

(Title: To Be Determined)

ABSTRACT

Agency 1. Active operation, action (*moral, free agency*); intervening action (*fertilized by the agency of insects*); action personified (*an invisible agency*). **2.** Function of an agent or representative; business establishment of an agent (*employment, news, agency*); specialized department of United Nations.

It seems to me that **network** (both as noun and verb) is in both principle and practice incompatible with **agency 1**, the first of the two senses of agency given above (which I presume is the agency of concern for this workshop); is in fact *constituted by the exclusion of agency 1* for the sake of the institution and operation of **agency 2**, the second sense of agency given above, which constitutes not just the agency but the very existence and identity of **network** (noun and verb) to/for which **agency 1** therefore (re)presents a permanent vulnerability and threat of interruption and disruption, of disruption as destruction, which **network** must therefore subordinate, silence, seduce and suppress, oppress, aggress and repress, denounce, deny, defeat, depose, eliminate and oppose with (un)equal and opposite force of destruction wherever it rears its predictable head.

Some notable instantiations of this structural dynamic of the agency at work in **network** include the actions of and reactions to the actions of Julian Assange, Bradley Manning, and Edward Snowden, for example, as well as what appears to be a growing epidemic of school shootings: Columbine, Virginia Tech', Sandy Hook, and most recently the killing spree of Elliot Rodgers at the University of California, Santa Barbara. Wherein, in both sets of examples, what is foreclosed at the level of the symbolic – castration – returns at the level of the real. Surely, it cannot be an accident that all these examples of network(ed) agency going rogue are men?

My presentation will explain and explore this summary account of the antinomies of 'network(ed) agency' and the pathologies of its contemporary manifestations in greater detail, at the same time proposing – indeed, performing – an alternative understanding of the possibilities of agency informed by the work of Hannah Arendt for whom a necessary condition of **action** (which she distinguishes from labour and work) is **a space of appearance in the presence of others**: 'venturing forth in speech and deed in the company of one's peers, beginning something new whose end cannot be known in advance, founding a public realm'. An activity she describes as **sounding-through** the masks and roles the world assigns to us, the *per-persona* of professional, familial, economic, social and technological functions, 'such that something entirely idiosyncratic and undefinable and still unmistakably identifiable manifests itself.' A **sounding-through** which is systematically excluded from **network** (both noun or verb) where every function is exchangeable, but constitutive of, essential to, and solicited by a **workshop** such as this, where we are invited to appear – in speech and in deed – in the presence of others, founding a public realm. As I hope to demonstrate in this presentation.