THE EPISTOLARY BODY OF EMAIL: PRESENCE, DISEMBODIMENT AND THE SUBLIME

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Abstract

Staring into the abyss, standing on the edge of the unknown, media historiography is enthralled by rupture. The ecstasy of difference, disjunction and aporia is sublime. Edmund Burke’s (1729–1797) mountain precipice becomes Poststructuralism’s threshold of difference and the ‘horizon of indefinite meaning’ (Spivak 1998, p. lxxvi). Romantic discourse informs the critical practices and socio-technological representations of new communication modalities in the longing for presence, immediacy and intimacy even as critics of humanist paradigms would disavow these concepts. In its fantasy of disembodiment, epistolary rhetorics haunt email relations. Exploring the postal imaginary, this paper maps the narrative of technological development and desire as it is configured within email practice.

I am determined I’ll never see you. I am resolved to communicate with an invisibility, our correspondence shall be literally & truly all Soul…supposing I should leave my manuscripts to you would it not be enchanting to say in the preface—I never saw him & therefore I can have no partialities—no Friendship, I judge only of his works, & his thoughts...and if we meet the other side of the gulph—our minds will feel we are the immortal Two—who in spite of the miserable physical enclosure of body—knew each other only by the Immortal!


Gender in the physical world is biological fact. In the online world it is at best a code for masking assumptions about a concept. I would prefer that
people were evaluated based on their ideas and concepts and not based on their chromosomal makeup. The bending of gender and the experimentation with gender is nothing more than souls attempting to escape from a social box. My proposal is to trash the box!!!

(An email from David Presley to the Cybermind discussion group, 26 January 2001) (http://listserv.aol.com/archives/cybermind.html).

For Benjamin Robert Haydon (1786–1846) and Elizabeth Barrett Browning (1806–1861), the fact that they do not meet face-to-face is central to their epistolary friendship. They were introduced by letter through a mutual friend but did not meet during the course of their three-year friendship. In his letters, Haydon regularly draws attention to the ‘invisibility’ of his correspondent: ‘my sweet unseen’ (p. 192), ‘you ingenious little, darling invisible’ (p. 58). Barrett Browning is Haydon’s ‘dearest dream’ (p. 276), their friendship ‘a touch beyond the Mortal’ (p. 165). But what is the link between ‘invisibility’ and ‘the soul’? Why do we assume, with Haydon, that corporeality, visibility and materiality operate in opposition to notions of the soul? The answer to this question lies, in part, with the communication technologies referred to in the opening quotations: electronic mail and letters. In general, with both these technologies interlocutors are not physically present to one another. For David, the email correspondent quoted above, this situation promises the opportunity for ‘souls’ to ‘escape’ the biological constraints of gender. His dream is of ideal communication: subjects are able to evaluate one another’s ideas and concepts unfettered by the complications of biological ‘code’. Biology ‘masks’, disguises and conceals the real. Email technology liberates interlocutors from their ‘chromosomal makeup’.

Both these technologies, then, are underpinned by an assumption about ‘disembodiment’ and how this is related to authentic communication. Were the correspondents visible to one another, their ‘evaluations’ might not be so reliable or impartial: ‘I never saw him & therefore I can have no partialities—no Friendship, I judge only of his works, & his thoughts’; ‘I would prefer that people were evaluated based on their ideas and concepts and not based on their chromosomal makeup’. In one sense, this is an odd situation. In contemporary culture, ‘the body’ is commonly aligned with ‘nature’, ‘authenticity’ and ‘truth’ or what Vicki Kirby calls ‘the fact of flesh’ (1997, p. 141). As Judith Butler notes, ‘the bodily being’ is ‘considered to be most real, most pressing, most undeniable’ (1993, p. ix). How, then, does the corporeal co-presence of epistolary or email agents seem to threaten the veracity and authenticity of their communication? What rhetorical and material function does the body play in these communication infrastructures?
For many researchers, the problematic of ‘online disembodiment’ has been resolved. Reviewing Hubert Dreyfus’s book *On the Internet* (2001), Geert Lovink writes:

Body politics may have been significant at some point but cannot nearly cover the variety of all too real issues that the Internet as a global medium faces. The Internet is not in need of ‘re-embodiment’ but cries for a strong coalition, able to update and defend core values such as openness and access...Around 1990 science fiction futurism was used to popularize and electrify the yet unknown ‘cyberspace’. There had been a lot of speculations about ‘virtual bodies’. However, by 2001...the excitement and curiosity for the disembodiment has faded away (2002).

In his review, Lovink is quite right to draw attention to the ways in which Dreyfus fails to situate his argument within the already comprehensive, complex, ongoing field of technology and body studies. There is no mention of the significant feminist critiques from, for example, Donna Haraway (1991, 1997), Vivian Sobchack (1995) and Sandy Stone (1995). This is quite an oversight in a book published in 2002. Nor is there any acknowledgement of the important existing research into the function of race online (e.g. Kolko, Nakamura & Rodman 2000, Burkhalter 1999, Bailey 1996). Lovink is also correct in observing how Dreyfus collapses a multiplicity of technologies, applications, practices, economic exigencies under the rubric of ‘the Internet’. However, while it is useful to observe the operational strength of various phases of net criticism, I would argue that narratives of disembodiment do not simply disappear because some theory ‘use by’ date has expired.

Lovink’s review raises a central issue for researchers of communications technologies: how to assess accurately the technological impact, historical significance and cultural consequences of a particular change in a communications system. It is a problem because, quite often, researchers of a specific technology argue for decisive shifts and an abrupt break when a nuanced view of that technology would see continuity as well as rupture. Theorists such as Mark Seltzer (2000) and Bernhard Siegert (1997), for example, who write about the history of the postal service from a perspective inflected by Poststructuralist media theory, often suggest the absolute newness of socio-cultural phenomena. Discussing the ‘postal’ conditions of literature in the context of Henry James, for example, Seltzer comments:

Once it becomes possible to write on sheets of paper that can be folded back on themselves (rather than, say, rolled into a scroll), once it becomes possible for the handwritten and folded sheet of paper to be inserted in an envelope, sealed, and posted, the technical conditions of interiority and privacy are in place (2000, p. 203).

In a similar manner, Siegert argues that the invention of the postcard represents a decisive and irreversible split within the history of communication:
When a medium with a message of self-reference to its own discursive system emerged, the letter was sent to its ruin. The postcard is the final misuse of love letters. And this is above all due to the fact that its origin was not the psychogenic voice preceding all letters as a transcendental requirement, but printed matter (2000, p. 156).

What these quotations express is the conviction that the technology under question inaugurates a decisive and irreversible split within the history of communication. This is a rhetorical move made by many writers in the field of cyberculture, CMC and Internet studies. The older technology is shown as naive and socially irrelevant or, to use Paul Duguid’s term, ‘narcoleptic’ (1996, p. 66). Duguid argues that there are two ‘futurological tropes’ which operate in the relation between new and old technology: the trope of ‘supersession’ where ‘each new technological type vanquishes or subsumes its predecessors’ and the notion of ‘liberation’ where the ‘pursuit of new information technologies is simultaneously a righteous pursuit of liberty’ (1996, p. 65). Underpinning these two tropes is a desire to escape ‘the clutches of the past’ (1996, p. 68) and a language that emphasises breaks over continuity: ‘talk of breaks and disconnections, of paradigm shifts and social transformations, of waves and generations, and of disjunctions between old and new abounds’ (1996, pp. 66–77). A fantasy of disembodiment informs these rhetorical strategies. When technological development is seen only in terms of radical disjunction and history is read solely as a series of crisis points, then one can glimpse this fantasy functioning as the desire to escape the messy materialities of the complex relations between new and old media forms.

Seltzer and Siegert make significant assumptions about the nature of privacy and its connection to the changing technologies of communication. In the first quotation, Seltzer argues that the technological structures of postal practice—‘the envelope’ or ‘the seal’—effect a change in, or indeed inaugurate, the conditions of privacy and ‘interiority’. As many postal historians have noted, there’s no doubt that the invention of the envelope in the mid-nineteenth century dramatically affected epistolary culture. It is, however, not quite accurate to suggest that the idea of epistolary privacy was absent from earlier modes of postal communication. Before the envelope was in widespread use, letters were folded back on themselves and sealed with wax; letters were ‘sealed’ and ‘posted’, therefore, before the invention of the envelope in 1840. Moreover, the introduction of the envelope did not necessarily guarantee ‘privacy’. British nineteenth-century letter writers regularly included two or three letters addressed to different people in the same envelope. Presumably, the contents of these letters would have been available for the addressee to read before they were forwarded to their intended recipients. Postal privacy is not vanquished (for the critical discourse of the postcard is troped as sexual) by the loss of the envelope. In the eighteenth century, for example, the state
regularly carried out postal surveillance. Epistolary privacy, then, has never been an absolute category but rather always historically and technologically contingent; a shifting, context-dependent and negotiated relation between agents. In recognition of this, much critical activity has focused on the problematic links drawn between the familiar letter, the private sphere and what Peggy Kamuf calls ‘an idea called woman’ (1982, p. ix). Long associated with the interiority of subjectivity and domestic space, the letter has been interrogated as the rhetorical site for the production of a feminised privacy (e.g. Gilroy & Verhoeven 2000, Goldsmith 1989, Kauffman 1992, Perry 1980).

The problem with Seltzer’s argument is a familiar one in many studies about the relation between old and new technology where the so-called past system is cast in terms of ‘simplicity’ or ‘innocence’ against the intricacies and nuances of the present technology. As Duguid explains, within these kinds of rhetorical moves: ‘the past is repeatedly portrayed in a version of “pastoral” that extracts idyllic and simple aspects of an earlier age only to contrast them with the assumed complexity and sophistication of the present’ (1996, p. 71). In Seltzer’s formulation we are encouraged to believe first, that the concept of epistolary privacy—and hence the discursive system of intimacy—is an empirically verifiable technological condition and, second, that the invention of the envelope ushered in a new mode of subjectivity in the form of ‘interiority’.

Similarly, for Bernhard Siegert the ‘letter’ stands for interiority, intimacy and privacy: ‘the psychogenic voice’ was the ‘transcendental requirement’ of epistolary practice. Postcard technology delivers violence to the letter: ‘postal objectification of the soul was not a painless one. The most agonising part undoubtedly was the incision that sacrificed the confidentiality of the letter by removing the envelope’ (1997, p. 148). One of the difficulties with Siegert’s overall argument is the somewhat simplistic semantic connections he makes between intimacy, privacy, individualism and the letter on the one hand, contrasted with public, ‘elimination of...individuality’ (1997, p. 148), ‘technological replicability’(1997, p. 160) and the postcard on the other. Intimacy, privacy and a longing for presence do not simply disappear with the advent of the postcard in 1865. Indeed, the ‘wish you were here’ economy of postcard technology actually enhances the dream of intimacy and presence. This is illustrative of a compelling yet confounding fact of postal history. Yes, it consists of sharp breaks but there are also continuities. There is disjunction but there is also conformity; difference and similarity. For the historiographer, these multiple, paradoxical and conflicting strands confound the construction of a cohesive narrative. Simply put, complexity abhors a good aphorism. The point demonstrated by these quotations is that the new is always more exciting and sophisticated than the old. Arriving with a great shout—‘the letter was sent to its ruin’—communication histories are so often written in the disembodied voice of the apocalyptic.3 Apocalyptic and
sublime, the historiography of media genealogy is inflected by the
tropes of Romanticism. In the Poststructuralist vision of socio-techno-
logical development, Edmund Burke’s infinite sublime is reformulated
as the ‘delightful horror’ (1998, p. 67) of rupture, impossibilities, dis-
sonance and aporia: ‘never before’; ‘for the first time’; ‘never again’.
And what is quite remarkable about these rhetorical strategies is
that they can end up confirming that very methodology and ideology
they wish to confound. That is, while arguing for historical rupture
and break against the universalising, totalising view of historical
seamlessness, these kinds of studies actually rejoice in the unbroken
narrative of history. As Duguid observes:
Claims of supersession, for instance, often escape portraying
history as seamless only by the factitious insertion of a single
seam, which often falls just behind the claimant. Beyond this
single, uniform rent that frees the claimant from the past,
history usually looks not the complex of tessellated breaks and
ruptures we are led to expect, but placidly smooth and undif-
To a certain degree, the socio-technological representations and
practices of electronic mail operate according to Duguid’s logic of
supersession and liberation because ‘disjunction’ is often emphasised
but there are also continuities which ought to be acknowledged.
Narratives of electronic mail reveal an interesting tension operating
between new and old media underpinned by a double logic of revolu-
tion and nostalgia. Email is viewed either as an entirely new system of
communication or a renaissance of paper-based letter writing: ‘e-mail
has shrunk the world, shattering old notions of language, time, geog-
raphy and etiquette…the letter and the telephone are fast becoming
the quill pens of communication’ (Freeman-Greene, 1998, p. 9) or ‘e-
mail has revived the art of letter writing for everybody and
tomorrow’s historians will be grateful’ (Stanford 1999, p. 5).
My argument is that while there are, clearly, major technological,
cultural and economic differences between the systems of letter
writing and email, there are significant continuities. Or, rather, the
sharp and sudden breaks argued for, in both academic and popular
contexts, are problematic. In the shift from one communication tech-
nology to another, there is always residue since new communication
technologies do not simply replace extant forms. Instead, the more
recent genre will borrow iconography, codes of composition and
modes of social practice from its predecessor. Moreover, the transition
from one communication regime to another is not a smooth, linear
process where each successive technology improves and dispenses
with the earlier mode. Katherine Hayles would call this residue
’skeuomorphic’:
A skeuomorph is a design feature, no longer functional in
itself, but that refers back to a feature that was functional at an
erlier time. The dashboard of my Toyota Camry, for example,
is covered by vinyl molded to simulate stitching. The simulated stitching alludes back to a fabric that was in fact stitched, although the vinyl 'stitching' is formed by an injection mold. Skeuomorphs visibly testify to the social or psychological necessity for innovation to be tempered by replication...like a Janus figure, the skeuomorph looks to past and future, simultaneously reinforcing and undermining both. It calls into play a psychodynamic that finds the new more acceptable when it recalls the old that it is in the process of displacing, and the traditional more comfortable when it is presented in a context that reminds us we can escape from it into the new (1999, p. 17).

Within the socio-technological representations and practices of electronic mail, the letter works skeuomorphically, neither fully embraced nor totally rejected. The trope of the post office—its iconography, perceptual frameworks and economies of intersubjective exchange—dominate the rhetorical structure of email practice. Email borrows its symbolic repertoire from postal lexicons. As Sunka Simon observes, 'internet rhetoric is full of “epistolarisms”' (2002, p. 218). Skeuomorphs are an important guide for tracing the relations between new and old technology because they point to the desire to escape the technological bodies of the past.

Confronting the researcher of new technology is an historiographical problematic underpinned by a dual dynamic: How can we assess the tension between old and new media without, on the one hand falling under the sway of ‘presentist’ ideology (Wellman & Gulia 1995, p. 167) (where the new technology simply sweeps away the old) or, on the other hand, failing to recognise the impacts wrought by culturally specific, technologically differentiated and historically located communication technologies (the new technology is ‘essentialised’ in terms of a overarching narrative which outweighs the specificity of particular media). These methodological and rhetorical problems can be identified as operating at the level of the theory that explains socio-technological change. For example, are we drawing from a media determinist position? But there are also attendant problems operating at the meta-theoretical level concerning socio-technological change. In other words, in cyberculture research, particular perspectives, approaches or theories are often thought to be passé, resolved or beside the point. And one such theory, as mentioned, is the ‘disembodiment’ issue. Indeed, if one wants to induce rapid somnambulism and creeping inertia in one’s audience, just bang on about the ‘disappearing corporeality within informational networks’ or ‘the body fear of cyberspace’.

This problem is partially due to the fact that we don’t quite understand the desire that drives and is produced by the concept of ‘disembodiment’. Part aesthetic, part political and part technological, the ‘will to disembodiment’ is, paradoxically perhaps, a desire for pres-
ence. ‘Paradoxical’ because common sense has it that our reality is structured by presence, embodiment and materiality on the one hand and absence, disembodiment and immateriality on the other. However, there are multiple interrelated factors which unsettle the correlation between presence and embodiment. Presence is not an absolute, unequivocal ontological category; rather, presence is a contingent effect that changes depending, in part, on what form of media is involved. Email ‘presence’ is different from face-to-face presence (and the latter not always superior to the former). A sense of presence, intimacy and immediacy is often produced by eclipsing the materialities of the particular communications system. These factors suggest that presence depends, counter-intuitively, on a process of disembodiment. This complex situation Derrida would explain in terms of the deconstruction of ‘the metaphysics of presence’. Presence is shown to be contingent and fragmented not, as commonly held, self-sufficient and indivisible. As he explains, ‘thus one comes to posit presence...no longer as the absolutely central form of Being but as a “determination” and as an “effect”’ (1982, p. 16). We can’t fully understand the function of electronic mail, the way we communicate on listservs, until we deal with the legacy left by eighteenth and nineteenth century virtual communities. Much of the rhetoric produced by and within email practice, is informed by Romantic notions of immediacy, presence and the effacing of the materiality of communication. Late eighteenth century letter writers created virtual writing spaces in which immediacy and presence were performed in ways comparable with the kinds of subjectivities produced by email.

Although cyberspace as a ‘medium of disembodied voices’ (Porter 1997, p. xi) has been comprehensively critiqued from a range of feminist, sociological, phenomenological and Poststructuralist perspectives, what remains under-theorised is the relation between the technology of writing itself and notions of ‘disembodiment’. For many cybercultural commentators, what tends to get overlooked is that writing itself is a system of signification already removed, or disembodied, from its referent.4 As Vicki Kirby has insightfully observed, ‘written representation per se’ operates ‘as a virtual technology’ (1997, p. 140). Moreover, the cultural desire for ‘transparent immediacy’ (Bolter & Grusin 1999, p. 74), or what one epistolary commentator calls ‘the letter writer’s fantasy of unmediated converse’ (Decker 1998, p. 37), is a tenacious one. Useful in this regard is Merleau Ponty’s explanation about how our assumptions about the transparency of language map onto our beliefs concerning the function of communication. As he explains ‘When someone—an author or a friend—succeeds in expressing himself, the signs are immediately forgotten; all that remains is the meaning. The perfection of language lies in its capacity to pass unnoticed’ (1973, p. 10).

Despite the ‘lessons of Postmodernism’, the trope of transparency, immediacy, authenticity, identity and presence is particularly visible
on email discussion lists. Indeed, recent critical commentary notes the rearticulation of this quixotic desire. Early 90s fantasies about the radicalisation of subjectivity within online contexts—or what Ned Rossiter calls ‘the doctrine of fluid identities’ (2002)—are being put into question. Beth Kolko and Elizabeth Reid have critiqued the ‘multiple and fragmented selves’ of cyberspatial relations, arguing that contrary to much of the celebratory rhetoric about the flexibility and negotiated interactions of virtual communities, in fact, ‘fragmented projections of the self can become fixed and invariable, and can preclude flexible social interaction’ (1998, p. 213).

Yet, often the desire for radical subjectivities, multiple selves and decentred identity depends, curiously, on a neo-Romantic discourse of presence which seeks to collapse dichotomy. In many socio-technological narratives of ‘new media culture’, the critique of authorial sovereignty or the so-called enlightenment self begins by alerting the reader to the dichotomous and, therefore, hegemonic, structure of social relations. The subject is not the unified, rational and autonomous product of humanist imperatives. Rather, she is fragmented, multiple, constructed and mediated. So far so good: pomo 101. But the next rhetorical move, and here’s where it starts to get interesting, makes fragmentation a sign for unification. Although this narrative of cyber-cultural relations is alert to difference it also desires the dissolution of hegemonic categories. Borders framing the binary structures of outside/inside, author/reader, public/private are seen as porous.

Culturally marked bodies are stripped clean by technology:

[I]ncorporeal interaction: technologically enabled, postmulticultural vision of identity disengaged from gender, ethnicity and other problematic constructions. On line, users can float free of biological and sociocultural determinants, at least to the degree that their idiosyncratic language usage does not mark them as white, black, college-educated, a high school dropout and so on (Dery 1994, pp. 2–3).

[I]n text-based, digital communication, conventional signals of gender, such as intonation and voice pitch, facial features, body image, nonverbal cues, dress, and demeanour, are absent. Thus, the idea of gender-free communication becomes conceivable for the first time (Danet 1998, p. 136).

[While I understand the reason, motivation and complexity of the feminist movement elsewhere, as a reaction to a (still) male dominated world, I do believe that such a movement is rather pointless in the digital environment, where you have exactly the same rights, whether man or woman. I cannot accept or believe that someone is fighting against a male dominated cyberspace (whatever that means) within the most egalitarian and democratic medium ever (Bianchi 2002).

[D]igital text is fluid because, taking the form of codes, it can always be reconfigured, reformatted, rewritten. Digital text
hence is infinitely adaptable to different needs and uses, and since it consists of codes that other codes can search, rearrange, and otherwise manipulate, digital text is always open, unbordered, unfinished, and unfinishable, capable of infinite extension (Landow 2000, p. 166).

Expressivity is a central trope of Romanticism, ‘the internal made external’, in M.H. Abrams’s words (1953, p. 22). The idea that the material signs of writing technology can stand for subjectivity is a function of a complex set of epistemological, economic, and technological forms within late eighteenth century cultural systems. To a very large degree, it is epistolary media which emerge as the vehicle for this ‘expressive’ rhetoric. The familiar letter of the late eighteenth century is perceived as well suited to express the identity of its author through metaphors of immediacy, intimacy and presence. That Poststructuralism has critiqued the issue of authorial sovereignty is clear; but as the above quotations demonstrate, tropes of expressivity and transcendence persist. In Landow’s ‘unbordered, unfinished, and unfinishable’ hypertext, the boundlessness of the digital sign evokes the textual sublime. Dissolving the borders between inside and outside, between subject and object, mind and matter is an aesthetic and ideological aim of Romantic discourse. And floating free of ‘biological and sociocultural determinants’, experiencing ‘gender-free communication’ and possessing ‘exactly the same rights, whether man or woman’ recall the desires of a certain trajectory of the Romantic political vision where the material exigencies of race, class and gender are sacrificed to the greater task of constructing the nation.

‘The English Mail-Coach’, Thomas De Quincey’s (1785–1859) apocalyptic postal narrative, understands the post office as a socio-political instrument of the state which regulates the national correspondence through the rhetorics of transparency and harmony. The mail coach, he extols, is ‘the conscious presence of a central intellect’ that could overrule ‘all obstacles into one steady co-operation to a national result’ (De Quincey 1890, p. 272). An early form of mass communication, the mail coach delivers newspapers detailing England’s military progress during the Napoleonic Wars. The discourse of military engagement holds that to triumph in war a country’s citizenship must be united, must have ‘one centre’ and acknowledge ‘one sole interest’ (De Quincey 1890, pp. 284–5). And nationalist unity is achieved by eclipsing the historical and economic materialities of class that might, otherwise, cause division among the state’s subjects. As De Quincey puts it:

That great national sentiment surmounts and quells all sense of ordinary distinctions. Those passengers who happen to be gentlemen are now hardly to be distinguished as such except by dress. The usual reserve of their manner in speaking to the attendants has on this night melted away. One heart, one pride, one glory, connects every man by the transcendent bond of his national blood (1890, p. 294).
Speeding through the land, the mail coach resolves the economic inequity and pain of corporeality: ‘the beggar, rearing himself against the wall, forgets his lameness…thinks not of his whining trade but stands erect, with bold exulting smiles, as we pass him. The victory has healed him and says—Be thou whole’ (De Quincey 1890, p. 296). In the wake of the galloping mail coach ‘washerwomen and charwomen’ are elevated to a ‘higher rank’ and ‘feel themselves by birthright to be daughters of England’ (1890, p. 297). As the mail coach careens through England ‘young and old understand the language of our victorious symbols…women and children, from garrets alike and cellars, through infinite London, look down or look up with loving eyes upon our gay ribbons and our martial laurels’ (1890, pp. 295–6). The materialities of difference are eclipsed and the mail coach produces a phantasmic English nationhood. De Quincey’s essay suggests that nationhood is produced, in part, by suppressing the localised, situated, materialities of social and economic reality. The corporeality of individual subjects gives way to the imagined body politic; the material infrastructure of the mail coach produces the imagined body of the nation.

The epistolary body of email is a figure for thinking through the relations between new and old media. Operating according to a double logic it raises questions about the role of the corporeal body in email systems and it also speaks to the materialities of communication, the ‘body’ of information, the material marks of writing technologies. Above all it urges delicacy and subtlety in the construction of media history. As with historiography, so with our corporeal bodies: there is rupture, but there is also continuity, the portentous but also the banal, progress and stasis, passion and boredom.

1 I thank Peter Otto for his generous discussions concerning issues covered in this article.
2 All letters cited are from volume 7 of the Kelley & Hudson collection and will be referred to hereafter in the text using page number only.
3 For an insightful exploration of the postal apocalyptic see Teh (2001).

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