems pathological and self-destructive) as the ethical approach to trauma, demanding that we foreground the singularity of each traumatic loss and keep losses from the reconciling memorization of mourning that dissolves their distinctness in collective relations. However, such melancholic politics meets with three challenges: First of all, it misunderstands the process of mourning as an act of forgetting when, in fact, it requires forms of memorization (e.g., the narration of trauma) for individuals to work through their sorrow. Secondly, it forecloses the possibilities of new subject-world relationships to elicit personal or collective change, for it dwells on the affective singularity of a particular experience. Third, it precludes what Michael Rothberg calls the "multifunctionality" of memory by overlooking the communal forms that precondition how individuals experience certain emotions, memorize them, and identify themselves with these memories (Vermeulen 254-57). In response to this debate, *Remainder* creates a different approach to trauma that triangulates the binary opposition of mourning *vs.* melancholia. The novel explores the possibility of a kind of materialistic memorization that allows the narrator to attend to a specific experience, revisiting its affective or material singularity while preserving the potential to change.

through the lens of cultural and individual anxiety or trauma. In “Two Paths for the Novel,” she observes that two breeds of realism have developed and may forecast the directions of contemporary fiction and literary production of this century—one she terms “lyrical realism,” exemplified by Joseph O’Neill’s *Netherland*; and the other the minimal writing of *Remainder*’s dialectical materialism. The two are markedly different in terms of their antithetical agendas dealing with affect and authenticity. Smith proposes that lyrical realism tends to mobilize the reader’s emotions and neutralize contemporary anxieties with well-crafted writing. It presupposes the affective power of the “beautiful plenitude” of literary vignettes, falsely anticipating the redemption of transcendental totality lost in modern society and the resurrection of the authentic self through the form of novel. On the other hand, *Remainder*’s materialism problematizes such exploitation of affect and confronts the convenient complicity between lyrical realism and bourgeois ideologies. Instead of associating the narrator’s traumatic experience and reenactments with the journey of a tragic hero and its teleological striving toward an integral and authentic self, *Remainder* formulates them in a kind of Kafkaesque absurdity. As the opening monologue intimates, the narrator is left with only the “technology”—the assembling and organization of “parts” and “bits”—as evidence of a past event. Ironically, it is also through his relentless searches for the “proper” parts and bits that he is turned against on the arrival of authenticity. Fractured into trivial pieces of matter, the nature of the accident and the reenacted *déjà-vu* remains inaccessible and unfathomable for him.

Vermeulen’s and Smith’s readings suggest that we may take *Remainder* as a fictional demonstration or rehearsal of Tom McCarthy and philosopher Simon Critchley’s criticism of authenticity in their “New York Declaration” (2007). In this joint manifesto, McCarthy and Critchley assert that art, like trauma, is “a repetitive mechanism” producing a hypnotic, “trance-

like stasis and intense psychic tingling” that we often mistake for aesthetic pleasure (18). Aligned with Smith’s critique of lyrical realism, the authors accuse the views of modernist idealism widely corroborated in art or literature, for modernist idealism tends to take the psychic tingling as the affective power of art to recuperate metaphysical transcendence. Put more specifically, the idealist conception of art presumes the capacity of fiction to formulate characters that represent the rise of an integral self, an autonomous individual, and an authentic identity. This idealist understanding treats novelistic characterization as a way of redeeming the lost transcendental totality in the disenchanted modern society.

By contrast, the manifesto undermines this holistic picture of characterization by disclosing the core of art and self as inauthentic and individualistic (9). For McCarthy and Critchley, art is “inauthenticity all the way down,” structuring around the materiality of “a series of repetitions and reenactments” (18). Likewise, contemporary subjects are “modern lovers of debris [fragmented remainders]” who consider “the brute materiality of the external world” truer than the metaphysical truth sought after by modernist idealism (6). Turning from subjective interiority to objective materiality, this individualistic image illustrates a self that “has no core, but is an experience of division, splitting” (9). In the novel, such an image is represented by the narrator’s definition of his existence after the accident as “[my] undoing: matter” (M 17) and, on the other hand, by his attraction to subjectivity becoming merged with the objective surroundings. Notified by the news of a man’s death caused by a shooting, the narrator considers the victim as “a symbol of perfection”:

[H]e’d done what I wanted to do: merged with the space around him, sunk and flowed into it until there was no distance between it and him—and merged, too,

with his actions, merged to the extent of *having no more consciousness* of them.

(M 177-78; italics added)

Showing his interest in this body-becoming-environment, the narrator particularly pays heed to its agentive state as consciousness withdraws. Throughout the novel, the narrator constantly demonstrates a similar fascination with actions performed outside the reach of conscious navigation. Rather than motions carried out by a human actor, the actions strike as actors in their own right and as a container assimilating the narrator's passive existence. As such, the narrator's body or actions are presented as the external milieu in which he embeds himself. Correspondingly, the narrator is split and distributed into various sectors: his mind, the body, and the surroundings.

To give form to the subject as "a dividual" (McCarthy and Critchley 9) with no core, McCarthy and Critchley maintain that trauma serves as the appropriate genre for shaping contemporary subjectivity, for "the forgotten origin of trauma . . . [cleaves] the self in twain," bequeathing to its victim a sense of existential uncertainty and inauthenticity through interminable repetitions (17). This forgotten origin, nonetheless, always leaves a mark, a material "remainder" alluding to the incident that the traumatized subject finds difficult to access (19). This is why the narrator in the novel is always provoked by the attentiveness to position—that is, the materiality of graphically correlated "parts" and "bits"—to reenact the untraceable memory: through such attentiveness, the narrator is enabled by a schematic framework to discover the "marks" of past experiences and, perhaps more crucially, to distribute his physical existence among them as a way to remember and re-live these experiences.

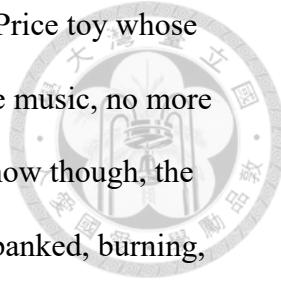
On the other hand, the spirit of trauma needs to be articulated through humor instead of melancholic suffering. According to McCarthy and Critchley, comedy is the mechanical

dividuation of the self. It opens up a critical distance that informs the disintegration and the estrangement of self for individuals to observe and ridicule their experiences (11, 14). By combining trauma repetition with the principle of comedy, *Remainder* facilitates a shift from psychic to technics, exhausting the aura of a tragic hero with the triviality of the material procession in each reenactment. From a building of its residents and cats moving in perfectly synchronized patterns to the mythical evaporation of a car's windshield-wiper fluid; from a shooting set in slow motion to a bank heist turning into an aircraft hijacking, the narrator reenacts highly specific scenarios that confuse the fine line between reality and fiction. They result in real-life consequences that problematize the staged reenactments' clean, congruent, and authentic identity. For example, to make the reenacted bank heist as "authentic" as possible, the narrator demands that his staff rob a real bank and escape with a plane. As the fuel runs out gradually, the narrator and the staff confront imminent death, while the aircraft flying in the pattern of the number 8 and pending for its crash. Without having a complete closure, the uncertain and ominous ending of the novel anticipates the failure of the narrator's pursuit of authenticity, attenuating its tragic value with the ludicrousness of the simulated-turned-real hijack.

Noticeably, the final suspension forms a narrative loop gesturing back toward the very beginning of the story—the falling object of an accident and the 8.5 million pounds offered by the corporations to “[close] the loop, so to speak” (5). The final suspension resembles the “messy” 0.5 dragging behind the number 8 (M 9):

I like this turning back and forth in mid-air, this banking one way, straightening, then banking back another, the feeling of weightlessness, suspension. I didn't want it to stop . . . Eventually the sun would set forever—burn out, pop,

extinguish—and the universe would run down like a Fisher Price toy whose spring has unwound to its very end. Then there'd be no more music, no more loops. Or maybe, before that, we'd just run out of fuel. For now though, the clouds tilted and the weightlessness set in once more as we banked, burning, heading back, *again*. (M 274-75; italics added)



The last word “again” seals the narrative in a loop, like the shape of 8 that is “infinitely turning back to itself” (M 9). However, it also implies the possibility of the aircraft crashing and of the falling machine disrupting the looping pattern. In this sense, the novel ends with a self-returning gesture that prompts the reader to go back to the very first sentence of the story and resume the narrative journey. Like the messy 0.5 million pounds, the word “again” points to “a leftover fragment” (M 9), or a remainder, and has a sense of suspension and uncertainty inscribed on the perfect shape of 8. By merging its ending with its beginning, *Remainder* creates what Smith describes as “comic declension” that precipitates the dividualization of the narrative identity, making the novel simultaneously the opening, the process, the ending, and the repetition of the story it tells. As this remainder intimates the coming of another accident with falling objects involved, the ending exposes the farcical and nonsensical nature of the narrator’s reenacted “authenticity,” rendering the narrative loop a Kafkaesque pursuit substantiated with comical absurdity.

The Logic of Automatism: Repetition of the Cognitive Nonconscious

The reformation of the trauma convention allows *Remainder* to recontextualize repetition in an emerging episteme whose center of interest, as Karl Deutsch observes, is shifted “from drives to steering” and “from instincts to systems of decisions, regulation, and control” (76). As mentioned above, critics such as Franklin, Vermeulen, and Smith believe this epistemic shift may

help us reconsider the material or nonhuman aspects crucial to contemporary lifestyle and reconfigure the hierarchical relationship between the subject and objects. As *Remainder*'s materialistic style gears our attention toward experiences mediated by technologically based repetition, this section investigates the correspondence between human behavior and machinic operation depicted in the novel.

Extending Vermeulen's and Smith's readings of trauma in *Remainder*, Emma Volk puts forward a provocative proposition that the novel serves as a work of science fiction challenging the modernist conception of subjectivity. Volk considers trauma as a speculative landscape where the novel explores elements that cannot be contained by the scope of the human psyche and yet are fundamental to contemporary experiences (4-6). Volk's argument recalls Franklin's idea of the reductive reading of trauma and Vermeulen's contention that trauma operates simply as a structural device in the novel. She notices that the narrative neutralizes trauma, presenting it "with no inherent political or social claims" by relocating it to the objective end (7). Without any presupposed social or political implications, trauma "operates as much as a concept as it does an actual event" in the novel (7), opening to flexible projections of the character's cognition of and reaction to the traumatic incident. In this sense, the novel approaches trauma through measures of the "science fictional ploy" that alienates a particular concept from our familiar understandings to create space for critical inquiry (7).¹¹

Passages highlighting the narrator's curious fixation on specific terms after the accident demonstrate Volk's observation of trauma functioning as an experimental site where presumed

¹¹ To justify her argument, Volk adopts Darko Suvin's idea of a "novum"—i.e., a "strange newness" around which a sense of reality and an understanding of a world is conjured (Suvin 4). She particularly notes that the forming of a novum has a dialectical relationship with the function of cognition, meaning that the estrangement simultaneously emerges from and precipitates transformations of our cognition.

sociopolitical meaning is suspended. Upon waking up from the coma, the narrator learns about the accident and the financial compensation offered by the corporations from his lawyer:

The Settlement. That word: *Settlement. Set-l-ment.* As I lay abject supine, traction and trussed up, all sorts of tubes and wires pumping one thing into my body and sucking another out, electronic metronomes and bellows making this speed up and that slow down, their beeping and rasping playing me, running through my useless flesh and organs like sea water through a sponge—during the months I spent in hospital, this word planted itself in me and grew. *Settlement.* It wormed its way into my coma . . . As the no-space of complete oblivion stretched and contracted itself into gritty shapes and scenes in my unconscious head . . . I'd think of the word's middle bit, the *-l-*, each time I tried to swallow. The Settlement made me gag before it gaged me . . . (M 6; italics in the original)

Instead of reflecting on the clauses proposed by the settlement, the narrator becomes absorbed in constant reiteration of the word “settlement” as a way to process the materiality, that is, the literal articulation of the word and the nauseous feeling it causes. The word enters the narrator’s physical system as bits of phonetic information along with other technological aids and stimuli, engendering physical responses even before his mind can register the social and legal significance implied by the document.

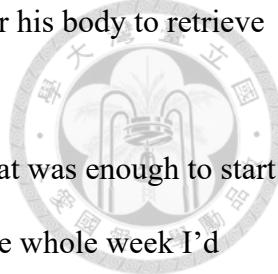
Even after being released from the hospital, the narrator continues to pick out particular words from a given text. He finds himself confounded by their meanings when encountering them in everyday situations. When he sees a sign on a movement car that reads “Airports, Stations, Light, Removals,” he cannot help wondering what the word “light” means and feeling “a slight wave of dizziness” washing over him as he ponders over the word (M 12). Similarly, he

constantly consults his facilitators or dictionaries for meanings of specific words that evoke the same kind of dizziness, learning them as curious compositions of sounds instead of as how they are usually used in quotidian exchanges.

Such an approach to language resembles how robots or automatons encounter human language. In her essay contemplating possible interpretative strategies facing the rise of open AI (e.g., chat-GPT), Hayles emphasizes the significant difference between how humans and machines learn or use language. According to Hayles, human subjects develop linguistic knowledge and intuition “with a model of the world” in the social contexts where they grow up; whereas machines only have “a model of the language” with which they register, correlate, and produce words functioning as technical expressions of mathematical calculations (258). The narrator’s reaction to texts intimates a similar reductive practice of language to machines as he perceives words outside the realm of given social contexts. Whether having difficulties understanding or sometimes simply ignoring what particular words mean in written sentences or conversations, the narrator treats them as what Hayles calls “a fragility of reference,” or “fractures that display a disjunction (really an ignorance) with how things work in reality” (258). To the narrator, these words appear as neutralized information and as the electronic stimuli sent into his body that cause certain physical reactions, stripped of meaningful connections between their articulations and a given worldview.

In addition to the way the narrator “re-learns” certain expressions, how he tends to put himself in a state of objective passivity (as mentioned in the previous section) also recalls our common descriptions of a robot or an automaton (Volk 7-8). In the training sessions for recovering his proprioceptive damage, the narrator is instructed to visualize the physiological process underlying the actions involved in grabbing and moving a carrot repeatedly. The narrator

describes this process as “rerouting” that “cut[s] and lay[s] new circuits” for his body to retrieve basic capacities for everyday activity (M 18):



I closed my fingers around the carrot. It felt—well, it *felt*: that was enough to start short-circuiting the operation. It had texture; it had mass. The whole week I'd been gearing up to lift it, I'd thought of my hand, my fingers, my routed brain as active agents, and the carrot as a no-thing—a hollow, a carved space for me to grasp and move. This carrot, though, was more active than me . . . I felt the surge of active carrot input scrambling the communication between brain and arm, firing off false contractions, locking muscles at the very moment it was vital they relax and expand, twisting fulcra joints the wrong directions. (M 19-20; italics in the original)

The proprioceptively injured body merges with the vegetable and becomes an autonomous mechanism that has its own agency. The repeated visualization of the anatomic details recalls the trial-and-error process feeding forward the self-correction of algorithmic programming. Through re-routing, the narrator seeks to re-establish a circuit that correlates his consciousness with the non-conscious somatic machinations. In other words, the narrator's body and mind become part of an agentive agglomeration by conforming to the processual chains of a circuit that helps him recover his proprioceptive faculty. No longer an active actor in and of himself, the narrator and his actions are now broken down into a procession of elements embedded in a complex subject-object fusion operating in repetitions.

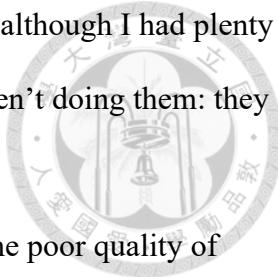
Although it remains doubtful whether it is theoretically beneficial to compare the novel's unconventional style with science fictional form based on the comparison between the narrator's post-trauma body and automatons, Volk's emphasis on cognitive alienation (5) serves as a

helpful indication to comprehending the automatic aspect of the narrator's corporeality. The narrator's failure to form a full picture of any given context shows his inability to integrate somatic signals and external stimuli into logically consistent and coherent mental representations. This inability shows that proprioception performs tasks comparable to the nonconscious cognition elucidated by Hayles. While the cognitive nonconscious provides an interpretative scheme for filtering and integrating sensual inputs into framed and discernable information before conscious perception (Hayles 88), the narrator's intense physical reaction (the dizziness) reflects his state of becoming overwhelmed in the absence of a working pattern that may help with his conscious apprehension of experiences.

In this case, the narrator's reenactments and outsourcing of the looping structures serve as the attempt of the narrator's consciousness to summon alternative means to compensate for the neurological damage. They substitute and externalize the micro-physiological mechanism, turning the tasks of the cognitive nonconscious into visible patterns based on which the narrator processes experiences. One of the effects of relocating the nonconscious faculty from a micro to a macro level is the narrator's repeated requests for slow-motioned reenacting, which manifests the belatedness of the consciousness. Compared to the high-speed functioning of the cognitive nonconscious, the reenactments ordered on a conscious level can only recuperate the repetitive structure of the cognitive nonconscious but not its speed. The slow uptake of consciousness makes the narrator spend more time accessing and analyzing his experiences. For instance, when reenacting a shooting scene, the narrator commands the reenactors to perform the criminal act as slowly as possible to the extent that every action becomes static:

My two assassins took their time in killing me. The slowed-down pace at which they raised and fired their guns, the lack of concern or interest this seemed to

imply, the total absence on my part of any attempt to escape although I had plenty of time to do so—all these made our action passive. We weren't doing them: they were being done. (M 193)



Hayles argues that the narrator's rigorous control of time suggests the poor quality of these reenactments as the replacement for the cognitive nonconscious (89, 93). Despite the narrator's efforts, the reenactments cannot perform as fluently as the original neural machinations do. Moreover, the absence of the cognitive nonconscious encourages the consciousness to obtain overbearing control over details to the point of maniacal obsession. According to Hayles, such obsession symptomatizes a kind of "imperialism of higher consciousness" (90). The tyranny of consciousness can result in ethical pitfalls as the narrator takes the exploitation of resources for granted, making him believe in his power to control and manipulate reality through the ordering of reenactments.¹²

While agreeing with Hayles's warning against the danger of prioritizing consciousness over nonconscious cognition, I argue that *Remainder* is more than a counterexample evincing what may happen if we only acknowledge the power of consciousness while neglecting the interplay between conscious and nonconscious workings. By underscoring the patterns—the loops—based on which the narrator navigates his actions, the narrative affirms the narrator's instinct to search for alternative constructs that may outsource the logic of automatism underlying human cognition.

Intending to reenact the shooting, the narrator is obsessed with the forensic details of the crime and is particularly drawn to the operation of the instrument—the gun—involved. To him, the firearm is an engine "that endlessly repeats itself" (M 170). More significantly, it is "history

¹² One of the examples illustrated by Hayles is the narrator's intention to adjust the pace of sunlight to assure the perfection of the reenacted scenario. This "reveals the extent to which he believes he can control his environment" (93).

itself, spinning alternate future in their chamber, hurling the present from their barrel, casting aside the empty shells of past" (M 171). This machine temporality which superimposes the future, the present, and the past simultaneously upon the moment of gunfire designates what Hayles observes as the future anterior tense embodied by algorithmic nonconscious (144). As the future anterior "stapl[es] the future to the past through an articulation in the present" (Hayles 144), the reenactment operates in the time of the gun that converges future possibilities (the anticipated outcomes of the reenactments) and past events (the real shooting and the *déjà-vu*) at the present moment of reenacting.

On top of the criminal instrument, the "action-reaction pattern" underlying a robbery, in which "A does X, B does Y in response, A then does Z" in the course of interaction (M 222), also marks the speculative nature of the digital nonconscious. In this interactive circuit, participants (the robber, the bank, the police, etc.) rely on predictions extrapolated from collected information to act and respond before and during a heist. By emphasizing the role of prediction, this pattern corresponds to the interpretative model brought forth by the recursive temporality of technical cognition. According to Hayles, this temporal and interpretative loop is most obviously visible in the pervasive application of algorithms in the stock markets (145).¹³ Also depending on the act of prediction, the computers reach investment decisions by speculating possible future prices according to the data provided by the markets as if the speculated circumstances have already turned into reality at the moment of transactions. Likewise, in the bank heist depicted in the narrative, each party is "programmed" to respond or to take measures following the predictions of possible outcomes and others' reactions, hoping to manipulate the information in their favor (M 222-23).

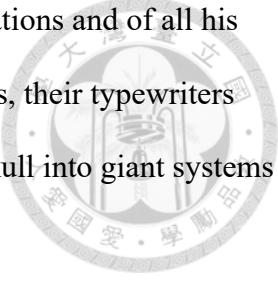
¹³ Interestingly, the theme of financial investment or stock market also plays a crucial role in the earlier part of the novel.

The reenactments render the narrator comparable to algorithmic cognition by reproducing patterns conforming to the temporal logic of the cognitive nonconscious. As the narrator continues to merge with the reenacted scenes, he embeds himself in the repetition of reenactments operating as substitute nonconscious cognition, conflates with the technical cognition (such as the gun) employed on site, and, consequently, accesses experiences through the future anterior tense of the technical cognition. The conflation constitutes what Hayles terms “a planetary cognitive ecology” that captures the “escalating complexities created by the interpenetration of cognitive technologies with human systems” (19). It implies the overlap between human and digital cognition.

The novel highlights the common ground between human and digital cognition with the character Naz, the leader of the facilitators. The narrator describes Naz as “an extra set of limbs” assisting him in coordinating logistics and executing instructions during reenactments (M 69). Naz’s exceptional skills in resourcing, analyzing data, and communication constitute a trait that runs in his family. The narrative introduces his family as generations of book-keepers—a “long line of scribes, recorders, clerks, logging transactions and events, passing on orders and instructions that made new transactions happen” (M 69). Following the family profession, Naz contributes to the narrator’s projects by documenting, organizing, and communicating information that makes the reenactments feasible. The information he shares with the narrator not only helps with ongoing reenactments but also inspires new projects (such as the shooting).

The descriptions of Naz and his family recall Bernard Stiegler’s idea of tertiary retention as artificial organs. Their professions gesture towards a set of mnemotechniques that enable the exteriorization and reproduction of memory or traces of memory. It is worth noticing that the narrator compares the professions and Naz’s talent for logistics with computer calculation:

I could almost hear the whirring: the whirring of his computations and of all his ancestry, of rows and rows of clerks and scribes and actuaries, their typewriters and ledgers and adding machines all converging inside his skull into giant systems hungry to execute ever larger commands. (M 209)



Confronted with the narrator's complicated instructions and an abundance of information, Naz's eyes "went vacant" when processing them and "became alive again" once the calculation terminates (M 80, 209). The impersonal objecthood when dealing with information shows that Naz becomes a computer, a program designed for sorting data and generating results under precise orders. Project after project, Naz develops a kind of bureaucratic zealotry for information management as its level of complexity increases. "He needed me as much as I needed him," the narrator states, "And need him I did, more than ever" (M 237). Inseparable in a collaborative synthesis with the narrator, Naz is transformed from a project manager into an embodiment of an algorithmic cognition serving as the narrator's exosomatic organ.

In this case, Naz conjoins with the narrator and other technical or material constituents in a cognitive assemblage, or, in Hayles's terms, a planetary cognitive ecology. This assemblage, represented by the operation of the reenactments, resembles an automatic system as it creates a sense of spontaneity—a special quality defining automation as the key form of tertiary retention in the digital society. As Stiegler explains, algorithmic automation makes possible the reproduction of traces of individual behavior, social relations, and the process of individuation (*Automatic Society* 19). It manifests the most advantaged stage of tertiary retention that has never been witnessed in eras before the surge of digital technologies. More distinctively, it permits a control or regulation over reality with its ability to reproduce events while distributing them in real-time, blurring the boundaries between fact and fiction (19). While the reenactments seek to

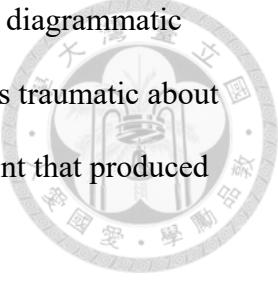
re-instate particular situations or actions enmeshed in sophisticatedly networked objects, they enable the narrator to access traces of memories (the *déjà-vu*) in real-time, at present. More significantly, not only are the reenacted experiences mediated by precise programming—that is, the narrator's rigorous modulation, but they are also heavily informed by the spontaneous and immediate effects caused during reenacting. These effects make the staged situations (fiction) inseparable from reality (fact). Moreover, as these reenactments mark and help facilitate the becoming-individual of the contemporary subject, they also demonstrate tertiary retention's pivotal function of intervening in individuation in this era.

In short, as the narrator relies on reenactments as the external nonconscious, the narrative suggests that a cognitive mechanism inaccessible to consciousness but working closely with it is fundamental to the subject's cognition of experiences and of the world. The reenactments structure the narrator's experience in repetition and the future anterior tense and conflate him with material and technological settings as he falls into a passive state. In this sense, they foreground the nonconscious aspect of human behavior, indicating the logic of automatism that undergirds human cognition and renders the characters comparable to algorithmic systems.

The Pharmacological Dangers and Epiphanies of Repetition

As *Remainder* represents the logic of automatism with the motif of repetition, what are some possible significances implied by the advent of this logic with the cognitive model captured in the narrative? Moreover, what can the novel tell us about this particular era where contemporary individuals rely more and more on such logic to conduct actions and living? In Franklin's words, the novel is a critical inquiry probing what kinds of "realizations" we need when the basis of experience and subjectification becomes the materiality of loops undergirding

almost every sector of contemporary life (158). More specifically, given the diagrammatic correspondence between the machinic loop and trauma repetition, “[What] is traumatic about viewing the world as a network of objects and matter in the historical moment that produced *Remainder*” (158)?



One possible approach to the questions is to consider the novel as an alert to the danger of apathetic repetition. As mentioned above, the novel manifests the author’s attempt to reconfigure subjectivity as dividualistic at a time when technological mediation fractures and replaces holistic transcendence. In fact, the novel also represents symptoms generated by the cultural logic behind such a picture. The narrator’s uncontrollable urge to reenact is presented as a destructive addiction at times in the narrative. The tingling—the sole sensation accumulated in the reenactments—sends the narrator in overwhelmingly ecstatic trances described as “waking comas” (M 195). They impede active actions and thoughts even if the narrator remains conscious all along, conditioning him to a hypnotic state as if under the influence of drugs.

Doctor Trevellian explains to Naz that the trances are prompted by endogenous opioids—i.e., the body’s “painkiller” generated by the neurological system in the face of trauma. This inner stimulus “can be rather pleasant” to the extent that “the system goes looking for more of them” uncontrollably (M 196). Driven by this irresistible “drug,” the narrator engrosses ardently in the recreations and ordering of realities, so much so that he is completely oblivious to the pernicious impacts they bring. Cats and people die, and the facilitators get trapped on a plane about to crash. For the narrator though, they exist only as part of the props that make his reproduced realities sufficient.

Franklin considers this destructive tendency as “the violence of digitality” (167). By this, he refers to a kind of violence underlying the conceptualization of cognition as automatic

feedback loops. The lack of empathy shown in the narrative reveals the impossibility or at least the dilemma of such conceptualization. As Franklin writes, if everything (e.g., subjectivity and social relations) must be conceived as always already enmeshed in loops, “then socioeconomic violence (i.e., the results of falling outside of a given system of networked representation) must be both properly unimaginable and at the same time the ground or raw material upon which such systems are built” (173). In other words, the idea of “remainder” entails an unsolved paradox: on the one hand, it hints at the existence of a particular formulation of technological basis (i.e., the circuits, the loops) that precipitates a shift in our epistemic regime; on the other hand, it alludes to the seemingly ineluctable injustice engendered by the transition, highlighting its ethical inattentiveness to those uncontrollable in the looping constructs (the falling cats, reenactors, and aircraft).

Still, the narrative provides glimpses into moments of epiphanies which, although transitorily, open to chances allowing a different take on reality. In the early stages of his first project, the narrator quickly realizes he needs to be “irrational” to make things right for the reenactment (M 89). He encourages Naz’s “piecemeal approach” to things instead of a logical overview in the planning process. Meanwhile, he welcomes a lack of comprehension during the reenactments, anticipating the facilitators and reenactors to understand as little as possible about their tasks (M 101). This inclination for unthought not only corroborates his desire for becoming objects and for pure stasis but also introduces a peculiar point of view to his perception.

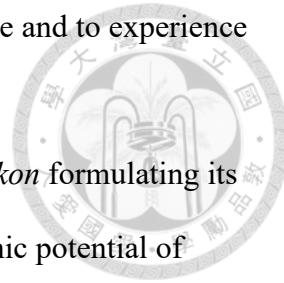
To control and dictate his first reenacted scene remotely while being preoccupied with other errands, the narrator asks his staff to build a model of the staged building as a reference for command. Soon, he discovers a fascinating usage of this model—embodying and reenacting the movement of sunlight:

I lay beside the model looking at it from the same angle as the sun did. My gaze burst in through the upper staircase window and flooded the floor's patterned maze, then slowly—very slowly, almost imperceptibly—glazed, lost its focus, darkened and retreated, disappearing from the furthest edge of floor four hours and seven minutes after it had first entered. I did this for each floor I'd previously measured: four hours and seven minutes for the top down to three hours and fourteen minutes for the second. (M 148)

By repeating the shift of sunlight with his gaze grazing over the model, the narrator encounters the materiality of the reproduced reality from a temporal scale far foreign to how individuals typically register their surroundings. The repetition channels an impersonal perspective of the sun to the subtle movement of the narrator's eyeballs, substantiating the near-frozen session with nonhuman dynamics.

Throughout the novel, the impersonal dynamics turn the duration of motionless unthought into periods of “suspension” (M 205, 223, 274) filled with transformative force. The suspension intimates the hybrid nature of the reenactments, each of which does not simply reproduce a singular event but “[a] mix of several ones, real and imaginary,” a combination of “[ones] that could happen, ones that have, and ones that might at some time in the future” (224). Operating in the temporality of the nonconscious repetition, the suspension conjoins past experiences and speculative possibilities together in the present stasis, until a sudden kick of irrational epiphany navigates the narrator to reenact and actualize one or a combination of these alternatives. As the narrator states, the random, illogical manner “get[s] me looking at things in a way I wouldn’t normally” (M 90). It tears open the “camouflage” deceiving the eyes of rational

human beings, allowing the narrator to let things happen in their own course and to experience them without thinking consciously (M 90).



Remainder presents algorithmic loops as the contemporary *pharmakon* formulating its distinct form of care/attention by capturing both the danger and the epiphanic potential of repetition. As Stiegler points out, *pharmakon* is the key tertiary retention of a particular era, which conditions an *episteme*—i.e., forms of knowledge informing “knowing how to do, knowing how to live, [and] knowing how to think” (3). *Remainder*’s emphasis on hypnotic trances and irrational unthought casts light on the emergence of a model of attention in the digital society, where the overflow of information and ever-increasing dependence on algorithmic technologies transform how humans conceptualize and interact with reality. As Alice Bennett contends, *Remainder* is a novel of attention that explores the “residual” or “amputated” attention marking the contemporary self as a dividual (95). The narrative’s recurrent usages of liquid metaphors, such as the flow of actions, musical notes, and windshield-wiper fluid, represent how the present world is constructed and comprehended as convoluted streams of information (107).

To attend to such a world in his reenactments, the narrator succumbs to what Bennett calls the “blind spot” of consciousness (97), searching for the unthinking and perfect assimilation with what he deems to be the authenticity of actions or objective settings. This attentional blind spot highlights the internal tension within the digital *episteme*. In one respect, the narrator’s meticulous care for trivialities reflects the tendency of the contemporary subject to gather and consume information in a flattened and inclusive manner to experience and recognize the world. However, the comprehensive absorption also amounts to a sensory overload that hinders the focus of the subject (107), causing distraction or even attentional paralysis such as the narrator’s waking comas.

This internal tension may suggest both the curative and detrimental impacts and hence the pharmacological potential of the repetition in the novel. To Stiegler, a *pharmakon* can be either therapeutic or toxic depending on whether its entailed attentional form enables the individuation process. Operating in repetition, a *pharmakon* (tertiary retention) can produce difference and indifference. More specifically, since each repetition unfolds as a separate temporal phenomenon, subjects can derive new observations and significance each time they revisit the repeated events. In this regard, repetition allows individuals to have different focuses when approaching a specific experience and consequently come up with new realizations that help them transition into new states of being. However, repetition can also lead to indifference, meaning an entropic state in which things lose momentum to evolve into something alternative and individuals no longer anticipate transformation.

Remainder illustrates both tendencies with its motif of repetition. On the one hand, the peculiarly inclusive attentiveness helps incorporate the impersonal perspective in ways that human cognition can access, if not fully apprehend. On the other hand, the physical and mental paralysis the narrator experiences during the waking comas and his addiction to the paralyzing tingling also demonstrate the possible costs of the attentional form. As the novel shows, the gap between becoming impersonal and becoming cramped by overloaded stimuli and, hence, irresponsible toward other beings is narrow and delicate.

Conclusion

Read pharmacologically, *Remainder* captures the cultural logic of the digital society through layered representations of repetition that hint at the potential gives and takes of this logic. The goal of this chapter is not to infer ethical critiques of such logic from the representations or

to claim possible solutions to the dilemma of digital humanity offered in the text. Rather, it dissects how the logic of automatism serves as the foundation of experience, actions, and meaning distribution in today's world. As illustrated in the novel, human characters have become more and more homogenized with non-human actors and objective surroundings with their similar behavioral or operative patterns. Especially, abiding by the recursive temporality, the reenactments conflate human cognition with the technological nonconscious, showing how the narrator registers and constructs reality with a kind of machinic instinct that renders him comparable to algorithmic systems.

After examining how individuality unfolding in automatic repetition characterizes digital humanity in *Remainder*, the next chapter will investigate the social possibilities of the logic of automatism shown in Ben Lerner's *10:04*. If *Remainder* helps us develop a comprehensive impression of what digital humanity is and the pharmacological tendencies its machinic cognition implies, *10:04* further explores how a sense of collectivity shared within the human community can be fostered with this cognition.

Chapter Four

From Bad Forms of Collectivity to Impersonal Epiphanies:

Repetition with a Difference in *10:04*



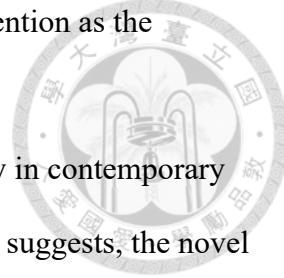
Lerner's *10:04* is an auto-fiction centered on its semi-autobiographical narrator-protagonist Ben. A poet-novelist, the character Ben is sponsored with a large sum of commission to write a novel that turns out to be the one we are reading. This chapter analyzes how *10:04* explores the potential of literature, as a form of tertiary retention, to foster a healthy form of collectivity based on its repetitive structure and recursive temporality.

The novel comprises themes and critical questions gaining much currency in contemporary literary studies. Alison Gibbons contextualizes the work in light of the structure of experience in the Anthropocene. Incorporating two identical hurricanes at the beginning and at the end of the narrative, the novel illustrates how nonhuman factors play an important role in shaping the structure of feeling nowadays (139). Leonid Blimes focuses on the intersection of literary narration and digital mnemotechnologies in the media-saturated age. To Blimes, the novel underscores the similarity between the temporal order of writing as technics, on the one hand, and digital memory technology, on the other hand. It reflects on “narrative as a kind of possibility that brings about acts of remembrance” (1084), asking how the rise of digital technology reforms the narrative logic and facilitates “a shift in temporality, whereby present experience is increasingly relegated to future recollection” (1081). Also thinking about the influence of digital technology, Alice Bennett questions how the narrative cultivates an attentional form specific to the digital society, where the distribution of experience and

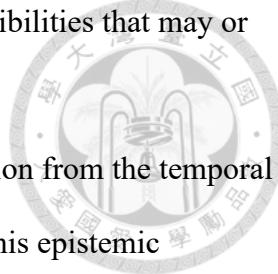
comprehension via algorithms foregrounds distraction in lieu of perfect attention as the prominent epistemic pattern (136).

These discussions indicate the significance of nonhuman materiality in contemporary fiction's rethinking of realism in the twenty-first century. As Ben de Bruyn suggests, the novel marks the emerging awareness of the "existential charge" contained in material mediums such as hurricanes, which frames contemporary subjectivity in a complex of barometric memories and hence challenges the anthropocentric image of humanity (962-63).

Noticeably, these scholars broach the nonhuman temporality that generates particular affects and undergirds subjective perception of reality. Gibbons borrows Gary Morson's idea of sideshadowing, which designates time as "a field of possibilities" to examine the temporal regime of repetition (143). The sideshadowing of repetitive events puts forth a kind of anticipation for retrospection in the narrative, making the present heterochronic by substantiating it with multiple projections of possible futures (141). Blimes explains that this kind of heterochronic historicity unfolds in the future anterior tense of prolepsis (1086). Extending Mark Currie's theory of narrative time, Blimes proposes that the future anterior tense represented in *10:04* exhibits the ways in which the becoming of the self or of the present comes about through repetition that conjoins the present with its futurity (1086-87). In other words, the present or one's identity is understood via speculation of how it will be remembered in the future. Pieter Vermeulen also draws attention to the play of prolepsis in the novel. In addition to pointing out the retrospective-speculative structure of the tense, he highlights how Lerner shifts the stress from the future to the present with the minimal difference produced by repetition (666). This transition maintains the recursive structure yet emphasizes how present experiences tend to sit on



the border of actuality and virtuality as the grammar projects a pool of possibilities that may or may not turn out as reality (668).



While Bennett, Blimes, and Vermeulen explore affirmative inspiration from the temporal structure of contemporary experiences, Jacque O'Dell is suspicious about this epistemic framework. O'Dell worries that the structuring principle of repetition easily enlists the capitalist machinations in the neoliberal economy. As the recursive temporality opens the present to multiple possibilities and renders it indeterminate, O'Dell maintains that repetition in the novel operates like “an engine for generating, accumulating, and recirculating surplus meaning in much the same way that money moves” (452). Although this thesis is aware of O'Dell's concern about the complicity between the temporality of repetition and capitalism, I argue that this pessimistic view about repetition ignores the potential of this “engine,” in O'Dell's words, to resist the regime of value in capitalist society in the narrative. As de Bruyn observes, the indeterminacy implied by repetition in the novel challenges the Enlightenment image of subjectivity by transforming subjectivity into “the experience of being enveloped in the material medium,” as well as the experience of “possibility culminating in a beautifully phrased moment of insight” (963, 965).

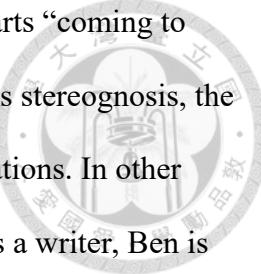
These scholars' readings of repetition's temporality echo the future anterior tense of the cognitive nonconscious examined in previous chapters. In addition, their opposite attitudes—O'Dell's suspicion *vs.* Bennett et al.'s affirmation—indicate the double-edged nature of repetition as *pharmakon* and of its temporal order. While Chapter Three focuses on the correspondence between human and digital nonconscious established by the future anterior tense, this chapter follows these critics' analysis of prolepsis and looks into the curative potential of transformation retained in the present significantly informed by its futurity. I read the

representation of impersonal repetition as demonstration of what Hayles points out as the cognitive nonconscious, a manifestation of the human cognition that resonates with Stiegler's conception of tertiary retention. The critics' contentions about the nonhuman factors, including the weather, digital technology, or even the economic system, suggest that digital repetition be taken as the substratum underlying the material forces that shape our sense of self and collectivity in this era. More specifically, the narrative principle (i.e., the prolepsis) entailed by the machinic repetition echoes Hayles's concept of the narrative nature of the cognitive nonconscious and, on the other hand, Stiegler's understanding of the connections between memory and technology. Both thinkers' ideas provide useful lenses through which to consider the materiality constituting the ways we think and experience today.

In the first section, I analyze how the temporality of impersonal repetition stages the correspondence between the subject, technology, and art or literature by capturing them existing or operating in similar epistemic structures. The second part of this chapter asks how the correspondence enables the formation of a de-anthropocentric collectivity with a new paradigm of meaning making implied by repetitions that produce horizontally branched differences. Similar to *Remainder*'s narrator, the protagonist Ben resorts to the irrational power of the nonconscious to perceive the world, which opens Ben's cognition to estranged epiphanies and to nonhuman realms of significance inaccessible to his consciousness.

The Flicker of Possibility in the Automatic Body

Like *Remainder*'s narrator, Ben endures proprioceptive breakdowns striking as the collapse of the cognitive nonconscious. He is diagnosed with Marfan, a disorder of the connective tissue that leads to enfeebled neurological connections between a patient's body and



mind. As a result, he experiences his state of being as a collection of body parts “coming to possess a terrible neurological autonomy” (Lerner, 10:04 7).¹⁴ His brain lacks stereognosis, the capacity to integrate local tactile information into coherent mental representations. In other words, he “cannot read the realistic fiction the world appears to be” (L 7). As a writer, Ben is keen to pick up the nature of proprioception (or, of nonconscious cognition) as a narrative apparatus. Without it to provide an effective interpretative schema, the protagonist has difficulty forming a consistent narrative—the “realistic fiction”—about his experiences and about the world.

Echoing the narrator’s recourse to reenactments in *Remainder*, Ben outsources the proprioceptive faculty to external machinery. On various occasions, he relies on the technology of sonography to perceive existential facts about his presence, social relationships, and the world of nature. As a Marfanoid, the protagonist undergoes regular MRI tests that monitor the diameters of his arteries. Owing to the autonomy of his organs, the diametrical limit (4.5 centimeters) of his aortic root is narrower than the normal caliber before the aorta dilates and reaches fatal dissection. The sonographic tests help keep track of the figures, based on which his doctors decide when surgical intervention is necessary. At 4.2 centimeters, the protagonist finds himself “burdened with the awareness” of the significance of the foreboding statistics, sensing the future “collapsing in upon me as each contraction expanded, however infinitesimally, the overly flexible tubing of my heart” (L 5, 7). In this sense, the protagonist turns himself into an object of scientific measurement, whose existence is subjected to and accessed through predictions extrapolated from the clinical data.

Not just in the case of individual existence, the application of sonographic technology in antenatal check-ups and weather forecasting also suggests the same statistical significance. As

¹⁴ Hereafter, quotations from the novel will be referred to as L in in-text citations.

meteorologists predict Hurricane Sandy could be one of the most menacing cyclonic events in decades, the protagonist senses the air of New York City filled with “an imminent, man-made excitation” before the hurricane arrives (L 213). Meanwhile, he accompanies his friend Alex to the clinic for a parental visit where the doctor alerts them to the possible miscarriage. Ben compares the baby to “the coming storm” and realizes that the risk of the baby “never mak[ing] landfall” runs high as the sonogram prognosticates an increased chance of miscarriage with unexplained bleeding in the mother’s womb (L 233).

In these instances, the technology of sonography translates personal and collective experiences, as well as human and non-human matters, into concepts of digit and probability. It intimates a narrative paradigm in which the protagonist absorbs things and thinks in an anxious prolepsis unfolding in the future anterior tense (Blimes 1086). Conforming to the recursive temporality of the cognitive nonconscious, sonography provides a temporal model that frames the present in a suspension of projected possibilities. The protagonist is thus confronted with “a sense of depresentification” (Blimes 1085) that prompts him to take immediate experiences as consigned to their future memories rather than as what they appear to be at the moment. The aortic root is not simply the artery with a 4.2-centimeter diameter; the baby is not just a fetus with strong heartbeats; and Hurricane Sandy constitutes more than a cyclonic system “still a few days away off the coast of Nicaragua” (L 213). Rather, they are presented as their anticipated misfortunes as if the catastrophes have already arrived.

Leonid Blimes contends that the novel’s representation of the sense of depresentification manifests a shift in contemporary *episteme* in which “the tense structure of our experience” directs our focus from the present to the future, subjecting now to its futurity as in how it will be remembered (1085). Adding to Blime’s contention, I maintain that this epistemic transition takes

root in the surfacing of the nonconscious cognition represented as the impersonal intelligence in the narrative. In the novel, the protagonist notices that the ultrasound technology performs as “a premonition from the future . . . too alien to integrate into a narrative” (236). The technical nonconscious interrupts the faculty of human rationality with which the mind constructs lived experiences in a linear chronological narrative. The sonography relocates experiences onto an estranged impersonal scale and, thus, opens a gap between events and the protagonist’s mental comprehension of them, prompting him to feel “equidistant from all my memories as the sense of time collapsed” (L 236).

This technical nonconscious does not simply operate as an ancillary working closely with the protagonist’s cognition. Rather, the machinic prolepsis it entails compensates for proprioception and externalizes the cognitive nonconscious embedded in human physiology. Throughout the novel, the protagonist derives sensory impressions from a visceral mechanism that escapes the reign of consciousness:

We sat and watched the traffic and I am kidding and I am not kidding when I say that I *intuited an alien intelligence*, felt subject to a succession of images, sensations, memories, and affects that did not, properly speaking, belong to me: the ability to perceive polarized light; a conflation of taste and touch as salt was rubbed into the suction cups; a terror localized in my extremities, *bypassing the brain* completely. (L 5; italics added)

This alien intuition marks the overlap between human beings and the nonhuman world, for it is also incorporated in various technological productions in the narrative, such as the technologically configured cityscape. The protagonist roams through the city and senses himself

“combining but not dissolving” into a dividualistic identity that opens to a “still-uninhabited second person plural” with the mediation of architecture and traffic systems (L108):

I breathed in the night air that was or was not laced with anachronistic blossoms and felt the small thrill I always felt to a lesser or greater degree when I looked at Manhattan’s skyline and the innumerable illuminated windows and the liquid sapphire and ruby of traffic on the FDR Drive and the present absence of the towers . . . What I felt when I tried to take in the skyline—and instead was taken in by it—was a fullness indistinguishable from being emptied, my personality dissolving into a personhood so abstract that every atom belonging to me as good belonged to Noor, the fiction of the world rearranging itself around her. (L 108-9)

The protagonist immerses in and becomes inseparable from the cityscape as the technological transfiguration renders nature and space containable by the cognitive structure of his alien intuition. More significantly, it is in the “built space,” instead of in the raw nature, that the protagonist discovers a sublime thrill and anticipation for a sense of collectivity (L 108). For him, art (architecture) and technology (traffic systems) constitute the human dimension of the nonconscious, whereby the world coincides with human experiences. Such coincidence, in turn, allows him to develop an estranged realization about the nonhuman reality.

Following Blimes (1081), I propose that Stiegler’s idea of tertiary retention provides a useful framework for analyzing the projections of possible collectivity in *10:04*. As a writer, the protagonist takes particular interest in how different forms of art, especially literature, organize momentary experiences of correspondence with the narrative logic of the nonconscious. He recounts his experience appreciating Christian Marclay’s *The Clock* (2010) in the theater and elucidates how the work’s repetition assimilates its audience into a collective sense of

contemporary life. *The Clock* is an installation in which the artist selects movie scenes or television footage that feature clocks or timepieces and edits these images into a looped 24-hour montage. The time indicated by the timepiece in each cut is synchronized with the actual time in reality as the montage plays in circadian repetitions. Therefore, the work functions like a real clock, turning the fictional time indistinguishable from the nonfictional duration (L 53). While the audience is allowed to enter and leave the theater at will during its exhibition, the protagonist proposes that *The Clock* brings forth “a supragenre that made visible our collective, unconscious sense of rhythms of the day” (L 53). Like the actors who go about their everyday activity in the scenes, the come-and-go of the audience renders their visits to theaters just another random affair “when we expect to kill or fall in love or clean ourselves or eat or fuck or check our watch and yawn” (L 53). In this regard, *The Clock* evokes a sense of collectivity by assimilating the audience and the actors in “the beating of a compound heart” (L 53), fostering a visceral awareness of the correspondence between alternative narratives of quotidian life.

The protagonist emphasizes that such correspondence does not entirely homogenize fiction and nonfiction. Instead, it enables the coincidence between them by superimposing the fictional possibilities upon the actual timeline:

[W]hile the duration of a real minute and *The Clock*’s minute were mathematically indistinguishable, they were nevertheless minutes from different worlds. I watched time in *The Clock*, but wasn’t in it, or I was experiencing time as such, not just having experiences through it as a medium. As I made and unmade a variety of overlapping narratives out of its found footage, I felt acutely how many different days could be built out of a day, *felt more possibility than determinism, the utopian glimmer of fiction.* (L 54; italics added)

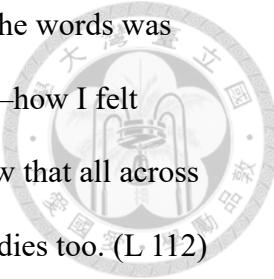
The description of *The Clock* and its interaction with the audience recalls the feature of mechanical automation that allows organizations, collages, and replays of materials accumulated from various media. It presents a self-conscious combination of cinematic time and spontaneous nonfictional chronology and, thereby, gestures toward a pool of possible narratives of contemporary life. Through its repetition—both its representation of time and its looping as an art installation, *The Clock* brings fragments of experiences into new arrangements of memories. It thus constitutes a mnemonic object conforming to Stiegler's "future-gazing definition of technics" (Blimes 1085), which comprehends tertiary retention as the inscription of possibility.¹⁵

On the other hand, the visceral rhythm of the compound heart casts light on the protagonist's quest for a positive form of collectivity in the novel. The protagonist continues to search for what he calls the "proprioceptive flicker in advance of a communal body" that leads to "the utopian glimmer of fiction" (L 28, 54). More specifically, he tries to trace the circulation of cultural events through the impersonal correspondence between literary narration and media coverage. In a speech, Ben remembers how he was motivated to become a poet by Reagan's presidential address as a child. He recalls the empowering moment when watching Reagan addressing and commemorating the *Challenger* disaster on television. At the end of Reagan's presidential address, Peggy Noonan, who drafted the script, quoted a poem written by an unknown young pilot before his death. The protagonist remembers feeling the lines "entered my body as much as my mind" and getting caught in a feast of emotional epiphanies as he sensed the poetic meter washing over him and his family (L 112):

The prosody of that last part of the sentence, the way the iambs offered both a sense of climax and of closure, the way the alternating stresses lent the speech a sense of authority and dignity, of mourning and reassurance—I felt it in my chest;

¹⁵ Stiegler defines technics as "the inscription of, within a living being, a possible" (*Technics and Time*, 3 203).

the sentence pulled me into the future . . . [T]he meaning of the words was nothing compared to that first experience of poetic measure—how I felt simultaneously comforted and stirred by the rhythm and knew that all across America those rhythms were working in millions of other bodies too. (L 112)



As Ben observes, the affective forces course through and possess his body along with the rest of the American citizens during the live broadcasting, conflating them in a visceral rhythm that resonates with the poetic meter.

Ben delves into a genealogical examination of the presidential address and the circulation of its concluding lines. He describes Noonan's artistry as "a kind of palimpsestic plagiarism" that turns a mediocre poem into an aesthetic revelation, a moving memory that "belongs to nobody in particular" (L 114, 116). The poetic prosody and grammar serve as the supra-individual neurons that channel the cultural catastrophe into possibilities of future narratives and significance, establishing a kind of "transpersonality" that underlies the whole community (L 112). In other words, the conclusion of Reagan's speech expresses its power not through the given semantic meaning of words but, instead, through a collective anticipation for the future invoked by the formal measure applied in the speech. This formal measure—i.e., the prosody—corresponds to Ben's intuited alien intelligence, both of which navigate experiences and frame significance in a way that bypasses rational comprehension, unifying people with the circulation of non-thinking affects in the community.

The protagonist also notices that a series of bad jokes about the *Challenger* incident circulated spontaneously in the aftermath of the tragedy. The jokes "seemed to come out of nowhere, or to come from everywhere at once" (L 115). They, as Ben maintains, provide a humorous template to deal with "the remainder of the trauma that . . . couldn't fully integrate into

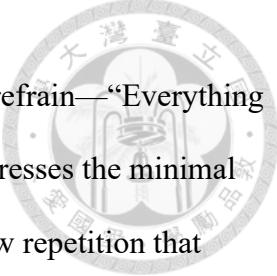
our lives" (L 115). The joke cycle exists as a "transpersonal syntax," a "shadow language" that frames meaning at the blind spot of the consciousness (L 115). What the protagonist considers "transpersonal" echoes the exosomatized mechanism of tertiary retention that operates as the extension of human cognitive nonconscious. The repetitions of the iambic and jokes record and congregate individual experiences or memories of the catastrophe and re-order them into specific narratives that inscribe possibilities of future interpretations or memories. These repetitions (re)invent collective recollections of particular events through narrativization of personal and public experiences related to said events, producing an affirming sense of the future in society (Blimes 1084). In this sense, they embody a kind of curative potential that helps the community deal with the tragic event.

Noticeably, *10:04*'s representation of mnemonic technologies undermines Stiegler's pessimistic prognosis of a kind of entropic stupidity prompted by the application of digital media (Blimes 1084). Whereas Stigler continues to warn against the standardization of memory caused by non-thinking repetition (*Age of Disruption*), Lerner highlights the narrative power of nonconscious repetition that retains the potential to change in the intersection of human chronicle and nonhuman timelines. In these intersections, the nonhuman or irrational forces become tangible to human cognition in a way similar to how "a star, from our earthly perspective, is often survived by its own light," indifferent to human observation (L 114). In other words, by discovering the corresponding structure in art, technology, and human cognition, the novel represents repetition or tertiary retentions as the cognitive lens through which the character's perception opens to realities inaccessible from the perspective of rationality.

Repetition with a Difference: A New Paradigm of Meaning Making

The novel structures the impersonal future anterior tense around its refrain—“Everything will be just as it is now, just a little different” (L, Epigraph). The refrain expresses the minimal difference entailed by the novel’s repetition (Vermeulen 666), indicating how repetition that operates in machine temporality produces the possibility of change with a new paradigm of meaning making. The minimal difference is unraveled from two aspects. Firstly, it is shaped by the protagonist’s oxymoronic syntax that articulates his experiences of correspondence. The oxymoronic syntax is expressed through the binary form of *X and not X*, such as when he states he is “kidding and not kidding” when intuiting the alien intelligence, the night air “was laced or not laced” with the blossom in the cityscape of Manhattan, or he “made and unmade” overlapping narratives when watching *The Clock* (L 5, 108, 54). The paradoxical grammar gestures toward a hybrid of multiple possibilities reserved in the moment of narration, suspending the present with the transformative dynamics that anticipate a future to come.

The second aspect resides in the novel’s play of prolepsis. While the future anterior tense may consign the present to a teleologically bound future (i.e., the speculated outcome intimated in the *will-have-been* grammar) through the act of prediction, the novel overthrows the teleological closure with its representations of failed prolepsis. For instance, Ben is intrigued by his artist friend Alena’s project of totaled art. The term “totaled art” designates artworks legally declared to have no value in the financial market due to severe damage. Ben notices that even though some of the totaled artworks remain incredibly intact after surviving catastrophic incidents such as deluges, they are still seen as having no commercial value and become remnants falling outside the economic system. They are “formally demoted from art to mere objecthood and banned from circulation,” confined within a “strange limbo” where their



significance stays obscure (L 130). Stripped of their commercial purpose and values speculated by the artistic market, these totaled artworks are liberated from the regime of capitalism and opened to indeterminate possibilities.

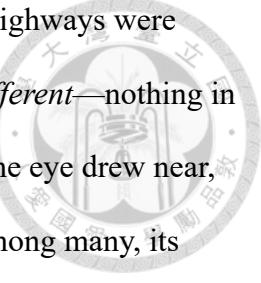
Vermeulen suggests that the proleptic failure illustrated by the totaled art restores the immanent potential of the present, for the failure dismantles the relegation of futurity by highlighting the “perpetual tension between actual and virtual” (668). The totaled art is set on the border between actual and virtual with its actual existence situated in a state of indeterminacy that “does not require transformation, yet retains the capacity to change” (668). As Ben observes, the totaled art has transformed from being a vehicle of capitalist value to an object in and of itself “without undergoing . . . any perceptible material transformation” (L 133). It is still “the same, only totally different” (L 133).

More significantly, the strange limbo induced by the minimal difference distances the protagonist from the narrativization of social institutions while sending him into the impersonal realm of meaning. The protagonist is exhilarated in an irrational trance stretching from his encounter with totaled art to his experience in the cityscape. “Dazed” by the works of art, Ben leaves Alena’s apartment and walks across the city where “everything . . . seemed totaled in the best sense” (L 134). Originally, he travels through the Manhattan Bridge with an impression of how the walk will be remembered after he has crossed the bridge. Though this proleptic memory is beautiful, he soon finds himself “starting to misremember crossing in the third person” (L 134-35). The misremembering suggests the equivocal nature of the present that is not entirely subordinated to a prominent projected future. Even if the present may have certain predictions inscribed on it, it still maintains the potential of becoming something alternative. The third person marks the estrangement from a reservoir of meaning provided by the narrative logic of

consciousness. While the present is often confined to a set of determined speculations inferred from interpretations that conform to human interests, the representations of totaled art and the nonhuman cityscape introduce a kind of emancipatory indeterminacy that enlarges the realm of possibility by incorporating the irrational or the impersonal.

The impersonal scale intimated by the minimal difference raises the question of identity. As O'Dell argues, the narrative principle of repetition with a difference "underscores how even the present is divided from itself," creating the dividualistic circulation and distribution of meaning and identity (453). While O'Dell suspects that the recursive temporality conforms to the "difference-flattening" machination underlying the automatized neoliberal economy and perpetuates the bad forms of (capitalist) collectivity the protagonist attempts to transform (452), the novel's representation of nonhuman entities points to fleeting epiphanic realizations fostered within a transpersonal relationality. The narrative opens and ends with New York City facing the imminent threats of Hurricane Irene and Hurricane Sandy. Media coverage of these two weather systems has predicted them to be two of the most destructive events of a century. Engulfed by collective anxiety, the protagonist notices the city "becoming one organism" as awareness of the coming cyclones penetrates architecture, traffic patterns, animals, and plants (L 17). The forthcoming danger makes the protagonist "stoned" as he purchases necessities in preparation for Hurricane Irene, defamiliarizing the activity "just enough to make [him] viscerally aware of both the miracle and insanity of the mundane economy" (L 17):

It was as if the social relations that produced the object in my hand [the instant coffee] began to glow within it as they were threatened, stirred inside their packaging, lending it a certain aura—the majesty and murderous stupidity of that organization of time and space and fuel and labor becoming visible in the



commodity itself now that the planes were grounded and the highways were starting to close. *Everything will be as it is now, just a little different*—nothing in me or the store had changed, except maybe my aorta, but, as the eye drew near, what normally felt like the only possible world became one among many, its meaning everywhere up for grabs, however briefly—in the passing commons of a train, in a container of tasteless coffee. (L 19; italics added)

The proleptic intimidation unleashes the pharmacological potential concealed underneath the operation of the commercial mechanism. Not only does the impersonal temporality estrange and problematize the standardization of value within the framework of the neoliberal economy, but it also makes possible an ephemeral epiphany that turns commodities into indeterminate objects with multiple projected futures pending for final actualization.

Nevertheless, the anticipated damage never materializes in the reality of Manhattan. The hurricanes constitute a repetition of incidents that “had happened but never occurred” (L 107). This *having-happened-but-never-occurred* structure of events recurs throughout the novel, serving as its narrative strategy that releases the present from its teleological closure. It indicates the coincidence of different timelines and challenges the hierarchical superiority given to the human chronicle. As Ben realizes, the hurricanes have indeed arrived, “just not for us” (L 231). They bring great malaise to more peripheral groups or entities such as animals, inflicting devastation upon the rat community dwelling in the subway system (L 231). At the same time, more artworks will soon become totaled as the precipitation inundates art galleries during the hurricane (L 231). By juxtaposing the impacts of the cyclones on human society and on the worlds of art and animals, the narrative foregrounds the nonhuman timelines and superimposes

them on human history, asking the reader to take in the materialized futures from a de-anthropocentric horizon.

In this sense, the repetition with a difference (more accurately, the minimal difference) responds and adds to Hayles's idea of the cognitive nonconscious by emphasizing its transpersonal possibility. Whereas Hayles proposes that a thorough comprehension of nonconscious cognition can help determine when and how human intervention is needed for asserting the role of humanity among a spectrum of cognizers (143), *10:04* embraces the power of the irrational generated by the performance of digital repetition and machinic cognition. The minimal difference casts light on the limitations of our conscious comprehension as it captures flickers of the impersonal significance unable to be relegated by given social institutions and value systems. While the recursive temporality of the prolepsis highlights the logic of automatism underlying human cognition, it does not reinforce the authority of the protagonist's consciousness. Rather, it bridges the connections between the conscious and the nonconscious through visceral correspondence, making structures of non-thinking visible and different regimes of meaning making conceivable.

On the other hand, although the transpersonal relationality established by the visceral correspondence resonates with the function of tertiary retention, the novel's representation of this relationality challenges Stiegler's Adornian distrust of automatons (Blimes 1083). Stiegler worries that the implementation of automatic mechanisms in shaping contemporary memory accelerates a kind of epistemic entropy in which the ubiquitous reliance on digital cognition sabotages the potential of individual and collective becoming (*Neganthropocene* 181). Contrary to Stiegler's concern, *10:04* illustrates that interactions between various repetitive constructs—e.g., art, technology, and the protagonist's viscerally intuited alien intelligence—may cultivate



individual and collective transformation with minimal differences. As these repetitive constructs function in the temporal model of the automatic nonconscious (the future anterior tense), they call forth a narrative paradigm that gives volume to the unthought. Even though the non-thinking repetition may perpetuate the entropic standardization of significance and value and, thus, may foreclose forces of becoming, it also gestures toward a virtual pool of possibility that cannot be fathomed by rational thinking. With the cognitive nonconscious underlying the character's Marfanoid body, the sonographic technology, the prosodic syntax, and so on, Ben is able to "remember . . . in the third person," integrating his body and experiences into a collective impersonality that frames "the totaled city in the second person plural" (L 240). In this case, the logic of automatism opens contemporary experience to the epiphanic realization that "discovering you are not identical with yourself even in the most painful and disturbing way still contains the glimmer, however refracted of the world to come" (L 109). Without neglecting the destructive tendencies of digital repetition in contemporary society, the novel shows that flickers of hope for transforming individualistic experiences into a positive sense of collectivity may still exist in the narrative principle of machinic prolepsis.

Conclusion

This chapter analyzes how Lerner's novel converses with Hayles's and Stiegler's concerns about the performance of the cognitive nonconscious or digital mnemotechnologies through its descriptions of repetition and the recursive temporality. Compared to *Remainder*'s concentration on behavioral patterns and the form of trauma, *10:04* approaches repetition's pharmacological potential by exploring the correspondence and interplay between human cognition, technology, and art or literature. Particularly interested in the narrative devices such as

the proleptic structure and the circulation of syntax, the novel seeks to establish a kind of transpersonal correspondence based on a temporal model that operates at a visceral level. The future anterior tense constructs an interpretative schema through which the protagonist conceives of his pathologized body, totaled art, technologically transfigured cityscape, and weather with statistical measurement and through the grammar of retrospective speculation. The retrospective tense differs from the chronological order possessed by the consciousness, framing significance that bypasses mental procession.

In addition, the novel depicts the minimal difference entailed by the function of the recursive temporality, showing how impersonal repetitions invoke a visceral awareness of future possibilities restored in the present. The minimal difference sets the present on the frontier between actuality and virtuality, looking toward projected futures without compromising the transformative potential of the present. As impersonality underlies a spectrum of entities including human beings and nonhuman surroundings, the possibilities implied by the epistemic paradigm of digital repetition are extensive to incorporate realities uncontrollable by social institutions (e.g., capitalist markets) and by rational thinking. In this sense, the repetition with a difference allows momentary epiphanies in which the protagonist sees beyond the horizon of human rationality. The epiphanies foreground the curative power of the unthought, suggesting the reliance on the non-thinking repetition for society to affirm a sense of collective anticipation.

Chapter Five

Conclusion



This thesis has attempted to examine digital humanity in light of the motif of repetition in McCarthy's *Remainder* and Lerner's *10:04*, respectively. These novels' representations of repetition manifest the logic of automatism undergirding how the contemporary subject conceptualizes the state of being and experiences in the form of circuits. Structures of repetition unfold in the future anterior tense. McCarthy's narrator is immersed in behavioral circuits and material assemblages organized by the temporal model of algorithmic loops. On the other hand, Lerner's protagonist speaks in the grammar of prolepsis. As the future anterior tense denotes the mode of anticipation of retrospection, it formulates contemporary individuals by breaking down their present experiences into a compound of projected possibilities.

Both novels highlight the impersonal aspects embedded in contemporary individuals by sending their narrators into the temporality of the cognitive nonconscious that operates in the realm of the irrational—i.e., the visceral reflexes that override and bypass the narrative authority of consciousness. Intervening in the conversations about the nonhuman turn in recent literary studies, I consider this impersonality as the basis of cognition that converges mankind with nonhuman forces in everyday experiences. Although the convergence does not cancel the cognitive gap between human comprehension and nonhuman entities, it acknowledges the power of the irrational that discloses nonhuman realities by opening up a set of possibilities outside the reach of human consciousness. In other words, the emergence of digital humanity does not make human beings identical to other forms of organisms or organizations such as traffic systems, artistic reproductions, or financial markets, which are also undergirded by the pattern of automatic loops. Representations of the pure stasis in *Remainder* and the autonomous body in

10:04 only present and foreground the objecthood embedded in human physiology as one of the key (not the sole or predominate) aspects constituting the ontological condition and epistemic framework of the contemporary subject. While the novels accentuate the irrational and visceral awareness that allows the characters to experience a shift of perspective and challenges the hierarchical superiority of rationality and consciousness, the characters still maintain the capacity for conscious reasoning without which they cannot begin their storytelling.

The importance of highlighting the impersonal aspects of digital humanity is that they provide a framework for addressing the complex synergy of human beings and nonhuman cognizers in the twenty-first century. As Hayles proposes, the critical question regarding the relationships between human beings and technology in contemporary society has transitioned from whether computers can perform human tasks (the Turing test) to “how networks of nonconscious cognitions . . . are transforming the conditions of life” (216). Since we are living in an era of “increasing complexity, sociality, and interconnections between technical nonconscious systems” (Hayles 215), understanding the nonconscious of human cognition can better equip us with knowledge of the interconnectivity between human beings and these technical nonconscious systems and of “the characteristic advantages and limitations” brought by each party to the cognitive assemblage (Hayles 216). This thesis examines the correspondence between human and nonhuman beings with overlapping nonconscious repetition to consider the question raised by Hayles. With a pharmacological approach, this study has attempted to point out the “advantages”—e.g., the enlarged spectrum of possibilities—of expanding the conception of cognition to incorporate the non-thinking processes while hinting at the “limitations”—e.g., the containment of capitalist machinations—implied by the growing influence of the nonconscious.

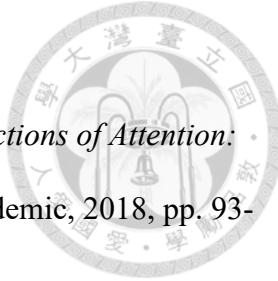
Apart from digital humanity, the novels also suggest themes crucial to understanding contemporary society, some of which I have not been able to discuss due to the limited scope of this thesis. One of them is the concept of *digitality* represented by the binary structures in the narrative. For instance, in *Remainder*, the narrator's conception of the reenacted scenes as something he can switch on and off at any moment indicates a mindset that everything can be translated or codified by a set of binary indices in the age of computation. By the same token, the syntax of minimal difference in *10:04* conceives of meaning through the binary form of *X vs. not X*, hence adopting the same logic of digitality to en-frame contemporary experience.

Another keyword related to the attentional form of the contemporary subject is *distraction*. As Stiegler observes in the pervasive application of digital automation long-term attention being short-circuited, *Remainder* and *10:04* portray their respective narrators as being constantly distracted from what they are supposed to do at a given moment. Quoting Kenneth Goldsmith's critique that there is not enough "theorizing or making sense of what [distraction] might involve and what its potential might be" (137), Alice Bennett argues that the contemporary fiction of attention, including *Remainder* and *10:04*, explores the affective power of distraction manifest in the trance of digimodernism (142). She reads distraction as a form of attention inducing enchantment that eludes the grasp of conscious absorption (137). Her theorization of distraction described in contemporary fiction complements Hayles's discussion of the cognitive nonconscious that calls forth alternative strategies to comprehend and care for the world.

Finally, the back drop of *affective capitalism* also looms in both novels. As both narrators receive a great amount of money that allows them to reenact an earlier encounter or compose fiction, the narratives are situated in a kind of financial capitalism that plays a significant role in framing the value of things and experiences according to their tradability. The novels broach the

complicity between the circulation of affects, meaning, and capital with the narratives' self-referential gesture toward the neoliberal logic underlying the literary market and the production of contemporary fiction. While both novels foreground the therapeutic potential of the logic of automatism, it is also evident that they are aware of the danger of consolidating neoliberal ideologies since the neoliberal markets adopt the same logic to distribute value. These themes indicate aspects of the contemporary world that are closely related to the emergence of digital humanity.

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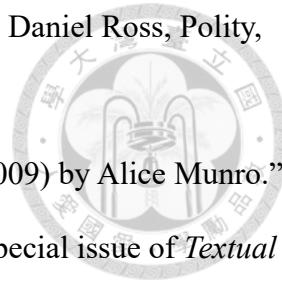
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