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Mari Lee Mifsud
University of Richmond, mmifsud@richmond.edu

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Ancient Rhetorics and Digital Networks

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What does it mean in this digital age to network and to be networked? One way to make sense is to trace the histories of the idea and practice. Gregory Flaxman identifies *ergō diktuōtō* as the ancient Greek antecedent of "network."[1] From this phrase, meaning "work with nets," as in fishing nets or hunting nets, Flaxman begins his genealogy of the ancient origin of "network" in fabric and fabrication. Tracing the development of network to its eventual immaterial form in the World Wide Web, Flaxman cautions that the material promises of networked culture must be explored in the context of the immaterial network encroachments into our lives: "In an age when our purchases and predilections are tracked, we are quickly becoming algorithmic functions within a massive information network: political campaigns now calculate and tailor their appeals for contributions on the same basis that Amazon personalizes recommendations, or Google personalizes advertisements, or Target customizes coupons by deducing out when a shopper is pregnant. . . . Perhaps the final step in the genealogy . . . a step already pioneered by the pharmacolonization of the brain, consists in networking our synapses."[2] The dangers of idealizing digital network call for being as circumspect about network as possible. Such circumspection issues from (at least in part) genealogical work in the ancient words, ideas, and cultural practices of network. Networks are not a New Age phenomenon. They were not born in digital form. They precede even the industrial revolution, though this epoch accelerated networks via roads and railways and communication systems, of the telegraph, the telephone, and television.[3] Networks are archaic in and originary to human society. As far back as can be seen, for example, in the ancient Greek past, networks are woven into as well as out of words, myths, and tropes of human knowing, being, doing, relating, and meaning.

In this essay, I card the archaic rhetorics of "network," separating the lexical and mythical threads to prepare for weaving. Then, weaving with these words and myths, a story-cloth emerges, one revealing network in the tropical pattern of amphibolia, an ancient rhetorical term and trope of

network. Amphibolia works in and reveals the ambiguity of network originary to society. This ambiguity tells of network as taking, as being taken, and as being free from being taken. In the elaborately woven threads of ancient Greek rhetorics emerge a complex and striking story-cloth of network, which tells as well of being human.

Lexical Network

From Homeric to Hellenistic cultures, we are given a robust vocabulary of networking. We have terms for "nets," for "work," and for "network."[4] Each term gives rise to yet another nuance of the role network plays in being human. In this section on lexical network, I present these terms in a catalog form as an homage to archaic Homeric rhetoric.[5] Homer's catalogs are plentiful in the epics, his catalog of ships being particularly well known.[6] Homeric catalogs call attention to their items. Catalogs circulate well and are an aid to remembering the past, as ever-present. The catalog of "network" I offer takes the form of a list, a sparse accounting of items, in this case related words for "net," "work," and "network." Lists are, as Benjamin Sammons describes them, "inelaborate catalogues (i.e., easily worked up into the fuller form through the addition of elaboration)."[7] From this list, we will begin to see distinctive lexical dimensions of network; elaboration of the list will issue from mythical and tropical dimensions of network.

NET:

agreuma: that which is taken in hunting, booty, prey, spoil, a means of catching, being caught in the net of fate

airein: to take, take away, take by force, take a city, to overpower, kill, often of passions, to seize, conquer, catch, in a good sense, to win over, to catch or detect one doing a thing, to win, gain, in law it means to convict a person of a thing, to prove, as in "*o logos aireei*," reason *proves*, to take for oneself, to take one's supper, to choose, to take in preference, prefer one thing to another, to choose by vote, to elect, to take up, raise, lift up, to step, walk, to hoist, to sail, to get under way, start, set out, raise up, exalt, to excite, to raise by words, to extol, exaggerate, to lift, take away, remove, take off, kill, take up for oneself, to carry off, win, gain, to receive, to take upon oneself, undergo, carry, bear, to undertake, begin, as in war

arkus: a net, hunter's net, the toils and perils of the sword

atelēs: free of end, without end, not brought to an end or issue, unaccomplished, incomplete, not accomplishing one's purpose, without deduc-

tion, net pay, pay without state intervention in form of taxes, free from tax or tribute, free from all other taxes, (of sums) without deduction, net, clear, clear gain, uninitiated in mysteries, endless, eternal

broxos: a noose or slip knot for hanging or strangling, a snare for birds, the mesh of a net

diktuon: net for fishing or hunting

sumpodidzein: to entangle in a net

WORK:

ergon: as in works of industry, or occupation: tillage, weaving, feasting, fishing; as in deed or action, primarily war; as in matter, taking something up as a matter, as an issue

NETWORK:

amphiballein: to throw upon, or put around both sides; of clothes, to put them on a person or oneself; to throw the arms around, to embrace; to create doubt or to be doubtful

amphiblēstra; *amphiblēston*: anything thrown around, a casting net, the garment thrown over like a net, a fetter, bond

periballein: to throw around, as in an embrace, to throw around oneself or put on, to throw around oneself for defense, to build a wall around, to have a thing put around one; to involve one in calamities, evils, to surround or enclose for oneself, to put around a person, invest a person with it, to bring into one's power, aim at, to cloak or veil in words, to throw beyond, to excel, surpass

peribolos; *peribolai*; *peribolē*: anything that is thrown around, a covering, associated with the grave—like death thrown around you, a wall around a town, a space enclosed, house of large compass, a circumference, circuit; to make a circuit (*peribolos poiēsthai*); a compassing, endeavoring after (the *archē*); the whole compass of the matter, the long and short of the matter, the spires or coils of a serpent

periptuxai: a network of

peristixidzein: to surround with a net

plegma: a network of

plekō: a plait, twine, twist, braid, weave, as in ropes or nets, or baskets, to plan, devise, contrive, like mostly of tortuous means, of poets weaving words, to twist oneself around

Each lexical thread in this list helps us to see network's character and quality, and each offers a generative energy of sayables (and unsayables) on network, giving patterns and possibilities of meaning-making for network.

Each thread becomes a rhetorical *topos* for weaving network's story. A most colorful, distinctive thread shows network as a making or creating of a circuit (*peribolos poiesthai*).[8] Identifying lexically this creative, endeavoring dimension of network invites query of the character and quality of network's circuit making. Again, we can see in the list that the terms signify network as all-encompassing and ambiguous: as taking and being taken (*airein*; *agreuma*, *arkus*) and as free, of end or issue, or deduction, as in "being net," or being free from being taken (*atelēs*).

What do we do with these ambiguous characters and qualities of network? Turning again to the terms for network, we see another distinctive thread: that of *amphiballein*, from which issues the rhetorical trope amphibolia. If network is amphibolic, then it makes, creates, and endeavors for ambiguity. An appropriate or fitting way to tell network's story is through ambiguation, not idealization. Amphibolia is a rhetorical trope for creating doubt, but at its base means "on both sides" (*amphi*) and "to throw" (*ballein*). We see *amphiballein* has a partner in the list *periballein*, throwing around not just "both sides" but "all sides" to make a circuit encompassing all. These terms suggest a rhetorical turn that could mean to throw one's arms around in an embrace, or to throw doubt around on both, or all, sides of a matter. Amphibolia and peribolia as network's tropes turn us in meaning-making between embrace and doubt and hold us accountable for attending to the ambiguity of being human in and through network.

The ambiguity of network—of endeavoring to take and to be free of being taken, to embrace and to doubt—shows forth in network's ancient Greek lexical range. Ancient Greek myths help us weave even more of network's story.

Mythical Network

The myths of network come to us from various ancient Greek texts, whether of poetry, tragedy, comedy, or philosophy. These myths are archaic. By "archaic" I mean more than that time well before the classical era. Rather, I mean originary. Whereas these myths take the mark of words, they are themselves deeds, acts of material, creative life, not only in the mythmaking and telling but also in the myth-keeping, in the form of material texts from an oral tradition, whether by monastic record-keeping or some other act of recording history. Both words and deeds become our originary material for exploring ancient Greek rhetorics of networks. With such an archaic rhetorical materialist sensibility, we can explore how these words and deeds of ancient Greek network are rhetorical threads weaving a story-cloth of being human.

We see in this list of network terms the range of life through network. The

base of these terms relates to the very making of the net and the network itself, the plaiting, twisting, twining, weaving (*plekō*). In myths told with such terms, we find women doing this base material work. As Evy Johanne Håland puts the matter, "In ancient Greek tradition, mostly sources written by men, the sign of the female, first and foremost, is weaving, since women do not speak, they weave."[9] Håland gathers the scenes of female speech, of weaving and planning, connecting both a female way of handling things and female cunning: "Lysistrata applies terms used in wool-working when describing her plan of how she will unite Greece in peace (Ar. *Lys.* 567 ff.). Homer (*Il.* 3.125–8) describes Helen weaving battle scenes and Andromakhe weaving talismans (*Il.*, 22.440 . . .), and shows Penelope, holding her suitors at bay for more than three years while she wove a figured funerary cloth, unraveling it every night (*Od.* 2.94–110, 19.139–51, 24.139 f) . . . women's weaving implies a 'writing,' or graphic art, a silent material representation of audible, immaterial speech."[10] Myth tells us that weaving belonged to women. Their networking was an art showing forth their various roles "as mother, provider, worker, entrepreneur and artist."[11] And women's art issues from ambiguity, of "silent material representation of audible, immaterial speech."

Weaving belonged to men, too, as myths do tell. In particular regard to women, myths show men taking women's bodies, identities, and authority. Well known is the myth of Aphrodite caught in Hephaestus's net. When Hephaestus learns about the infidelity of his wife, Aphrodite, with Ares, he forges a hunting net, as fine as gossamer but unbreakable, which he secretly attaches to the bedposts of his marriage bed with Aphrodite. The trap works, and Aphrodite and her lover, Ares, are caught in the net and put on display for the gods to shame. Male gods laugh and jeer at her and devise their plan for controlling her. Only a gift exchange among the men, to force Ares to pay Hephaestus for the marriage gifts and to release Aphrodite for their own services, frees her from the net. Her freedom, though, is just another form of being taken.[12]

This episode of masculine network and the negative consequences for women pales in comparison to a lesser-known, more insidious, myth of Melanion in Aristophanes's *Lysistrata*. This myth reveals that masculine network enacts the political means by which to live in hatred and rejection of women. Here is the scene of the telling of the myth: In a revolutionary act, Lysistrata and her Panhellenic band of women occupy the Acropolis to force the men to end their perpetual warring. In the transition between a scene featuring the women reading prophecy to fortify their courage in staying the course of the occupation and a scene wherein the men are readying to confront the women, we are visited by the men's chorus, which tells this myth of Melanion. There once lived, in olden times, a young man named

Melanion. In flight from marriage, he went off into the wilderness. He lived in the mountains with his dog. There he wove nets. And he hunted. And he never went home again because of his hatred for women. That's how much he loathed women. And, the men's chorus concludes, they, being wise, hate women just as much as Melanion did.[13]

To loathe women is to steal their work, to turn it against them, to structure society via political network in such a way as to trap women, whether by devising through network perpetual war (*ergon*) that unravels the feminine economy of home and peacefulness, as Lysistrata frames the matter, or by trapping and torturing women for men's pleasure and power, like Aphrodite caught in Hephaestus's net. The men's chorus singing support for Melanion's misogyny sings of the magistrates' network. The object and objective of this network is war and misogyny. These magistrates are the leaders of the *polis* and have networked in such ways as to create endless war throughout all of Greece. Moreover, their network, as revealed in the myth of Melanion, creates an unwillingness to live in society with women.

The myth of Melanion is taken to excess by the magistrates. Whereas Melanion was seemingly content to secure independence from women by weaving his own nets for hunting and living, the magistrates in their network go far beyond this contentment. The myth of the magistrates, told sometimes by Lysistrata and sometimes by the magistrates themselves, tells of a masculine disconnection from the base material world of weaving to elevate men's network to an ideal form, namely, devising plans for all-encompassing power and self-benefit. Although immaterial in its devising, men's network is material in it effects. As Lysistrata describes, these magistrates network by way of making endless war from which they build their wealth and power. The women and children suffer. In their idealized network, the magistrates take without giving and hence become parasites of the *polis*. The magistrates' network unravels the connection between material and immaterial. The immaterial becomes an idealized *logos* of men's devising dominion. This idealized *logos* carries forward a myth of the pure idea of network, a network elevated from the base material labor of weaving. The myth of the magistrates, as we are told by the magistrates themselves, not just characterized by Lysistrata, announces the objective of men's network: men's independence, that is, securing the means of life and death, namely, network, from women and living their lives loathing women, securing their own benefit through war.

Although networking as devising is idealized for men, it is a vice for and of women. Sources of ancient Greek literature and philosophy, our sources for myths, written by men, typically "express a certain uneasiness towards weaving women."[14] These women come to be called wicked, for their weav-

ing is devising, and works, like men's, to take control and to be free from being controlled. Take, for example, the myth of Clytemnestra, who welcomes her husband, King Agamemnon, home from the Trojan war by throwing the net of fate around him. The net of fate for Agamemnon is not a material net but rather his elaborately devised death at the hands of his wife in return for slaughtering their daughter in sacrifice to war. This net of fate thrown around is not a deed but a representation of network. Immateriality is inescapable, not something a man accomplishes in his loathing of women. Yet, the archaic female network connection to material remains in Clytemnestra's story. Agamemnon does face the material consequences of this net of fate: deathblows. The material scene is featured all the more by the attention paid to his entrance into the space of his death: his adornment with a purple welcome shroud that Clytemnestra ordered her handmaidens to make, woven and unfolded before the King as a cunning welcome device, though signaling in code that only his death will be welcome.[15]

We can make more of network from the myth of Clytemnestra than the story of misogyny. Clytemnestra's story tells of network in terms of materializing fate, and this is just one example of signifying network with fate, and the material outcome of such network as death and madness. When Odysseus casts the net of fate over the suitors, they all die.[16] When Cassandra is caught in the net of fate, she suffers the evils of her death at Clytemnestra's hands.[17] When the Furies seek justice for Clytemnestra, they pursue Orestes's death with their nets of fate, and indeed, Orestes must run to escape.[18] When Zeus throws a net of fate around Io, she goes mad wandering.[19] When Athena throws Ajax into evil nets, he, too, goes mad wandering.[20] When Gorgias argued that Helen may have had the net of fate around her soul, he found a reason to find her blameless against such a force.[21]

Network is associated with death, evil, calamity, treachery, and madness. A suspiciousness of nets is woven into ancient Greek rhetoric. Nets are cunning devices, as they are not noticed, usually, until it is too late, though a trap fashioned well in advance. Nets are *topoi* of entrapment. Their powers to bind liken them to the coils of a snake with the power of death by constriction (*peribolē logou*). The net throws us into ambiguity about immateriality. This immaterial fate is always already (or perhaps never not) material. Death, evil, and all kinds of calamity happen to material bodies, material lives. The materiality is ever-present in immaterial fate.

The material *topoi* of network as calamity originate etymologically and lexically from words that mean "to take," as in to take one's catch from hunting nets, or to take power through military and political domination and war, or to take control of women's bodies and authority (*airein*). Taking by force a city, overpowering a people, killing them, seizing their goods and

their women, conquering and enslaving their culture—all are represented by working to "net" a catch. Also represented in working to "net" a catch is, in law, to make a judgment to convict a person, or to prove, as in "*o logos aireei*," reason *proves*. Moreover, choice is represented in the telic taking of network. To choose, to take in preference, to prefer one thing to another, to vote, to elect to office: All show how the ends of judgment are the ends of network. This judgment in turn leads to taking up all in accordance with it, raising up, extolling, even exaggerating all in the name of this judgment. This ancient rhetoric of network celebrates taking. And not just any taking but that characterized by the highest level of taking, a teleology of taking things to the top, a hierarchical march to idealized, immaterial judgments as given truths.

Still, lexical network reveals something other to mythic network, an equal and opposing force to taking: *atelēs*, meaning that which is free from being taken. The *a* marks an alpha privative of *telēs*. *Telēs* is more likely recognizable in English transliteration as *telos*, that end that is taken to be ideal. To be free from *telos* means to be free from an idealized end. To be liberated from *telos* means to be "net," as in "clear of deductions," as in "free from being taken." Archaic myths tell of network as telic and atelic: telic, as in networking to bring the ends of taking, or atelic, networking to avoid the ends of being taken. Still, mostly the atelic myths are another site of gender struggle, wherein masculine ideals lament *atelēs* as networking having come to naught, or idealized ends being left unaccomplished, with loss and defeat and weakness typifying the results. Athena reminds Telemachus that he is the son of a great man who is known for accomplishing all, for being telic. She assures him his journey to find news of his father and bring justice and peace to his home will not be atelic, in vain, but will be accomplished.[22] Homer tells us that the heart within Odysseus ponders thoughts that were not to go unaccomplished.[23] Agamemnon vows after the death of his brother, Menelaus, that there will come a day when Troy shall perish and that this shall not go unaccomplished (*atelesta*).[24]

Atelic rhetorics of network have more to offer than what these constricting, masculinized myths show. The power of atelic rhetorics to be other than issued from *topoi* of loss is exemplified in Penelope weaving.[25] Caught in the net of the suitors, Penelope devises her plan. She weaves. And then she unweaves. She nets and un-nets to be net. She tells her suitors she will choose among them upon completing her womanly work of weaving a death shroud for Laertes. Weaving is telic, as it must be accomplished. All day she weaves. And affirming atelic possibilities of network, all night she unweaves. Her devising and weaving are quite profoundly one and the same. Penelope's story is network's story of the ever-present, originary possibility of being

free. Homer tells us that gods have this freedom, hence power, to decide whether to bring something to pass (*teleseien*) or to leave it undone (*ateleseien*).[26] Penelope becomes godlike in her choice to leave weaving undone.

Not only does this opposition within network between *airein* and *atelēs* allow for the possibility of being free in networks designed for taking, but the opposition allows as well for life. Whereas the myth of Melanion is told by the men's chorus to justify the men's networking of civilization built on the hatred of women, Aristophanes tells, on the whole, a different, and better, story with *Lysistrata*. This is a comedy after all, not a tragedy. Lysistrata accomplishes in the end of her women's networking something that is in excess of a constrictive, masculinized network, namely, the gift of the *peplos* to Athena Polias.[27] The gift is said to be appropriate to a free people, to represent their love for each other and their secure and lasting union. This gift, though it seems telic, accomplished in the giving and receiving, can never be accomplished. Obviously, Athena Polias is a statue; she can hardly receive a gift in a material way. Immateriality shows its ever-presence and atelic quality of the gift. Gifts keep on giving; they have what Marcel Mauss describes as a continuing spirit, a life, infused by the giver. As long as the gift is given, the spirit of the gift is a never-ending, eternal, atelic energy.[28] And of course, we know from Mary Douglas's well-known forward of Mauss's classic work, that the theory of the gift offers a theory of human solidarity.[29] The atelic energy of the gift is always already present in network. Still, we must not forget, as Émile Benveniste notes, "to give" in most Indo-European languages has an ambiguity and ambivalence that allows it to mean as well "to take."[30] The atelic energy of network can be part of a poison gift, where that which is given by way of network carries on forever, whether one likes it or not.

Tropical Network

Ancient Greek rhetorics of network in archaic words and myths tell of network as an ambiguous mix of gender and power, materiality and immateriality, and the forces of taking (*airein*), being taken, and being free from being taken (*atelēs*). Far from a teleological genealogy of network's metaphors, from fabric and fabrication to immaterialization, network has always already intermingled the material and immaterial, giving and taking, and paradigms of masculine and feminine power. One is not necessarily a likeness of the other, nor an elevated ideal from the base; rather both sides coexist or comingle as an ambiguous and ambivalent weave in a tropical pattern of amphibolia.

The amphibolia of network can be imagined not only as a trope figuring

meaning-making in and of network but also as a trope for imagining how network can be most fittingly thought about, engaged, circumscribed, communicated. The ambiguity of network, as the ancient rhetorics reveal, helps us critique narratives of the digital age that idealize benefits of immaterial network. As described by Stanford intellectual and cultural historian, Ian Beacock, a contemporary communication of digital network is spoken "to the tune of billions of dollars," and the tale is a "Whiggish one" of "the digital ascent of humanity." The story goes, "from our benighted times, we'll emerge into a brighter future, a happier and more open society in which everything has been measured and engineered into a state of perfect efficiency."[31]

Such a story is afflicted with cultural amnesia about ancient rhetorics of network. Ancient rhetorics of network are amphibolic, not teleologic. In other words, in amphibolia, when an idea moves forward, an ambivalent, opposing, contrasting idea arises to throw the matter into ambiguity, to cast the movement into the limen. In amphibolia, teleology gets no traction, unless *teloi* were figured ironically as changes toward the opposite, rather than change for the better. Such irony signals the ancient Greek rhetorical connection between the tropes of *amphibolē* and *eirōneia*.[32] Material life is not teleologic, but rather ironic, full of ambiguity and ambivalence, perhaps its base irony being this: as it lives, it dies. At any moment, any kind of calamity could befall us. Material life does not just get better and better, and material life is inescapable, no matter our desire for or capacity to escape into the ideal immaterial.

This yearning to escape into the ideal immaterial needs turning to its opposite of the base material. As we see in the myth of Melanion, such escape into an ideal, inspired by hatred and division of what is identified as the lowly other base of life, arises at the high and unworthy cost of everything trampled on during the ascent. This ideal is not so ideal for women. Cultural amnesia about ancient rhetorics of network is cultural amnesia of women's lives, work, authority, art, and the very basis of technology.[33] As Virginia Postrel writes, "Textiles are technology—and they have remade our world time and again."[34] Postrel appeals for us to connect to the past, to remember that technology started with textiles and that textiles started with women's network, weaving. If we remember that technology started with textiles, then we remember women in society. Postrel makes an eloquent case for reestablishing a cultural memory of technology and weaving by reminding us that "the ancient Greeks worshipped Athena as the goddess of *technē*, 'the artifice of civilization,'"[35] and of weaving. Our idealization of technology in the form only of digital networks is a problem for material lives, especially for women.

Network's base materialism is women's weaving, and women's weaving

is the base materialism of technology. The phrase "base materialism" calls forth Georges Bataille's musings on man's disdain for base materialism, in terms of man's own foot: "But whatever the role played in the erection by his foot, man, who has a light head, in other words a head raised to the heavens and heavenly things, sees it as spit, on the pretext that he has this foot in the mud."[36] Man's ideal denies dependence on and relation to base matter, constructing the base as disgusting, vile, ignominious. Yet, the base cannot be eliminated by the ideal; the ideal depends on the base.[37]

By attending to the ancient rhetorics of network, the words and deeds as offered to us by lexical and mythic sources of network, we see the base and the ideal not in a hierarchy but in an amphibolia, a network of relations that is all-encompassing and characterized by turns of ambiguity, throwing one's arms around in embrace, and throwing ideas and meanings around as to create doubt. Amphibolia is not a simple reversal of the hierarchy of ideal to base, nor a call to return to base sans ideal, nor a dialectical synthesis of the two. Amphibolia acts as a rhetoric of networking relations of, in, and through ambiguity.[38]

Women's lives in society show the stakes of ambiguating rather than idealizing base materialism in relation to the "digital ascent of humanity."[39] Let's consider two images to bring this point into bold relief: Lewis Hine's photograph of a spinner girl (figure 1.1) and a stock image for "network" produced by a Google image search (figure 1.2).

The first image comes from Lewis Hine's body of work documenting the lives of women and children in the textile industry: a little spinner girl, her tiny body dressed in textiles likely woven by others with tiny bodies like hers. She gazes at the world outside, trapped in a spinning industry, standing alone and isolated, offering her work to a world that renders her invisible.[40] The second image comes from a stock photo agency, Shutterstock, and appears in Google searches for images of "network." We see two men, united in a face-to-face handshake, with matching business attire and mirrored stances, in a context of binary code.[41] Each man is seen by the other, hence neither is invisible to the other. Face-to-face, hands clasped, they perform a ritual of recognition and reciprocity, alliance and solidarity. Unlike the spinner girl, whose body and location in the spinners' sweatshop communicates the material conditions that constrain and confine her, the men barely have bodies; they are silhouettes and shadows, suspended in light rays of binary code.

If we were to view the image of digital network teleologically, through a masculinist disconnect of material and immaterial dimensions of network, we would only be able to see ideals communicated, namely those mentioned above of recognition, reciprocity, alliance, and solidarity, and add to these

Figure 1.1. A spinner at the Rhodes Manufacturing Company in Lincolnton, North Carolina, 1908. Lewis Wickes Hine, photographer. Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division (LC-DIG-nclc-01345).

Figure 1.2. *Digital World Agreement*, found online in a Google image search for "Network." Shutterstock.com.

the shining light of wealth. We would see in this image progress, advancement, and development. The men's silhouettes reflect an idealized achievement of transcendent, immaterial worlds of being. The spinner girl is left behind, rendered again invisible, embodied, entrapped.

When we view this image amphibolically, in response to the tropical call of ancient rhetorics of network, we see ambiguity: these men are and are not embodied. The escape into the immaterial, elite world of pure ideas, of binary code and silhouettes, cannot be a complete escape. The material world lurks; the body cannot be left behind. Moreover, the body, too, appears entrapped, in a net of binary code. The body entrapped in net is emphatic, via the ancient Greek figure of emphasis, meaning something ever-present albeit always in the shadows.[42] The body in network is in the shadows, literally and figuratively, in this stock image of network. Through amphibolia, we turn toward the shadows to see what is haunting us there.

Weaving haunts the digital. Before punchcards were used in computers, they were used to control the patterns on jacquard looms. As Postrel explains, "Weaving is the original binary system, at least 9,000 years old. Warp threads are held in tension, and weft threads go over or under them. Over-under, up-down, on-off, one-zero. Punch cards could control looms because weaving is intrinsically binary."[43] To forget this connection between weaving and coding constrains living well together. We forget the spinner girl. We forget the women of the digital world who are closed out of men's deals in Silicon Valley.[44] We forget about criminal and moral injustice against women working in the digital world, particularly against women who code, who are being sexually harassed and threatened with rape and death.[45] We forget the women and children of developing countries living in what has been described as a "poisonous, post-apocalyptic hell" serving as "the final resting place" for the First World's old televisions, computers, and mobile phones.[46]

How wrong to be so forgetful? Can we live well together as a people with such amnesia? Forgetting is an effect of a teleological rhetoric of the digital network ascent of humanity. Amphibolia, as an ancient rhetorical trope of network, turns us toward network's ambiguity, away from ascent, and calls attention to the immanent material conditions of the immaterial transcendent possibilities. We cannot valorize and idealize an immaterial ascendency of men in solidarity and wealth at the cost of the lives and labors of women, children, and the earth itself.

Rhetorical resources of amphibolia offer more than what haunts us. Amphibolia as network's figure shows forth that which is in excess as well as that which is deficient. We need to see these extremes to bring into focus the standard mean as moderator and measure. The Stranger in Plato's *Statesman* foretells that the weaving art as the political art would be destroyed

without excess and deficiency being moderated by the standard mean. The standard mean arises from that which is fitting, kairotic, and opportune.[47] For weaving and political arts care about excess and deficiency in relation to that which is fitting. These arts regard excess and deficiency not as nonexistent but as real difficulties in actual practice.[48] Without such measures in relation to each other and that which is fitting, the woof and warp of the loom cannot achieve and maintain the proper laxity and tension, the fitting balance of separation and unity required for weaving. So, too, in the political arts of living well together. The excesses of Silicon Valley cannot be so valued that we become blind to the deficient conditions of the spinner girl. If we do, no art of living well together can be practiced. Likewise, if the deficient material conditions of the spinner girl were to become the only focus of critique, a stasis at best would be created. Of course, a halt, a moment of suspension, a stasis is a necessary condition for rhetorical change. But we cannot live in stasis, not for long anyway. Rhetoric must generate anew, innovate, give more, create again and otherwise. Amphibolia keeps a needed tension so we can weave our story-cloth of living well together.

In this story-cloth we see digital network entrapment and freedom. We see gender struggles and other dimensions of power struggles. We see the tensions between materialism and immaterialism. We see the gift as it takes and gives. In terms of the contemporary situations of digital networks, the extraordinary encroachments of digital networks in our lives drives discovery of new ways. David Orban proposes that Bitcoin enthusiasts communicate their work as "weaving" rather than "mining." "Mining" focuses on taking, rather than giving, and it enforces allegiance to the same system that honors gold as a monetary base, the very system that Bitcoin culture is trying to leave for all that system's encroachments on privacy. Moreover, Orban asks, "Could women be more easily drawn into the world of Bitcoin if we spoke about weaving the fabric of global financial emancipation? Could this result in a more attractive mental image than the macho world of secretive solitary miners searching for gold?"[49]

I will forgive Orban in this moment his gender essentialism so that I can attend to his question of whether changing the way we talk about network can change the way we live together in network. His question sparks a critique of misogyny in digital network, and calls for weaving freedom. This critique and call offer evidence that something other has gotten through, something forgotten remembered, affirming in turn the atelic possibilities of freedom. And, yes, changing rhetoric can change life.[50]

We can see the possibilities of atelic network in stories beyond Bitcoin. The indigenous Aymara women of Bolivia weave medical devices to help children with heart defects. The designing cardiologist, Franz Freudenthal,

told the BBC that "the most important thing is that we try to get really simple solutions for complex problems."[51] Such an approach is figured by an amphibolic turn and relation between the simple and the complex, something a teleological turn just cannot create in its rejection of the simple to idealize and achieve the complex. This simple solution though, of the weaving women of Aymara, is excessively complex, as it exceeds the possibility of mass production. Each device must be woven by hand via the indigenous, archaic weaving and networking of women. These women weaving "parts for hearts" are in turn being networked on social media via *A Mighty Girl*, a digital collection claiming the title of the world's largest of books, toys, and movies for parents, teachers, and others dedicated to raising smart, confident, and courageous girls.[52] We find a tremendous resource for the good life in this amphibolic turn toward the simple weaving of Aymara women to address such complex needs as healing heart disease and parenting mighty girls.

Or consider as another example of the atelic possibilities of network woven in an amphibolic pattern the StEP Initiative in the United Nations: Solving the E-waste Problem. United Nations' web communications describe their role, organization, objectives, work, principles, and education initiatives all through the language of "network."[53] They have developed elaborate digital networks to advance solving this material e-waste crisis. One striking example is the StEP e-waste world map, which provides visual data on the amount of electrical and electronic equipment put on the market and the resulting amount of e-waste generated in most countries around the world. The data on the material quantity and location of e-waste is updated regularly to stay current with changes, and the map provides links to relevant e-waste rules, regulations, and policies. Network got us into this problem of e-waste; network can get us out.

Idealizing digital networks at the expense of forgetting about material origins and effects allows digital networks to proceed as if the ecologically catastrophic horrors of e-material waste do not exist, or perhaps that these horrors must be accepted for achieving the immaterial digital ideals of networked life. The ancient rhetorics of network tell us that such rhetorics of idealization are not fitting for network. Rather, rhetorics of ambiguation, signaled by the words and deeds of amphibolia and *atelēs*, can free us from being so taken by an ideal, can return us to a connection with base materialism that fuels us with resources to create a circuit of solutions all around complex problems. Still, network's amphibolic turns will not allow human beings to rest forever in *atelēs*, let alone experience *atelēs* only as an ideal called "freedom." Network will again take, and yet for being amphibolic, will

again offer resources for freeing us from being taken. So is the story-cloth of being networked, of being human in society.

Now, with network's story-cloth in hand, we can imagine the gift of the *peplos*, a robe fitting a free people, in the spirit of the ancient Greek gift of a *peplos* to the goddess Athena at the annual Panathenaic Festival. This gift is given to symbolize a free people. From our genealogy of ancient rhetorics of network, we can see that a free people in network's story-cloth appears as a people capable of both embracing and doubting, as well as recognizing their responsibility to do both, equitably and continually. A free people in network's story-cloth appears as a people capable of and desirous of living in ways other than war. A free people live in the connection of material and immaterial worlds so as to be circumspect always of network's promises and problems. A free people, living in this connection, for example, sees e-waste's ecological catastrophe, and sees the cultural colonization that idealizing the immaterial allows for in gender, race, and class relations. A free people throws down on all sides of such matters to create doubt in the idealized structure of power that networked us into such problems in the first place. This throw down on being taken simultaneously turns a free people to the atelic potential of network to find freedom from such problems. A free people navigate, for example, the domination of masculinist ideals with the ambiguity of shared power within and across genders to address gender-based violence and oppression.

Freedom does not reside in the extremes of excess and deficiency, as the arts of weaving and the arts of living well together show. We see this in network's story-cloth, though ambiguously we see as well that these extremes are ever-present in and for network. May our robe offer safety from extremes.

Notes

1. Gregory Flaxman, "Networked: Politics in the Age of Information," *Media Res*, Oct. 5, 2012. http://mediacommons.futureofthebook.org/imr/2012/10/05/networked-politics-age-information. Accessed October 10, 2014.

2. Ibid.

3. See Armand Mattelart, *Networking the World, 1794–2000*, trans. Liz Carey-Libbrecht and James A. Cohen (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000).

4. The network terms I select, and their summary definitions, are derived from two key sources: S. C. Woodhouse, *English-Greek Dictionary: A Vocabulary of the Attic Language* (London: George Routledge and Sons, 1910); and Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, Henry Stuart Jones, and Roderick McKenzie, *A Greek English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996).

5. I work with the idea of Homeric catalogs also in *Rhetoric and the Gift: Ancient Rhetorical Theory and Contemporary Communication* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2015), 55–66.

6. *Il.* 2.484–760. Citations for Homer throughout are from the Oxford Classical Texts: Homer, *Homeri Opera: Odysseae*, vols. 3–4 (London: Oxford University Press, 1974); *Homeri Opera: Iliadis*, vols. 1–2 (London: Oxford University Press, 1920). Translations are my own. I consult as well *The Odyssey of Homer*, trans. Richmond Lattimore (New York: Harper Perennial, 1991); and *Odyssey*, 2 vols., trans. A. T. Murray (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984).

7. Benjamin Sammons, *The Art and Rhetoric of the Homeric Catalogue* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 9.

8. In the rhetorical tradition, poetry (*poiēsis*) can be distinguished from rhetoric, yet, even in Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, "*poiēsis*" is the term used throughout to signify the "generation" of arguments, or what the Romans would later call "invention." For Aristotle's use of *poiēsis*, see *Rhetoric*, 1362b15, 18; 1367a5; 1379a8; 1381a11, 19; 1381b35, 36; 1382a2; 1388b17. Citations for Aristotle's *Rhetoric* are of the ancient Greek from the Oxford Classical Text: Aristotelis, *Ars Rhetorica* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959). Translations are my own. I consult *Aristotle: The "Art" of Rhetoric*, trans. John Henry Freese (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982); *Aristotle: On Rhetoric*, trans. George Kennedy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); and *Rhetoric*, trans. Rhys Roberts (New York: Modern Library, 1954).

9. Evy Johnanne Håland, "Athena's Peplos: Weaving as a Core Female Activity in Ancient and Modern Greece," *Cosmos* 20 (2004),170.

10. Ibid.

11. Ibid., 155.

12. *Od.* 8.256–366; See Robert Graves, *The Greek Myths*, vol. 1 (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1974), 67–71, for his account of the ways in which Aphrodite is taken by the men upon release.

13. Aristophanes, *Lysistrata*, 781–96; citation of the ancient Greek and translation consultation for Aristophanes is from Jeffrey Henderson, ed. and trans., *Aristophanes: Birds, Lysistrata, Women at the Thesmophoria* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000).

14. Håland, "Athena's Peplos," 165.

15. Aeschylus, *Agamemnon*, 905–10; 980–1013; 1379–83. Citation of the ancient Greek and translation consultation for Aeschylus is from *Aeschylus: Suppliant Maidens, Persians, Prometheus, Seven Against Thebes*, vol. 1, ed. Hugh Lloyd-Jones and trans. Herbert Weir Smyth (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006); and *Agamemnon, Libation Bearers, and Eumenides*, vol. 2, trans. Herbert Weir Smyth (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971). Alexander Galloway begins his entry for "networks" with a reference to *Agamemnon*; see Galloway, "Networks," in *Critical Terms for Media Studies*, ed. W. J. T. Mitchell and Mark B. N. Hansen (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010): 280–82. For an analysis of the agency of "tragic textiles" in ancient Greek tragedy, see Melissa Mueller, *Objects as Actors:*

Props and the Poetics of Performance in Greek Tragedy (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016), 42–68.

16. Homer, *Od.*, 22.33, 41, 43, 65–67, 363, 381–82.

17. Aeschylus, *Agamemnon*, 1035–50.

18. Aeschylus, *Eumenides*, 145, 299–396, 460, 630.

19. Aeschylus, *Prometheus Bound*, 738. For commentary on mad wandering, see Silvia Montiglio, *Wandering in Ancient Greek Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 38.

20. Sophocles, *Ajax*, 59–60. Citation of ancient Greek and translation consultation from *Sophocles: Ajax, Electra, Oedipus*, vol. 1, ed. and trans. Hugh Lloyd-Jones (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994).

21. Gorgias, *Encomium of Helen*, 19, in *The Older Sophists*, ed. and trans. Rosamond Kent Sprague (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1972), 54.

22. *Od.* 2.270–75; 19.137–51.

23. Ibid., 18.344–45.

24. *Il.*, 4.168.

25. *Od.*, 2.94–110.

26. Ibid., 8.570–71.

27. For historical accounts of the ritual of the gift of the *peplos* to Athena, see E. J. W. Barber, *Prehistoric Textiles: The Development of Cloth in the Neolithic and Bronze Ages with Special Reference to the Aegean* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991). See also, Barber, "The Peplos of Athena," in *Goddess and Polis: The Panathenaic Festival in Ancient Athens*, ed. Jennifer Niels (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992): 103–17; and Håland, "Athena's Peplos," 155–82.

28. Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies* (London and New York: Routledge Classics, 2002).

29. Mary Douglas, "No Free Gifts," forward to Mauss, *The Gift*, x.

30. Benveniste, "Gift and Exchange in Indo-European Vocabulary," in *The Logic of the Gift*, ed. Alan Schrift (New York: Routledge, 1997), 34.

31. Ian Beacock, "Humanist among Machines," *Aeon*, June 25, 2015, http://aeon.co/magazine/society/why-we-need-arnold-toynbees-muscular-humanism/.

32. See R. Dean Anderson Jr., *Glossary of Greek Rhetorical Terms Connected to Methods of Argumentation, Figures and Tropes from Anaximenes to Quintilian* (Leuven, Belgium: Peeters, 2000), 17, 39.

33. Virginia Postrel, "Losing the Thread," *Aeon*, June 5, 2015, http://aeon.co/magazine/culture/how-textiles-repeatedly-revolutionised-technology/.

34. Ibid.

35. Ibid.

36. Georges Bataille, *Visions of Excess*, ed. and trans. Allan Stoekl, with Carl R. Lovitt and Donald M. Leslie Jr. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985), 20.

37. Ibid., 22.

38. Ibid., 4.

39. See Beacock, "Humanist among Machines."

40. Lewis Wickes Hine, photographer, "Rhodes Mfg. Co., Lincolnton, N.C. Spinner. A moments glimpse of the outer world Said she was 10 years old. Been working over a year. Location: Lincolnton, North Carolina," photograph. Lincolnton, NC, 1908. From Library of Congress: *Photographs from the records of the National Child Labor Committee (U.S.)*, accessed June 20, 2015, http://www.loc.gov/item/ncl2004000062/PP/#about-this-item.

41. "Digital World Agreement with Binary Code," Shutterstock, Image ID 61426666, accessed July 11, 2016, http://www.shutterstock.com.

42. See Anderson, *Glossary*, 41–42.

43. Postrel, "Losing the Thread." Postrel uses the phrase "cultural amnesia" to describe our memory loss of the connection between textiles and technology.

44. Two leading digital industries, Facebook and Google, have made public their lack of diversity, in particular gender diversity. Women make up only 15 percent of Facebook's tech workforce. Women at Google fare "better," making up 17 percent of its tech workforce. See Maxine Williams, "Building a More Diverse Facebook," *Facebook Newsroom*, June 25, 2014, http://newsroom.fb.com/news/2014/06/building-a-more-diverse-facebook/; for Google's data, see "We're Working Toward a Web that Includes Everyone," accessed September 20, 2015, http://www.google.com/diversity/index.html. See also Murrey Jacobson, "Google Finally Discloses Its Diversity Record, and It's Not Good," *PBS NewsHour*, May 28, 2014, http://www.pbs.org/newshour/updates/google-discloses-workforce-diversity-data-good/.

45. The Gamergate controversy offers a poignant example: In August 2014, a harassment campaign sought to drive out several women from the video game industry. The campaign of harassment took place in Internet Relay Chat (IRC) channels and online forums such as Reddit, 4chan, and 8chan. The harassment ranged from "doxing" (a digital practice of researching, including hacking, and broadcasting personal information about targeted individuals) to threats of rape, death threats, and a threat of a mass shooting at a university event hosting one of the targeted women, Anita Sarkeesian. She canceled her talk. See Fruzsina Eördögh, "Gamergate and the New Horde of Digital Saboteurs," *Christian Science Monitor*, November 25, 2014, Accessed October 6, 2017, https://www.csmonitor.com/Technology/Tech-Culture/2014/1125/Gamergate-and-the-new-horde-of-digital-saboteurs.

46. Damien Gayle, "Chemical Breakdown: The Toxic Substances Inside Your Mobile Phone," Daily Mail.com, October 5, 2012, http://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-2213366/Chemical-breakdown-What-really-goes-new-iPhone.html. Gayle details the following scene in a suburb of the capital of Ghana: "Piles of cracked computer monitors sit in rancid pools of noxious green slime, while the circuit boards and innards of old PCs leak toxic mercury, beryllium and cadmium, poisoning the earth. Scampering over these mounds of decaying computers are red-eyed gangs of wild, young boys in rags who smash old computer components with rocks to rip out the valuable copperwire inside."

47. Plato, *The Statesman*, trans. Harold North Fowler and W. R. M. Lamb (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1925), 284e.

48. Ibid., 284a.

49. David Orban, "Weaving Is a Better Metaphor for Bitcoin, Instead of Mining," *Bitcoin Magazine*, April 25, 2014, https://bitcoinmagazine.com/12311/weaving-better-metaphor-bitcoin-instead-mining/.

50. For essays on rhetoric, materialism, and materiality, see Barbara A. Biesecker and John Louis Lucaites, eds., *Rhetoric, Materiality, and Politics* (New York: Peter Lang, 2009).

51. Ignacio de los Reyes, "The Bolivian Women Who Knit Parts for Hearts," *BBC Health Check*, March 29, 2015, http://www.bbc.com/news/health-32076070.

52. See AMightyGirl.com, accessed September 22, 2015, http://www.amightygirl.com.

53. See StEP-Initiative.org, accessed September 20, 2015, http://www.step-initiative.org. A search of this web page for "network" turned up an array of uses. Here is a sample: members form a global network of more than 470 locations in 55 countries, StEP recognizes the Greener Network Methodology, Step works with the Asian Network for Prevention of Illegal Transboundary Movement, features regional, multisectoral networks for Latin America and the Caribbean, with networks serving as focal points for information exchange, with countries acting as catalysts, networking scientists, policy-makers, educators, as well as citizens on the front lines of the calamity to solve the problem, and on and on the language of "network" is engaged by the United Nations to communicate what is being done, and what is a necessary condition, namely network, required for solving this global calamity.