

Victor Vitanza interviewed by David Rieder

Victor Vitanza

Ok, Dave, so, um, this is these moments on the file, this one and the others, comprise a flashback to years 1999-2000. Your opening question, Dave, is difficult to respond to. I've never thought of myself as innovative. The webtext published--self-published--was in *Pre/Text: Electra(Lite)*, which I can only assume that most of you listening here, there, everywhere, never knew about or had simply forgotten about, this online journal. The journal was but still is in code and pics established by Cynthia Haynes and me, she at UT Dallas and me at UT Arlington. The e-journal was housed at UT Dallas. Anyway, basically what I did in the piece titled—and you have to see the title visually to get the breakups and visual puns. But here it is in speech audio: “Composing Complicating Processes” (“CompoZing com_PLI_cating Processes”). The emphasis in all caps of PLI, P, L, I, capital, is in French an allusion to folding and making layers. Perhaps you have read Deleuze's *Pli*—in English, the fold. So, keep that in mind as I talk here. But yes, there is also an alternative title of “the yellow wall socket”. Um, I dedicated the pieces of this article—or rather, spectacle—to Kevin Kelly, *Out of Control*, his book. The file opens with a repeat of that information in the form of a GIF animation, which I was fond of making back in those days. In fact, on that page thereafter there is a whole series of word pics and animations with various colliding colors. At the near end of that sequence there are GIF animations of quotations, such as “rub out the word”. So understand there are conventional words at first and then they are translated into word-images in GIF animations. Yes, “rub out the word” is from William Burroughs, but then I add this phrase: “electra-fry the word.” So, rubbing out and electra-frying the word, etc. Perhaps the theme of the word-play is the wall socket that I allude to often about my time as a mere baby crawling on the floor and finding a bobby pin and sticking it into the yellow wall socket. Where did this take place? Yes, fondly, I recall, it took place, a sense of place, away from me in my grandmother's house. As I recalled on several occasions, I was thrown for a loop. There's more, but that's enough. I just spoke of this matter at the C's, CCCC in Tampa. I was on a wonderful panel with Sarah Arroyo, Cynthia Haynes, Jan Holmervik, Greg Ulmer, oh, and yes, we had Matt Leavey playing his guitar to our presentations. Matt was a major player in the development of *PTEL* back in the days. So on the page that is not a page I write, “Yes, entering the wall socket” and the explosion. Looking at this site page on my monitor and thinking “maybe this is a set list of explosive, shocking, electrifying innovations after all.” And then, the page tells the viewer, you, soon, I hope, quote, Yes, entering the yellow wall socket, end quote. What are the consequences, if you enter, right? And there is the image itself on the page that is not a page of a statelessness of incubation. Then again, there's another question or a set of two offerings. And they are to be clicked on. One is readable and the other—these are the choices—unreadable. What do you want, readable or unreadable? I'm looking at the site now that is playing on my computer. Keep in mind that I have the files. I think in retrospect now that this thing is a remarkable event. So if I click on “readable” I get text, and text, and text as you find in books, yet there are all kinds of GIF animations on the left side in the margin, interrupting the viewer's readings, perhaps. And then

at the end of the page there is a link, yes, to the yellow wall socket. Clicking on this link sends you to the spectacle of the innovation. When you arrive I'm reading out loud like I am now in two audio forms. Simultaneously. But the innovation is that the visitor to this strange page without a page can click on any of sixteen other audio buttons, one at a time, without turning off the other audios. The consequences of clicking on other audio files leads the visitor to foldings and layers of my voices. Simply put, I'm doing what Paul Miller taught me to do, sampling and mixing in layers of the text of the voices that I wrote, words, words, words, I spell the word "word" W, U, R, D, as we find in Joyce's *Finnegan's Wake*. The results are shocking the eardrums, making for something new in terms of words as music, see it in the file on *PTEL* is reachable again. I will be sending the files to Doug Eyman, who will archive them at *Kairos*. Oh, the gods. Ah, now, I see. (Laughs) Remember, in yellow over red, this statement in a GIF animation that reads, "out of this swarm comes innovation." The swarm, of course, refers to the multiple voices speaking over speaking, the spectacle becomes electro-swarms—well, at least, at the time I thought I was being innovative. Now, there's more, Dave, and you can too are listening to these files, on the text, the next text un-text file, ok. Overstand—instead of understand—overstand that the beat goes on. But yes, let me turn again, again, again and say that we co-editors, Cynthia and I, were doing some exceptionally innovative happenings or instances in a flash of electorates. Dave, as for my part, call me Vito.

Victor Vitanza

Dave, this is a difficult question. You ask, how do you see your—that is, Vito's—webtext as having influenced the trajectory of the field? Well, um, so many genres and para-genres and blended genres and the beat goes on are at work, play, whatever now. Multimodality has been the word, at least for some. It's near impossible to presume to know when it began. Perhaps it was lost when we were new born, just chattering, chattering, chattering. Perhaps it began with possibly Gunther Kress or moreso, playfully so, ancient so, prehistoric cave artists while we are waiting on post-historic caves. Whenever, wherever. Or then perhaps we are waiting on extraterrestrial aliens' drawings that I've seen reported on the History Channel. (Laughs). It's amazing, isn't it? But yes, perhaps ness, I'm tired of hearing the word "multimodality". I love as well as find unacceptable Ovid's work, shape shifting, and the beat goes on. I think that moving from orality to literacy and unsettling ourselves in electracy and beyond is a nova event. Remember, for example, Burrough's *Nova Express*, the cut-up. But there's so much, countless, more. With electracy we witness and experience numerous lines of unthought. Think as Greg Ulmer has thought and is practicing, for example, and this is one example: the Derridean notions of *différance* and the trace. Electracy is informed with the embedded word "trace" which at times reminds me of "Dick Tracy"; Chester Gould's comic strip. Multi with words and graphic representations, I will not spell out the possible compossibilities here. Stay in yet out of tune. Ok? Are you following what I'm saying? Probably not. You certainly cannot see how I spelled "knot" as in taking a strip of threads or whatevers and tying and interweaving them to fix them, control

them, but also in such a way that the threads can undo themselves, being in a knot. So it goes, so many unstable possibilities that can make, remake for numerous possibilities. Are you still listening? Really. What it comes up to is your relationship with language. Once again, I would point to the play-work of Greg Ulmer. Ok. But, to the point or pointless. David, I see the question again, the trajectory of the field. I would expect that the trajectory, or rather trajectories, let's make it plural as I've been leading up to, would be multi-trajectories, redetermined to go wherever they desire to go and go and go go, like goats hopping around, up and down and entering non-Euclidean geometries. Or again, gain, gain, as Mallarmé spoke wrote dreamed, a coup de day, jamais, n'a voir lire, le hazard, or a roll of the dice will never abolish chance. Ok, then. Let's think of this statement and how some say it brought the conditions for the possibilities, then compossibilities, to what we used to call hypertext, a throw of the dice gave us hypertext. And the beat goes on with syncopations. Or syncopes. For some it refers to rapture in language, thinking, walking, etc. One of my moms, Catherine Clément, wrote a book on the suppression of a syllable. Yes, ness, syncope. She refers to Lacan's imago. You all might want to read this book, both in French and its various translations. The bookless opens, opens, wide opens the conditions of possibilities for language in rhythm. And its practitioners, as a jazz musician, a drummer, I was at times drawn big times to syncopations. Off the beat, off the beaten ways, off the beaten paths. When I write or I am written I'm disengaging with syncopations and my colleagues tell me, "Victor, I can't make sense out of what you write or say." I am told I am totally perverse. This is a praise, this, and can only make me so happy, really. They ask me, "who taught you to write." My thoughts and answers, Charlie Mingus, Thelonius Monk, Dizzy Gillespie, Charlie Parker, Miles Davis, John Coltrane, Ornette Colman, and most of all Al Dawson. And the beat goes on. I love pickled beets, fresh ones, pickled. Ok, by now surely those who were listening to what I might have to say have probably already hung up the telephone call. What we need is to multiply party lines.

Victor Vitanza

Dave, yes, yes, yes, your question. "What is your position on curation?" is the question given that the work of mine, rather of languages, is in an old online site that is no longer available. It's in other words not online. So, yes, Cynthia Haynes and I do have the files, well, most of them, and we have the capability of uploading them. But we most likely will not, for the journal *PTEL* was connected at the hip with *LinguaMoo*, etc. My work that won the *Kairos* award for Best Webtext 1999-2000, however, will be reestablished at the *Kairos* site. Therefore, I give the simple uncomplicated answer to your question. Thank you for your question.

As for what I'm working on now, you ask, I can report that I have two books in production, one on cinematics to be published by Punctum Books, and another in the Routledge's Landmark Essay collection. Mine is on historiographies of histories of rhetorics. I am seeking permissions to republish some images for the cinema book. The title of that book is *Chaste Cinematics*. Both books should be published early in 2016. During the middle summer, I will begin full-time on a major project of a book and a film, together. But first let me say that I do have other projects that I

am presently and for some time now working toward finishing—for example the book on Jim Berlin, and the third volume of the trilogy on dasein as design. But again the major project. The book has a working playing title of *A Rethinking of Historiographies of Rhetorics as Atemporal, Anachronistic, Post-Cinematic Practices*. My first writing of this book, planning it out in a broad level way, I published in *Rhetoric Society of America*, not too long ago. In the book, I will have, of course, chapters and excurses, but also shooting scripts and storyboards. The major settings are in Turkey—Ephesus for the most part—and Sicily—Mother Etna, for the most part. I'm focusing on Heraclitus and Empedocles, but also in parallel form I'm focusing on Mary Theotokos and Mary Magdalene. My turn on these philosophers and Marys is their representations by various philologists in word and in film, etc. I'm especially focusing on the historiographical approaches on them, how they are researched and written and supposedly canonized and are lost. Therefore, as expected, I will join those who question the stories' narratives. I refuse to follow with those for temporality, chronology, etc. I will of course, I hope, be received as being sacrilegious and heretical. I'm not worried that Papa might excommunicate me. I am also moreso interested in gnostic and fictive stories. I am interested in, say, the Marys in John Water's film on Mary, Padaro's film on Mary, Pasolini's film on Mary, and then again Gibson's "The Passion of the Christ," Martin Scorsese's "The Last Temptation of Christ," etc. Additionally I'm interested in studying those researchers who have found lost texts, etc. For example, I'm interested in Simcha Jacobovici and Barrie Wilson's *The Lost Gospel: Decoding the Ancient Text that Reveals Jesus' Marriage to Mary the Magdalene*. But I'm interested so so so much and more. I have a set of three new bookshelves packed with books I've read but moreso books that I've not yet read studied. This is exceptionally important. I am writing a book against other books. I am shooting and making a film against other films. The principle that I'm playing with is greatly put forth by Greg Ulmer in his article, "The Post-Critical Object". Simply put, if someone wants to write a critique of a film, they should do it with the genre of a film, not a book. Therefore I'm trying to cover the possibilities: book, excurses, film, shooting scripts and storyboards, altogether, so to speak. I'm doing this so as to avoid a performative contradiction. Temporality: this project is for working playing the rest of my lives. Actually I've been working on it from the day I was conceived in my mother. I have been told all of my lives that I would make a film of films. For years now I've been reading, studying, and writing about historiographies of rhetorics in books and in films. Understand: it's not THE history or of rhetoric. There is nothing but pluralities all the way across. I do see rhetoric in terms of culture, hence countless cultures. About shooting the film in the places that I mentioned, and producing it, I started about two or so years ago with the establishment of St. Vitus Pictures, a non-profit film production company. I have a full crew of cinematographers, editors. I have an art director, sound designers, a voice-over champion. I have animators, CGI people, legal counsel, etc. They are doing it for the love of the projects, our projects. My sweet wife, Toni, as well, at times our son, Roman, and I have been scouting the sites—again, primarily Ephesus and Etna. Also various places such as Rome. The shooting is, will have been, and will be influenced by Chris Marker, Jean-Luc Godard, and William Greaves. And the beat goes on and on and on.

David, thank you for the opportunity. Signing out to reassign myself, else, whereas, weaving all together in non-Euclidean geometries. Hello, this is Vito, signing off and up and up away.