### 1NC Public Sphere K

#### the affirmative remains trapped in Enlightenment thinking, thinking: “if only the citizens were all educated and aware of the TRUTH, then things would be change, there would be massive backlash to the government’s militarist war on terror!” this false nostalgia is mere wishing for a democratic citizenry that never existed, hope against hope that we can change society by “raising awareness” or “speaking the truth” – an endless, insatiable drive for more information that feeds a parasitic system of rationality

Dean 2k (Jodi, political science prof, http://nationalism.org/patranoia/dean-theorizing.htm)JFS

The title to the Marcus volume highlights the loss of the fiction of plausibility attached to the rational public sphere -- Paranoia Within Reason. Observing that Hofstadter fails to appreciate the reasonableness of conspiracy thinking, Marcus explains: "We wish mainly to deepen and amend Hofstadter's study precisely by coming to terms with the paranoid style, not as distanced from the 'really' rational by exoticized groups with which it is usually associated in projects of targeted critique of expose, but within reason, as a 'reasonable' component of rational and commonsensical thought and experience in certain contexts" (2). Like other Enlightenment theories with claims to truth and reason, conspiracy theory links facticity, causality, coherence, and rationality. And, like other Enlightenment theories, conspiracy theories are marked by a drive to know and uncover the truth. They suspect. They express the sense that something has been withheld, that all the facts aren't known, that what we see isn't all there is. As if inspired by the mantras of global technoculture, conspiracy theory demands more information. Too humble to offer a totalizing account, too aware that the whole, the global, resists imagining (something is always left out), its accumulated assertions remind us that we don't know.      A "casebook" of the tendencies and situations through which conspiracy haunts contemporary society, Paranoia Within Reason presents the diversity among paranoid intensities and conspiratorial assemblages of information. Few of its essays reduce conspiracy thinking to a style, a preoccupation with plot, or a pathology motivated by exclusion. Rather, the chapters take up conspiratorial articulations of power and agency, publicity and secrecy, in the security and exchange commission, quantum mechanics, amusement parks, Russian gangs, philosophy of language, as well as Waco, Gulf War syndrome, and multiple personality disorder. In so doing, the volume's contents display the instability of distinctions between the conspiratorial and the 'normal.' Its methodological use of interviews keeps alive the way "some of the subjects move from a sense of being completely outside a world in which conspiracies operate, perpetrated by others, and of which they are victims, to the more ambiguous situation of suddenly discovering oneself implicated in or complicit with conspiratorial processes and movements emanating from a mysterious elsewhere" (7). To think conspiratorially, to posit links between actions and events, to imagine that there is an other working behind the scenes, may well be reasonable, inseparable from reason, part of the very operation of reason. Indeed, could it not be the case that denying this paranoid core is precisely that intrusion of irrationality, of affective extremism, that empowers reason with its undeniable coercive force?

#### Conspiracy theorizing is a reiteration of a faith in the public sphere that presupposes that there is any value in revelation and “uncovering the truth” to a democratically active public

Dean 2k (Jodi, political science prof, http://nationalism.org/patranoia/dean-theorizing.htm)JFS

Sedgwick's question regarding the assumptions of a hermeneutic of suspicion suggests an answer to her question regarding the shift from object to method in queer theory, an answer important for thinking about conspiracy theory. The faith in exposure is the faith of the public sphere. Suspicion as method practices this faith, searching for and uncovering the truth, bringing it to light, making it available for reflection. "Secrecy," as Fenster notes, "constitutes conspiracy's most egregious wrong." When queer theory and conspiracy theory adopt a methodological paranoia they are reiterating, adopting, but not without revision, the drive for truth at the heart of the ideal of public reason. Indeed, within this method there is not only a presumption regarding an illegitimate non-consensuality within the secret and private, but also a presumption that publicity is directly linked to consensuality, that which is public is accepted by the public. Recent work by Michael Taussig on the public secret ("knowing what not to know") and Zizek on ideology ("I know, but nevertheless") demonstrates yet again the fantastic and politically dangerous dimensions of this assumption.[[16]](http://nationalism.org/patranoia/dean-theorizing.htm#fn16)      To return to Sedgwick, the assumption of surprise she notes as a characteristic of the drive to uncover rests on an ideal of a rational and transparent public sphere, a sphere where people act in clear, consistent, principled ways, where they trust each other and believe that revelation and discussion will lead to justice. Critiques based on this assumption exhibit a confidence in their own significance. Conspiracy theory, which shares with liberal ideals of public reason, a conviction in the importance of revelation and a link between actions and events, illuminates, then, not conspiracy but publicity. It says something about the general logic of the public sphere, taking some of its presuppositions with deadly seriousness. I'm struck, for example, by Fenster's critical observation regarding the protagonist of the conspiracy tract, The Gemstone Files: "his only actions are cognitive and communicative" (199). Sounds like someone trapped in a Habermasian public sphere to me. Conspiracy thinking is a method for thinking critically when caught within the governing assumptions of a public sphere. So the problem with conspiracy thinking is not its failure to comply with public reason but its very compliance, a compliance that reiterates some of these assumptions even as it contests others, a compliance that demonstrates all too clearly the paranoia, surveillance, and compulsive will to know within the ideal of publicity. Thus, conspiracy theory rejects the myth of a transparent public sphere, a sphere where others can be trusted (and, importantly, conspiracy theory doesn't claim with certainty that no one can be trusted; it claims an uncertainty as to whether anyone can be trusted), although it continues to rely on revelation. In so doing, it demonstrates the constitutive antagonism between transparency and revelation, the antagonism of a notion of the public that ultimately depends on secrecy: if everything and everyone were transparent, there would be nothing to reveal.      We might say that, by reiterating the compulsions of publicity, conspiracy's attempts to uncover the secret assemble information regarding the contexts, terms, and conditions of surveillance, discovery, and visibility in a culture where democracy is conceived within a hegemonic notion of the public sphere. When publicity feeds the mediated networks of the information age, conspiracy theory challenges the presumption that what we see on the screens, what is made visible in traditional networks and by traditional authorities, is not itself invested in specific lines of authorization and subjection.      Make links, search for truth: within these injunctions one is forced to be free insofar as one is forced to gather information. More powerful, more persuasive, than market and consumerist conceptions of freedom, freedom as information gathering confirms a conception of democratic engagement long part of the ideal of the public sphere: the public has a right to know. Citizens are free, in other words, so long as nothing is hidden from them. Thus, they must watch, surveill, expose, and reveal. Conspiracy theory or the version of democracy that supports the information age? I can't tell the difference. I guess I'll have to look on the Internet.

The Public sphere is a fundamentally unequal zone that produces apathy and nihilism, can never change anything and locks in contentless politics that leaves us disempowered

Hubert L. Dreyfus, Philosophy at UC Berkeley, 2004

“Kierkegaard on the Internet: Anonymity vrs. Commitment in the Present Age,” socrates.berkeley.edu/~hdreyfus/html/paper\_kierkegaard.html

To understand why Kierkegaard would have hated the Internet we need to understand what he meant by the Public and why he was so opposed to the Press. The focus of his concern was what Habermas calls the public sphere which, in the middle of the 18th century, thanks to the recent democratization and expansion of the press, had become a serious problem for many intellectuals. But while thinkers like Mill and Tocqueville thought the problem was "the tyranny of the masses", Kierkegaard thought that the Public Sphere, as implemented in the Press, promoted risk-free anonymity and idle curiosity that undermined responsibility and commitment. This, in turn, leveled all qualitative distinctions and led to nihilism, he held.

Kierkegaard might well have denounced the Internet for the same reasons. I will spell out Kierkegaard’s likely objections by considering how the Net promotes Kierkegaard’s two nihilistic spheres of existence, the aesthetic and the ethical, while repelling the religious sphere. In the aesthetic sphere, the aesthete avoids commitments and lives in the categories of the interesting and the boring and wants to see as many interesting sights (sites) as possible. People in the ethical sphere could use the Internet to make and keep track of commitments but would be brought to the despair of possibility by the ease of making and unmaking commitments on the Net. Only in the religious sphere is nihilism overcome by making a risky, unconditional commitment. The Internet, however, which offers a risk-free simulated world, would tend to undermine rather than support any such ultimate concern.

I. How the Press and the Public Undermine Responsibility and Commitment

In his essay, The Present Age, Kierkegaard, who was always concerned with nihilism, warns that his age is characterized by a disinterested reflection and curiosity that levels all differences of status and value. He blames this leveling on what he calls the Public. He says that "In order that everything should be reduced to the same level, it is first of all necessary to produce a phantom, its spirit a monstrous abstraction...and that phantom is the Public."(59) But the real villain behind the Public Kierkegaard claims is the Press. He feared that "Europe will come to a standstill at the Press and remain at a standstill as a reminder that the human race has invented something which will eventually overpowered it." (Journals, Vol. 2, 483.) and he adds "Even if my life had no other significance, I am satisfied with having discovered the absolutely demoralizing existence of the daily press." (JP 2163)

But why blame leveling on the Public rather than on democracy, technology, consumerism, or loss of respect for the tradition, to name a few candidates? And why this monomaniac demonizing of the Press? Commentators have noted the problem. For example, Hakon Strangerup remarks that "the Danish daily press was on an extremely modest scale in [Kierkegaard’s] lifetime." and asks: "How, then, is SK’s preoccupation with these trifling papers to be explained?" He answers that Kierkegaard’s strident opposition to the Press had political, psychological and sociological motivations.

First, the Press was the mouthpiece for liberalism and this "filled the deeply conservative SK with horror." But this is not convincing for, in The Present Age at least, Kierkegaard does not attack the Press for being liberal or for any political stand. I will argue in a minute that Kierkegaard would have hated the newspapers and TV talk shows on the right just as much as those on the left. Then there was, of course, the Corsair affair. Strangerup tell us that "From then on the tone of SK’s polemic with the Press changes from irony to hatred of the Press as such." But what is this "as such"? Does SK hold that the essential function of the Press is to attack outstanding individuals like himself? The Corsair affair certainly hurt Kierkegaard but I think the evidence is clear that he thinks this is only one possible unfortunate side effect of what is essentially dangerous about the Press as such. Indeed, Kierkegaard quite sensibly holds that such degrading gossip is only a "minor affair". Finally, Strangerup tells us that Kierkegaard had "contempt for [journalist’s] low social status" but I think it will soon be clear that he would have hated the snobbish and self righteous William Buckley as much as the lower class felon, Gordon Liddy. None of Strangeup’s three reasons, nor all of them combined, explains why Kierkegaard says in his journals that "Actually it is the Press, more specifically the daily newspaper...which make[s] Christianity impossible." Clearly, besides his political, psychological and sociological reservations concerning the daily press, Kierkegaard saw the Press as a unique Cultural/Religious threat.

It is no accident that, writing in 1846, Kierkegaard choose to attack the Public and the Press. To understand why he did so, we have to begin a century earlier. In The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere Jürgen Habermas locates the beginning of what he calls the Public Sphere in the middle of the 18th century. He explains that at that time the Press and coffee houses

became the locus of a new form of political discussion. This new sphere of discourse is radically different from the ancient polis or republic; the modern public sphere understands itself as being outside political power. This extra-political status is not just defined negatively, as a lack of political power, but seen positively. Just because public opinion is not an exercise of political power, it is protected from any partisan spirit. Enlightenment intellectuals saw the Public Sphere as a space in which the rational, disinterested reflection that should guide government and human life could be institutionalized and refined. Such disengaged discussion came to be seen as an essential feature of a free society. As the Press extended the Public debate to a wider and wider readership of ordinary citizens, Burke exalted that, "in a free country, every man thinks he has a concern in all public matters."

Over the next century, thanks to the expansion of the daily press, the Public Sphere became increasingly democratized until this democratization had a surprising result which, according to Habermas, "altered [the] social preconditions of ‘public opinion’ around the middle of the [19th] century." "[As] the Public was expanded ... by the proliferation of the Press...the reign of public opinion appeared as the reign of the many and mediocre." Many people including J. S. Mill and Alexis de Tocqueville feared "the tyranny of public opinion" and Mill felt called upon to protect "nonconformists from the grip of the Public itself." According to Habermas, Tocqueville pointed out that "education and powerful citizens were supposed to form an elite public whose critical debate determined public opinion."

But leveling to the lowest common denominator was not primarily what Kierkegaard feared. The Present Age is not primarily concerned with "the merging of the individual with the group", nor with the conformism of the masses which Kierkegaard called "the crowd", nor with what Alastair Hannay calls "the eliminating of grades of authority within and between groups." Although Kierkegaard is concerned with all these phenomena. According to Kierkegaard, these phenomena are not dangerous in themselves since they can and do occur in a positive, passionate revolutionary age such as the age of the French revolution. If an elitist disgust with the crowd were the basis of Kierkegaard’s attack on the Public and the Press, his polemic would ironically itself be a case of conforming to the intellectual worries of his time.

In fact, however, The Present Age shows just how original Kierkegaard was. He saw that "the public is a concept that could not have occurred in antiquity, because the people en masse... took part in any situation which arose, and were responsible for the actions of the individual." (60). And, while Tocqueville and Mill claimed that the masses needed better philosophical leadership and education and, while Habermas agrees with them that what happen around 1850 with the democratization of the Public Sphere by the daily press is an unfortunate decline into conformism from which the Public Sphere must be saved, Kierkegaard sees the Public Sphere as a new and dangerous cultural phenomenon in which the leveling produced by the Press brings out something that was deeply wrong from the start with Enlightenment idea of detached reflection. Thus, while Habermas is concerned to recapture the moral and political virtues of the Public Sphere, Kierkegaard brilliantly sees that there is no way to salvage the Public Sphere since, unlike concrete groups and crowds, it was from the start the source of nihilistic leveling.

This leveling was produced in several ways. First, the new massive distribution of desituated information was making every sort of information immediately available to anyone, thereby producing a desituated, detached spectator. The new power of the Press to disseminate information to everyone in a nation led its readers to transcend their local, personal involvement and overcome their reticence about what did not directly concern them. As Burke had noted with joy, the Press encouraged everyone to develop an opinion about everything. This was seen by Habermas as a triumph of democratization but Kierkegaard saw that the Public Sphere was destined to become a realm of idle talk in which spectators merely pass the word along.

This demoralization reaches its lowest form in the yellow journalism of scandal sheets like The Corsair. Since the members of the Public being outside political power take no stand, the Public Sphere, though the Press, removes all seriousness from human action so that, at the limit, the Press becomes a voyeuristic form of irresponsible amusement that enjoys the undermining of "outstanding individuals".

#### Vote negative to interrupt the mechanisms of the 1AC to confront them with the falsity of any faith in the public sphere

Perucci 9 (Tony, ssistant Professor of Co mmunication Studies at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, "What the F uck is T hat? The Poetics of Ruptural Performance," Liminalities: A Journal of Performance Studies Vol. 5, No. 3, September 2009)

Recent years have seen a rise in the practice of political street performance. Often called “interventions” or “performance activism,” many of these actions exceed the transparent political messaging of traditional agit - prop performance. Rather, they mobilize the particular qualities of performance as embodied action — what I call “ruptural performance” — as a modality in opposition to the stultifying effects of the society of the sp ectacle. Drawing on Brechtian aesthetics and the Artaudian embodiment of “the poetic state” as well as the (a)logic of Dada and the materialism of Minimal Art, **ruptural performance enacts interruption, event, confrontation and bafflement as a form of direct action**. “ Every day, do something that won’t compute” — Wendell Berry, The Mad Farmer’s Manifesto 1 Much of today’s activism emerges out of an experience of the totality, of the intractability and intransigence of consumer culture, and of what Guy Deb ord once called “the society of the spectacle.” It is an aesthetic response to a political/cultural crisis, not to mention an ecological, psychic and economic one. This essay addresses what is particular to the performance of what are variously called “interventions” and “performance activism.” These actions’ characteristics as performance work in ways that are specific to their form and exceed any “message” or content that they might (or might not) seek to convey. The conditions of inequity and ecological disaster that are intrinsic to consumer culture are now an open secret – or not even a secret but an accepted fact of life. Perhaps this is even truer now in the face of what has been named “the current economic crisis,” which spurs the call to “drill baby drill” and sends Wal - Mart sales through the roof while the rest of the economy collapses. Ecological crisis and sweatshop labor are no longer concerns that we think we can afford to address in daily life. In the face of such conditions, Jacques Rancière points out the challenge of what he calls the dilemma of “critical art” thusly: “understanding alone can do little to transform consciousness and situations. The exploited have rarely had the need to have the laws of exploitation explained to them. Because it’s not a misunderstanding of the existing state of affairs that nurtures the submission of the oppressed, but a lack of confidence in their own capacity to transform it” (83). In what follows, I argue for and trace out the critical characteristics of this insurgent form of performance activism that I am calling “ruptural performance.” Ruptural performances are distinct less because of a communicated message of their content and more by their qualities as performance: they are interruptive, becoming - event, confrontational, and baffling. Understanding performance as rupture provides a significant way to think about and create interventionist and political performance that places the focus centrally on the act of performance. This emergent genre of performed activism pays a particular debt to the pranksterism of Abbie Hoffman, the d é tournement of the Situationists, and the absurd enactments of Dada performance. These performance interventions are best known today through the practice of culture jamming and by the staged performances of Reverend Billy and the Church of Stop Shopping, The Billionaires for Bush, and the Yes Men. Such interventions, as well as those by lesser - known artists (partly because their strangeness cannot be easily accommodated by media coverage, political activists and academic theorization), can be understood through the notion of “performance as rupture” (Perucci “Guilty” 315 - 329). Rupture itself is not a “new” element in culture, and it certainly has a long legacy in modernism as the bre ach, shift or break. But it has a particular resonance in current activist practices that are both freer and more delimited than previous such enactments. To define performance as rupture, we must articulate what it ruptures. At the risk of constructing a false binary, let me propose that the obverse of “performance as rupture” is Debord’s “spectacle.” Debord explains that while the society of the spectacle is indeed an “accumulation of spectacles ,” ( Society 12) he distinguishes that “The spectacle is not a collection of images; rather it is a social relationship between people that is mediated by images” ( Society 12). While he calls it a “weltanschauung” ( Society 13) it is more than an ideology or a veil of false consciousness. Rather it is “the very heart of society’s real unreality,” ( Society 13) and in that materiality extends the alienation of the production of the commodity to its consumption: the spectacle produces “isolation” through the shift from doing to “contemplation,” where “The spectator’s alienation from and submission to the contemplated object [...] works like this: the more he contemplates, the less he lives” ( Society 23). Ultimately, the spectacle as “social relationship” represents the triumph of the commodity - image, the “ruling order’s ... un interrupted monologue of self - praise” ( Society 19) where “the commodity completes its colonization of social life” ( Society 29). In understanding the spectacle as not merely spectacles, but a modality of experience, in which separation and contemplation fl atten the encounter with presence, Debord proposes “situations” specifically to intervene at the level of the experience. However, in his recent attempt to characterize the new activism, Dream: Re - imagining Progressive Politics in the Age of Fantasy , Steph en Duncombe proposes that spectacle is itself the basis for protest, and that the distinction of the spectacle and the situation is merely “semantic” (130). Instead, he proposes “the ethical spectacle”: **our spectacles will be participatory** , dreams the public can mold and shape themselves. They will be active : spectacles that work only if people help create them. They will be open - ended : setting stages to ask questions and leaving silences to formulate answers. And they will be transparent : dreams that one knows are dreams but which still have the power to attract and inspire. And finally, the spectacles we create will not cover over or replace reality and truth but perform and amplify it. (17, emphasis added) There is much to be gained from Duncombe’s schema tization here. And what I wish to do is revise and amplify it by challenging his dismissal of the distinctive character of “spectacle.” 2 As I have tried to show in my brief summary above, the spectacle is not just a thing to be seen, but is also a mode of performance . Interventionist performance, particularly that which seeks to challenge and disrupt the values and especially the experience of the society of the spectacle, is another modality of enactment rather than a variation of spectacle. While performa nce interventions share with spectacle the qualities of being dramatic and theatrical, what distinguishes them is that they disrupt the experience of daily life, a rupture of the living of social relations — what Reverend Billy of the Church of Stop Shopping calls “the necessary interruption” ( What Should I Do, xiii). The interruption, which Benjamin might call the “sudden start” or the “shock” (163), creates the space for and initiates the experience of a ruptural performance. While bearing in mind the promi sing schema laid out by Duncombe, but also taking into consideration the particular characteristics of the society of the spectacle upon which much “interventionist” work means to engage, I am calling for a proliferation of ruptural performances. Below is an attempt to trace out rupture as a “modality” of performance that means to disrupt, or at least, to fuck with the spectacle. Given Duncombe’s setting of “dreaming the impossible” (158) as a critical element of performance activism, I will introduce my sc hematic be means of an example from a fiction film. The 2004 film, Die Fetten Jahre Sind Vorbei ( The Fat Years are Over , released in the US as The Edukators , d. Weingartner) begins this way: an affluent German family returns to their home to discover a bre ak - in. Their first sign of trouble is a massive tower made of their dining room furniture. They gaze at the sculpture, frozen with bafflement. Nothing, however, has been stolen. But their many commodities have been humiliated: a porcelain bust is hanging f rom a noose, glass figurines are found stuffed in the toilet, the stereo is in the refrigerator, and finally a letter that says “Lesen!” (“Read! ” ). Inside reads the message from the anarchist group that reorganizes the possessions of wealthy residents: “Di e fetten Jarhre sind vorbei.” They stop and stare, confounded. 1. Ruptural performances are interruptive. In some way these performances halt, impede, or delay the habitual practices of daily life. They intervene at the level and in the midst of the quotidian. Such performances engage the “necessary interruption” which seeks to make conscious what is habitual so that it is available for critique. In this way it shares Debord’s notion of the con structed situation — “the concrete construction of temporary settings of life and their transformation into a higher, passionate nature” is inherently interruptive as it “asserts a non - continuous conception of life” (“Report” 48). They seek to destabilize wh at the Russian Formalist Viktor Shklovsky called the “automatism of perception” (13). For Shklovsky, the role of art is to undo “habitualization,” which he says, “devours works, clothes, furniture, one’s wife, and the fear of war” (12). Such a reclamation of perception Shklovsky calls “defamiliarization” (13), for which the Russian phrase is priem ostraneniye , and that translates literally as “making strange.” Brecht realized the political potential for this concept as the Verfremsdungeffekt , which is foundational in that it focuses on the experience of making the familiar strange as much as the transmission of a political message. In the speed - up of a contemporary life characterized by images and simulations, these performances engage what Walter Benjamin c alls the “interruption of happenings” that estranges the “conditions of life” (150). It is this interruption, Benjamin suggests, that allows performance to obtain the “special character [of] ... producing astonishment rather than empathy” (150). Interruptive performance, however, occurs not at the level of representation, but on the field of presence. It is achieved by “putting a frame” around experience (more in John Cage’s than Erving Goffman’s sense) that produces what Richard Bauman calls a “heightened in tensity” or “special enhancement of experience” (43). The Brazilian group, Opovoempé , 3 has performed their Guerrilha Magnética (Magnetic Guerilla) and other intervenções (interventions) throughout public spaces in São Paulo. In 2006, they composed and per formed Congelados (Frozen), a series of intervenções , throughout the city’s supermercados . The performances consisted of simple and improvised ensemble compositions constructed through the use of gesture, repetition, spatial relationship, and kinesthetic r esponse. 4 The piece, in its basic performance of the actions of shopping, defamiliarizes the activities of shopping. The “choreography” that constitutes the “dance and music of buying” only gr adually becomes evident, as the repetition of the banal gestures of shopping begins to mark their strangeness as performance (“Nos Supermercados” Esteves). 5 Though the content of the action is not overtly political (it does not scream its ideology), it ma kes the encounter with shopping, and especially its mindlessness and repetitiveness, seem strange. At its foundation, the pieces are rupture - producing machines : “ The interventions intend to cause rupture of communication barriers, revelation of humor and play, change in the use of public space, and the manifestation of latent contents or social tensions previously unnoticed” ( “What is” Esteves). That rupture is specifically political — particularly in mobilizing the poetic state of quotidian settings. Guerri lha Magnética performances are intended “to break apathy and indifference, to install a creative atmosphere of play and to reveal the poetic content of the city” ( “What is” Esteves). 2. Ruptural performanc es are becoming - events. That is, they do, as Dell Hymes suggests, “breakthrough into performance” (11). And while their boundaries are unstable and unfixed, it is the ruptural performances’ eventness, their status as singular in time and space, which enables the presencing that the spectacle confounds. Alain Baidou puts it this way: “This other time, whose materiality envelops the consequences of the event, deserves the name of a new present. The event is neither past nor future. It makes us present to the present” (39). And yet the instability of the boundaries of the event is equally significant. Ruptural performances tend to confound boundaries of the real and artificial. The actual event of performance is generated by means of artifice, in which audience s often don’t initially realize that they are in a performance. In ruptural performances, audiences often first suspect that something isn’t right, but are not sure if something is amiss. Ultimately, though, the “breakthrough” occurs that things aren’t nor mal, they are strange, and we are in the midst of an event. It is this eventness (and the anticipatory process of becoming event) that enlivens the occasion of the here and now. And that temporal immediacy is captured well by Benjamin’s invocation of Jetzt zeit or the “presence of the now” (261). One becoming - event that has been performed around the world is the “whirl.” The whirl consists of a group of fifteen or more people entering a sweatshop store a few at a time (most often a Wal - Mart, thus the someti mes - used moniker: “Whirl - Mart”) who move empty shopping carts throughout the store. Once all performers are inside and with carts, the participants create a single line of carts that snakes throughout the store, splitting and refiguring as the snake of car ts meets up with blocked aisles and shopping customers (which must look like a Busby Berkley dance sequence to the overhead security cameras). 6 During the hour or more of the performance, if asked by management, security, employees, or customers what they are doing, performers respond kindly with “I’m not shopping.” As performers make their rounds, it is the employees who first encounter the becoming - event, then the customers, then management (who begin manically communicat ing on walkie - talkies), and finally security. When security gets wise, it’s time to return the carts and exit the store. As ruptural performance, the whirl does not make any specific claim on protesting the many things one could advocate against — sweatshop labor, poor treatment of store employees, predatory business practices, etc. ad infinitum — given that all present could recite this litany of wrongs. Rather the whirl enacts the becoming - event of “not shopping,” which in itself can be read as an engagement against over - consumption, Wal - Mart’s imperialism, unfair labor practices, or ecological devastation. 7 3. Ruptural performances are confrontational. By this, I don’t necessarily mean aggressive, though they may be that. Rather, it is as Benjamin puts it, where a “stranger is confronted with the situation as with a startling picture” (151). Ruptural performance is thus distinguished from the “revelatory” performance that unmasks the hidden truths (though it may also do this). In our age, what Marx called the “secret of the commodity” — that its price masked the alienated labor that produced it — is now exposed. We know, for instance, that many of the products we buy are produced by sweatshop, child and slave labor; but we have developed what Adrian Piper calls “ways of averting one’s gaze” (“Ways” 167). Ruptural performance is thus less a critique of ideology or false consciousness, and is more about the experience of the encounter of returning one’s gaze to that which one avoids to maintain acceptance of the inequities of the contemporary social orders. As Husserl notes, “Things are simply there and just need to be seen.” Bruce Wilshire also gets at what I’m talking about when he describes phenomenology as a “systematic effort to unmask the obvious” (11). In fact, this quality is what Michael Fried complained about as the central quality minimal art: its “stage presence” or “theatricality” where “the work refuses, obstinately, to let him alone — which is to say, it refuses to stop confronting him” (140). And in this way, ruptural performance owes as much to Minimalism as it does to Dada. As such it enacts what Fred Moten suggests is not only an “excess of meaning” but also “the anti - interpretive nonreduction of nonmeaning” (197). Ruptural performances, like Minimal Ar t , are characterized by a “concrete thereness,” that Barbara Rose says is a “literal and emphatic assertion of their own existence” (216). As Rosalind Krauss says of Donald Judd’s work, we can say of Ruptural Performance: it “compels and gratifies immediat e sensual gratification” (211)