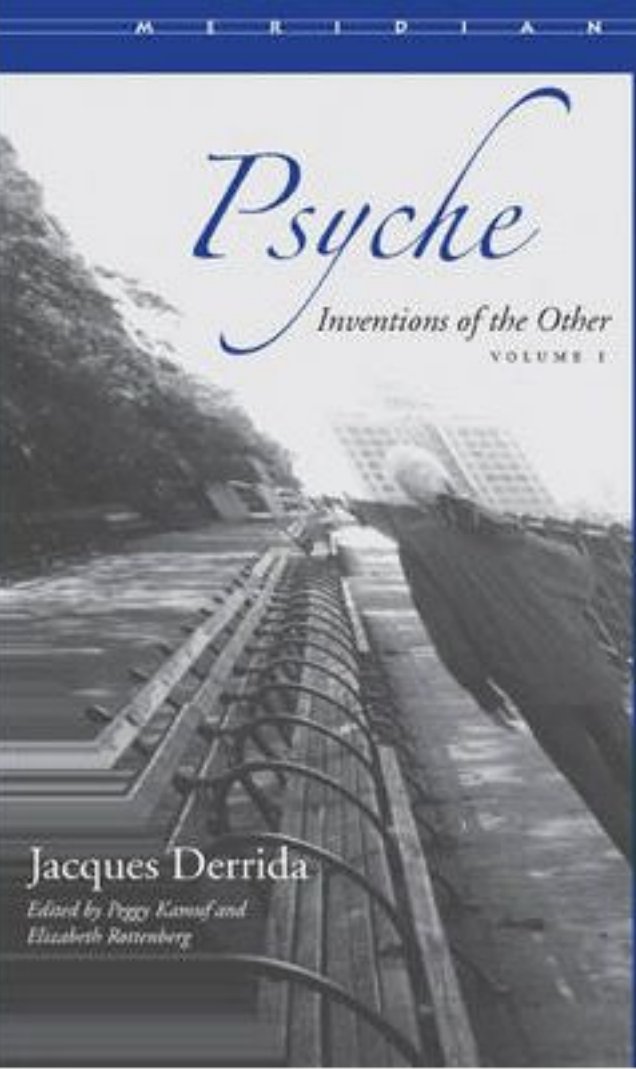
MERIDIAN

CROSSING AESTHETICS

Psyche

Inventions of the Other

VOLUME I



Jacques Derrida

Edited by Peggy Kamuf and Elizabeth Rottenberg

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Stanford
University
Press

Stanford
California
2007

Stanford University Press
Stanford, California

Psyche originally appeared in French as *Psyché: Inventions de l'autre, tomes I et II*, by Jacques Derrida. Copyright © Éditions Galilée 1987/2003.

Printed in the United States of America
on acid-free, archival-quality paper

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Derrida, Jacques.
[Psyché. English]
Psyche : inventions of the other / Jacques Derrida.
p. cm. (Meridian: crossing aesthetics)
Includes bibliographical references.
ISBN 978 0 8047-4798-1 (cloth : v. 1 : alk. paper)
ISBN 978 0 8047-4799-8 (pbk. : v. 1 : alk. paper)
ISBN 978-0-8047-5766-9 (cloth : v. 2 : alk. paper)
ISBN 978-0-8047-5767-6 (pbk. : v. 2 : alk. paper)
1. Soul. 2. Narcissism. 3. Other minds.
(Theory of knowledge) I. Title.
B2430.D483P7813 2007
194—dc22
2006037117

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Editors' Foreword

The English edition of this work by Derrida is long overdue. Initially published in one large (652-page) volume in 1987, *Psyché: Inventions de l'autre* grew to two volumes in its second edition (1998, 2003) when two essays were added to the original twenty-six ("My Chances / *Mes chances*" in volume 1 and "Interpretations at War" in volume 2). With few exceptions, all of the essays eventually gathered here have long been available in English translation; indeed, several of them appeared in English versions before Derrida collected them in *Psyché* in their original French. And yet to say that these translations were available is misleading in several ways. First, because over time they have scattered to the four winds prevailing over the fortunes of scholarly publishing, and several of the places of publication for these translations have since disappeared, or were so out of the way from the start that few libraries ever entered them in their catalogues. Second, because Derrida set the essays in this work and meant them to be accessed within the contiguity it provides, within what he calls in his preface "a mobile multiplicity." "These texts," he writes, "follow one another, link up or correspond to one another, despite the evident difference of their motifs and themes, the distance that separates the places, moments, circumstances" (xii). What has been available in English until now, therefore, leaves out these connections and this correspondence, which only the work called *Psyche* can provide. Finally, it is misleading to say the translations have long been available, because, without exception, Derrida revised each essay for inclusion in *Psyché*, thereby rendering obsolete translations based on unrevised versions or even sometimes on the text of

unpublished lectures. Although the extent of the author's revisions varies considerably from one text to another, not one of the essays included here will be found to correspond exactly to the previously published English version.

These essays, then, have appeared in myriad journals and collections in English, and many translators have had a hand in them. Given this dispersion and diversity, it is hardly surprising that the sort of correspondence and links Derrida signaled among the essays got lost from one translation to the next, since they were rarely done with any of the others in mind. But the same conditions also explain why there was a great variance among translating "styles," which will remain palpable to some degree for the reader of these two volumes, because we have not sought systematically to overcome it with our editing. We have, however, endeavored to revise existing translations, and sometimes extensively, according to a principle of *allegiance* or *alliance* to the idiom of Derrida's writing, to the grain, rhythm, and tone of his thought as it puts itself to work and into the work. This allegiance to the written work and the work of writing means that throughout we have sought less to comfort eventual English readers than to give them access, through English, to Derrida's thought in its practice of reflecting on the language condition in general, but always necessarily in a particular language.

Translator's and editor's notes have been kept to a minimum. In the text of the essays square brackets or, on very rare occasions, curly brackets enclose insertions by the translators or editors, usually to clarify a translation. When brackets enclose an insertion within a quotation, these indicate a comment or clarification made by the author.

Work on this project began in earnest in 2003, when we could still look forward to collaborating with the author whenever the need might arise. We knew from earlier experiences translating and editing Jacques Derrida's work that we could count on his always generous counsel and support. His disappearance leaves this work, in its *survivance*, bereft and inconsolable. But the inconsolable condition of thought is also what is called here, in the first essay that gives its title to the whole work, "Psyche," the mirror, and the mirror that must, sooner or later, be broken:

> So we see why the breaking of the mirror is still more necessary, because at the instant of death, the limit of narcissistic reappropriation becomes terribly sharp, it increases and neutralizes suffering: let us weep no longer over ourselves, alas, when we *must* no longer be concerned with the other *in ourselves*, we *can* no longer be concerned with anyone except the other *in ourselves*. The narcissistic wound enlarges infinitely for want of being able to be narcissistic any longer, for no longer even finding appeasement in that *Erinnerung* we call the work of mourning. Beyond internalizing memory, it is then necessary *to think*, which is another way of remembering. (9)

"It is then necessary *to think* . . . "; yes, and to think how thinking is an invention of the other. This is *Psyche*'s injunction, which we now pass on in another language.

Peggy Kamuf
Elizabeth Rottenberg

Author's Preface

These texts have accompanied, in some fashion, the works I have published over the last ten years.[1] But they have also been dissociated from those works, separated, *distracted*. This is marked in their *formation*, whether one understands with this word the movement that engenders by giving form or the figure that gathers up a mobile multiplicity: configuration in displacement. A formation must move forward but also advance in a group. According to some explicit or tacit law, it is required to space itself out without getting too dispersed. If one were to make of this law a theory, the formation of these writings would proceed like a *distracted theory*.

Law of a discontinuous theory or discreet appearance of the series, these texts, then, follow one another, link up or correspond to one another, despite the evident difference of their motifs and themes, the distance that separates the places, moments, circumstances.

And the names, especially the names, proper names. Each of the essays appears in fact to be devoted, destined, or even singularly dedicated to someone, very often to the friend, man or woman, close or distant, living or not, known or unknown. It is sometimes but not always a poet or a thinker, the philosopher or the writer. It is sometimes but not always the one who *puts things on stage* in the worlds that are called politics, the theater, psychoanalysis, architecture. Certain texts seem to bear witness better than others to this quasi-epistolary situation. "Letter to a Japanese Friend," "Envoi," "Telepathy," "'Plato's Letter'" or "Seven Missives," for example, might have stood in the place of the title

or the preface, thanks to the play of some metonymy. I made another choice. By disrupting the chronological order only once, I thought that "Psyche: Invention of the Other" might better play this role. At the halfway point (1983), a certain *psyche* [which is also what the French call a "cheval glass," that is, a full-length, free-standing mirror] seems to pivot on its axis so as to reflect in its way the texts that preceded it and those that followed. By the same token, a mobile mirror feigns to gather the book together: in any case in what resembles it, its image or phantasm. This remains, after all—technique of the simulacrum—always the proper function of a preface.

Simulacrum and specularity. It is a matter here of speculating on a mirror and on the disconcerting logic of what is blithely called narcissism. There is some complacent self-satisfaction, already, in the gesture that consists in *publishing*. Simply in publishing. This first complacency is elementary; no denial could erase it. What then should be said of the gesture that gathers up previous writings, whether or not they are unpublished?[2] Without denying this additional exhibition, let us say that it also makes up the object of this book. But the mirror named *psyche* does not figure an object like any other. Nor is the gesture that *gets caught* wanting to show the mirror just one gesture among others. Whether or not it is granted this right, whether or not it makes of the right a duty, it has no choice but to watch itself showing while listening to itself speak. Is that possible?

And why *expose* oneself to this risk? To the other each time addressed, the question also becomes a demand. In its most general and most implicit form, it could be translated in several words, thus: What is an invention? And what does invention signify when it must be *of the other*? The invention *of* the other would imply that the other remains still *me, in me, of me*, at best, *for me* (projection, assimilation, interiorization, introjection, analogic appresentation, at best, phenomenality)? Or else that my invention of the other remains the invention of me by the other who finds me, discovers me, institutes or constitutes me? By coming from her (or him), the invention of the other would then return to him (or her).

Is there a choice between these modalities? The other without me, beyond me, in me, in the impossible experience of the gift and of mourning, in the impossible condition of experience, is that not still something else?

The gift, mourning, the *psyche*, are they *thinkable* beyond all psychologism? And what, then, does thinking mean?

If the question *corresponds*, if it corresponds always to some demand come from the other, then it lets itself already be preceded by a strange affirmation. To watch over this affirmation, perhaps it is necessary first of all to *transport oneself/surrender oneself* to what comes before the question [*Pour veiller sur elle, peut-être faut-il* se rendre *à la veille de la question*].

—Translated by Peggy Kamuf

PSYCHE

§ 1 Psyche: Invention of the Other

What else am I going to be able to invent?

Here perhaps we have an inventive incipit for a lecture. Imagine, if you will, a speaker daring to address his hosts in these terms. He thus seems to appear before them without knowing what he is going to say; he declares rather insolently that he is setting out to improvise. Obliged as he is to invent on the spot, he wonders again: "Just what am I going to have to invent?" But simultaneously he seems to be implying, not without presumptuousness, that the improvised speech will remain unpredictable, that is to say, as usual, "still" new, original, unique—in a word, inventive. And in fact, by having at least invented something with his very first sentence, such an orator would be breaking the rules, would be breaking with convention, etiquette, the rhetoric of modesty, in short, with all the conditions of social interaction. An invention always presupposes some illegality, the breaking of an implicit contract; it inserts a disorder into the peaceful ordering of things, it disregards the proprieties. Showing apparently none of the patience of a preface—it is itself a new preface—it goes and frustrates expectations.

"Psyche: Invention of the Other" is the text of two lectures given at Cornell University in April 1984 and again at Harvard University (the Renato Poggioli Lectures) in April 1986.

The Question of the Son

Cicero would certainly not have advised his son to begin this way. For, as you know, it was in responding one day to his son's request and desire that Cicero defined, on one occasion among others, oratorical invention.[1]

The reference to Cicero is indispensable here. If we are to speak of invention, we must always keep in mind the word's Latin roots, which mark the construction of the concept and the history of its problematics. Moreover, the first request of Cicero's son bears on language, and on translation from Greek to Latin: "Studeo, mi pater, Latine ex te audire ea quae mihi tu de ratione dicendi Graece tradidisti, si modo tibi est otium et si vis"; "I am burning with a desire, father, to hear you say to me in Latin those things concerning the doctrine of speaking that you have given [dispensed, reported, delivered or translated, bequeathed] to me in Greek, at least if you have the time and want to do it."

Cicero the father answers his son. He first tells him, as if to echo his request or to restate it narcissistically, that as a father, his first desire is for his son to be as knowing as possible, *doctissimum*. The son has then, with his burning desire, anticipated the father's wish. Since his desire is burning with that of his father, the latter easily takes satisfaction in it and reappropriates it for himself in satisfying it. Then the father offers the son this lesson: given that the orator's special power, his *vis*, consists in the things he deals with (ideas, themes, objects), as well as in the words he uses, *invention* has to be distinguished from *disposition*; invention finds or discovers things, while disposition places or localizes them, positions them while arranging them: "res et verba invenienda sunt et collocanda." Yet invention is "properly" applied to ideas, to the things one is talking about, and not to elocution or verbal forms. As for disposition or collocation (*collocare*), which situates words as well as things, form as well as substance, it is often linked to invention, father Cicero then explains. So disposition, furnishing places with their contents, concerns both words and things. We would then have, on the one hand, the "invention-disposition" pairing for ideas or things, and, on the other hand, the "elocution-disposition" pairing for words or forms.

We now have in place one of the most traditional philosophical topoi. Paul de Man recalls that *topos* in a beautifully wrought text entitled "Pascal's Allegory of Persuasion."[2] I should like to dedicate this lecture to the memory of Paul de Man. Allow me to do so in a very simple way, by

trying once more to borrow from him—from among all the things we have received from him—a bit of that serene discretion that marked the force and radiance of his thought. I was determined to do this at Cornell because he taught here and has many friends here among his former colleagues and students. Last year, on the occasion of a similar lecture and not long after he was last among you,[3] I likewise recalled that in 1967, he directed the first Cornell University program in Paris. It is then that I first came to know him, to read him, to listen to him, and there began between us—I owe him so much—an unfailing friendship that was to be utterly cloudless and that will remain in my life, in me, one of the rarest and most precious rays of light.

In "Pascal's Allegory of Persuasion," de Man pursues his unceasing meditation on the theme of allegory. And it is also, more or less directly, invention as allegory (invention of the other), as myth or fable, that I want to talk about today. Is the invention of the other an allegory, a myth, a fable? After pointing out that allegory is "sequential and narrative," although "the topic of its narration" is "not necessarily temporal at all," de Man insists on the paradoxes in what we could call the task of allegory or the allegorical imperative: "Allegory is the purveyor of demanding truths, and thus its burden is to articulate an epistemological order of truth and deceit with a narrative or compositional order of persuasion." And in the same development, he comes across the classical distinction of rhetoric as invention and rhetoric as disposition: "A large number of such texts on the relationship between truth and persuasion exist in the canon of philosophy and rhetoric, often crystallized around such traditional philosophical topoi as the relationship between analytic and synthetic judgments, between propositional and modal logic, between logic and mathematics, between logic and rhetoric, between rhetoric as *inventio* and rhetoric as *dispositio*, and so forth" (2).

Had we had the time for it here, we would have wondered why and how, in the positive notion of rights that is established between the seventeenth and the nineteenth centuries, the view of an author's rights, or of an inventor's proprietary rights in the realm of arts and letters, takes into account only form and composition. This law thus excludes all consideration of "things," content, thematics, or meaning. All the legal texts, often at the price of considerable difficulty and confusion, stress this point: invention can display its originality only in the values of form and composition. As for "ideas," they belong to everyone; universal in their essence, they could not ground a property right. Is that a betrayal, a bad

translation, or a displacement of the Ciceronian heritage? Let us leave this question hanging. I simply wanted to begin here with some praise for father Cicero. Even if he never invented anything else, I find a great deal of *vis*, of inventive power, in someone who opens a discourse on discourse, a treatise on oratory art, and a text on invention, with what I shall call the *question of the son* as a question *de ratione dicendi*. This question happens also to be a scene of *traditio* as tradition, transfer, and translation; we could also say it is an allegory of metaphor. The child who speaks, questions, zealously (*studeo*) seeks knowledge—is he the fruit of an invention? Does one invent a child? If the child *invents himself*, is it as the specular invention of parental narcissism or is it as the other who, in speaking, in responding, becomes the absolute invention, the irreducible transcendence of what is nearest, all the more heterogeneous and inventive in that it seems to respond to parental desire? The truth of the child, therefore, would invent itself in a sense that would be neither that of unveiling nor that of discovery, neither that of creation nor that of production. It would be found where truth is thought beyond any inheritance. The concept of this truth would itself remain without any possible inheritance. Is that possible? This question will resurface later on. Does it first of all concern the *son*, the legitimate offspring and bearer of the name?

What else am I going to be able to invent?

It is certainly expected of a discourse on invention that it should fulfill its own promise or honor its contract: it will deal with invention. But it is also hoped (the letter of the contract implies this) that it will put forth something brand-new—in its words or its contents, in its utterance or its enunciation—on the subject of invention. To however limited an extent, in order not to disappoint its audience, it ought to invent. One expects of it that it will say the unexpected. No preface announces it; no horizon of expectation prefaces its reception.

Invention: in spite of all the ambiguity of this word and concept, you already have some sense of what I want to say.

This discourse must then be presented as an invention. Without claiming to be inventive through and through, and continually, it has to exploit a largely common stock of rule-governed resources and possibilities in order to sign, as it were, an inventive proposition, at least one, and that signed innovation will alone determine the extent to which it will be able to engage the listener's desire. But—and here is where the dramatization

and the allegory begin—it will also need the signature or the countersignature of the other, let's say here that of a son who would no longer be the father's invention. A son will have to recognize the invention as such, as if the heir were the sole judge (remember the word "judgment"), as if the son's countersignature held the legitimating authority.

But presenting an invention, presenting itself as an invention, the discourse I am talking about will have to have its invention evaluated, recognized, and legitimized by someone else, by an other who is not one of the family: the other as member of a social community and of an institution. For an invention can never be *private* once its status as invention, let us say its patent or warrant, its manifest, open, public identification, has to be certified and conferred. Let us translate: as we speak of invention, that old, grandfatherly subject we are seeking to reinvent here today, we ought to see this very speech granted a patent, the title of invention—and that presupposes a contract, consensus, promise, commitment, institution, law, legality, legitimation. There is no natural invention—and yet invention also presupposes originality, originarity, generation, engendering, genealogy, that is to say, a set of values often associated with genius or geniality, thus with naturality. Hence the question of the son, of the signature, and of the name.

We can already see the singular structure of such an event taking shape. Who sees it taking shape? The father, the son? Who finds himself excluded from this scene of invention? Which other of invention? Father, son, daughter, wife, brother, or sister? If invention is never private, what then is its relation to all the family dramas?

So, then, the singular structure of an event, for the speech act I am speaking of must be an event. It will be so, on the one hand, insofar as it is singular, and, on the other hand, inasmuch as its very singularity will produce the coming or the coming about of something new. It should make come about or allow the coming of what is new in a "first time ever." The full weight of the enigma is borne in every word used here—"new," "event," "coming," "singularity," "first time" (here the English phrase "first time" marks the tem;poral aspect that the French *première fois* elides). Never does an invention appear, never does an invention take place, without an inaugural event. Nor is there any invention without an advent, if we take this latter word to mean the inauguration for the future of a *possibility* or of a *power* that will remain at the disposal of

everyone. Advent there must be, because the event of an invention, its act of inaugural production, once recognized, legitimized, countersigned by a social consensus according to a system of conventions, must be valid *for the future* [l'avenir]. It will only receive its status of invention, furthermore, to the extent that this socialization of the invented thing is protected by a system of conventions that will at the same time ensure its inscription in a common history, its belonging to a culture: to a heritage, a patrimony, a pedagogical tradition, a discipline, a chain of generations. Invention *begins* by being susceptible to repetition, exploitation, reinscription.

While limiting ourselves to a network that is not solely lexical and cannot be reduced to the games of a simple verbal invention, we have already encountered the convergence of several modes of coming or of venue, the enigmatic collusion of *invenire* and *inventio*, of *event* and *advent*, of *future-to-come* [l'avenir], of *adventure*, and of *convention*. How could one translate this lexical cluster outside the Romance languages while preserving its unity, the unity linking the *first time* of invention to the *coming*, to the arrival of the future [*avenir*], of the event, of the advent, of the convention or of the adventure? Of course, for the most part, these words of Latin origin are welcomed, for example, into English (even the term "venue," in its narrow, highly coded judicial sense, and the special sense of "advent" designating the coming of Christ); they are welcome with, however, a notable exception at the center of this home and hearth: the *venir* itself. To be sure, an invention amounts, says the *Oxford English Dictionary*, to "the action of coming upon or finding." But I can already imagine the inventiveness required of the translator of this lecture in those places where it exploits the institution of the Latin-based languages. Even if this verbal collusion appears adventurous or conventional, it makes us think. What does it make us think? What else? Whom else? What do we still have to invent in regard to the coming, the *venire*? What does it mean, *to come*? To come a first time? Every invention supposes that something or someone comes a *first time*, something or someone comes to someone, to someone else. But for an invention to be an invention, in other words, *unique* (even if the uniqueness has to be repeatable), it is also necessary for this first time to be a last time: archaeology and eschatology acknowledge each other here in the irony of the *one and only* instant.

So we are considering the singular structure of an event that seems to produce itself by speaking about itself, *by the act of speaking of itself* once it has begun to invent on the subject of invention, paving the way for it, inaugurating or signing its singularity, bringing it about, as it were; and all the while it is also naming and describing the generality of its genre and the genealogy of its topos: *de inventione*, sustaining our memory of the tradition of a genre and its practitioners. In its claim to be inventing again, such a discourse would be stating the inventive beginning by speaking of itself in a reflexive structure that not only does not produce coincidence with or presence to itself but instead projects forward the advent of the self, of "speaking" or "writing" of itself as other, that is to say, following a *trace*. I shall content myself here with mentioning that value of "self-reflexivity" so often at the core of Paul de Man's analyses. Doubtless more resistant than it seems, it has occasioned some very interesting debates, notably in essays by Rodolphe Gasché and Suzanne Gearhart.[4] I shall try to return to these matters some other time.

In speaking of itself, then, such a discourse would be trying to gain recognition by a public community not only for the general truth value of what it is advancing on the subject of invention (the truth of invention and the invention of truth), but at the same time for the operative value of a technical apparatus henceforth available to all.

Fables: Beyond the Speech Act

Without yet having cited it, I have for a while now been describing a text by Francis Ponge, with one finger pointed toward the margin of my discourse. This text is quite short: six lines in *italics*, seven counting the title line—I will come back in a moment to this figure 7—plus a two-line parenthesis in *roman* type. The roman and italic characters, although their positions are reversed from one edition to the next, may serve to highlight the Latin linguistic heritage that I have mentioned and that Ponge never ceased to claim for himself and for his poetics.

To what genre does this text belong? Perhaps we are dealing with one of those pieces Bach called his *Inventions*, contrapuntal pieces in two or three voices that are developed on the basis of a brief initial cell whose rhythm and melodic contour are very clear and sometimes lend themselves to an essentially didactic writing.[5] Ponge's text puts in place one such initial cell, which is the following syntagm: "*Par le mot* par . . . ," that is, "*With the word* with. . . . " I shall designate this invention not by its genre but by its title, namely, by its proper name, "Fable."

This text is called "Fable."[6] This title is its proper name and it embraces, so to speak, the name of a genre. A title, always unique, like a signature, is confused here with a genre name; an apt comparison would be a novel entitled *Novel*, or an invention called "Invention." And we can bet that this fable entitled "Fable," and constructed like a fable right through to its concluding "moral" [*moralité*], will treat the subject of the fable. The fable, the essence of the fabulous about which it will claim to be stating the truth, will also be its general subject. *Topos*: fable.

So I am reading "Fable," the fable "Fable."

FABLE	FABLE
Par le mot par *commence donc ce texte*	*With the word* with *begins then this text*
Dont la première ligne dit la vérité,	*Of which the first line states the truth,*
Mais ce tain sous l'une et l'autre	*But this tain under the one and the other*
Peut-il être toléré?	*Can it be tolerated?*
Cher lecteur déjà tu juges	*Dear reader already you judge*
Là de nos difficultés . . .	*There as to our difficulties . . .*
(APRÈS sept ans de malheurs	(AFTER seven years of misfortune
Elle brisa son miroir).	She broke her mirror.)

Why did I wish to dedicate the reading of this fable to the memory of Paul de Man? First of all because it deals with a text by Francis Ponge. I am thus recalling a beginning. The first seminar that I gave at Yale, at the invitation of Paul de Man who introduced me there, was on Francis Ponge. *La Chose* was the title of this ongoing seminar; it continued for three years, touching upon a number of related subjects: debt, signatures, countersignatures, proper names, and death. To remember this starting point is, for me, to mime a starting over; I take consolation in calling that beginning back to life through the grace of a fable that is also a myth of impossible origins.

In addition, it is because of the resemblance that Ponge's fable, in that singular crossing of irony with allegory, bears to a poem of truth. It presents itself ironically as an allegory "of which the first line states the truth": truth of allegory and allegory of truth, truth as allegory. Both are fabulous inventions, by which we mean inventions of language (at the root of fable/fabulous is *fari* or *phanai*: to speak) as inventions of the same

and the other, of oneself as (of) the other. This is what we are going to try to demonstrate.[7]

The allegorical is marked here both in the fable's theme and in its structure. "Fable" tells of allegory, of one word's move to cross over to the other, to the other side of the mirror. Of the desperate effort of an unhappy speech to move beyond the specularity that it itself constitutes. We might say in another code that "Fable" puts *into action* the question of reference, of the specularity of language *or* of literature, and of the possibility of stating the other or speaking *to* the other. We shall see how it does so; but already we know the issue is unmistakably that of death, of this moment of mourning when the breaking of the mirror is the most necessary and also the most difficult. The most difficult because everything we say or do or cry, however outstretched toward the other we may be, remains *within us*. A part of us is wounded and it is with ourselves that we are conversing in the work of mourning and of *Erinnerung*. Even if this metonymy of the other in ourselves already constituted the truth and the possibility of our relation to the living other, death brings it out into more abundant light. So we see why the breaking of the mirror is still more necessary, because at the instant of death, the limit of narcissistic reappropriation becomes terribly sharp, it increases and neutralizes suffering: let us weep no longer over ourselves, alas, when we *must* no longer be concerned with the other *in ourselves*, we *can* no longer be concerned with anyone except the other *in ourselves*. The narcissistic wound enlarges infinitely for want of being able to be narcissistic any longer, for no longer even finding appeasement in that *Erinnerung* we call the work of mourning. Beyond internalizing memory, it is then necessary *to think*, which is another way of remembering. Beyond *Erinnerung*, it is then a question of *Gedächtnis*, to use a Hegelian distinction that Paul de Man was wont to recall in his recent work for the purpose of presenting Hegelian philosophy as an allegory of a certain number of dissociations, for example, between philosophy and history, between literary experience and literary theory.[8]

Allegory, before it is a theme, before it relates us to the other, the discourse of the other or toward the other, has the structure of an event here in "Fable." This stems first of all from its narrative form.[9] The "moral" or "lesson" of the fable, as one says, resembles the ending of a story. In the first line, the *donc* appears merely as the conclusive seal of a beginning, as a logical and temporal scansion that sets up a singular consequential-

ity ("With the word *with* begins then this text . . . "); the word APRÈS ("AFTER") in capital letters brings it into sequential order. The parenthesis that comes *after* marks the end of the story, but we shall shortly see these times get inverted.

This fable, this allegory of allegory, presents itself then as an invention. First of all, because this fable is called "Fable." Before venturing any other semantic analysis, let me state a hypothesis here—leaving its justification for later. Within an area of discourse that has been fairly well stabilized since the end of the seventeenth century in Europe, there are only two major types of *authorized* examples for invention. On the one hand, people invent *stories* (fictional or fabulous), and on the other hand, they invent *machines*, technical devices or mechanisms, in the broadest sense of the word. Someone may invent by fabulation, by producing narratives to which there is no corresponding reality outside the narrative (an alibi, for example), or else one may invent by producing a new operational possibility (such as printing or nuclear weaponry, and I am purposely associating these two examples, since the politics of invention is always at one and the same time a politics of culture and a politics of war). Invention as *production* in both cases—and I leave to the term "production" a certain indeterminacy for the moment. *Fabula* or *fictio*, on the one hand, and, on the other, *tekhnē, epistemē, istoria, methodos*, that is, art or know-how, knowledge and research, information, procedure, and so forth. There, I would say, for the moment, in a somewhat elliptical and dogmatic fashion, are the only two possible, and rigorously specific, registers of all invention today. I am indeed saying "today," stressing the relative modernity of this semantic categorization. Whatever else may resemble invention will not be recognized as such. Our aim here is to grasp the unity or invisible harmony of these two registers.

"Fable," Francis Ponge's fable, is inventing itself as fable. It tells an apparently fictional story, which seems to last seven years, as the eighth line recalls. But first "Fable" is the tale of an invention, it recites and describes itself, it presents itself from the start as a beginning, the inauguration of a discourse or of a textual mechanism. It does what it says, not content with announcing, as Valéry does moreover in "Au sujet d'Eurêka": "In the beginning was the fable." This latter phrase, miming but also translating the first words of John's gospel ("In the beginning was the logos," the word) is perhaps also a performative demonstration of the very thing it is saying.

And "fable," like "logos," does indeed say the saying, speak of speech. But Ponge's "Fable," while locating itself ironically in this evangelical tradition, reveals and perverts, or rather brings to light by means of a slight perturbation, the strange structure of the dispatch [*envoi*] or of the evangelical message, in any case of that incipit which says that in the incipit, at the inception, there is the logos, the word. "Fable," owing to a turn of syntax, is a sort of poetic performative that simultaneously *describes* and *carries out*, on the same line, its own generation.

Not all performatives are somehow reflexive, certainly; they do not all describe themselves as in a mirror, they do not designate themselves as performatives while they take place. This one does just that, but its constative description is nothing other than the performative itself. "Par le mot *par* commence donc ce texte." Its beginning, its invention, or its first coming does not come about before the sentence that recounts precisely this event. The narrative is nothing other than the coming of what it cites, recites, points out, or describes. It is hard to distinguish the telling and the told faces of this sentence that invents itself while inventing the tale of its invention; in truth, telling and told are undecidable here. The tale is given to be read; it is a legend, since what the tale narrates does not occur before it or outside of it, of this tale producing the event it narrates; but it is a legendary fable or a fiction in a single line of verse, with two versions or two versings of the same. Invention of the other in the same—in verse, the same from all sides of a mirror whose tain could not, should not be tolerated. By its very typography, the second occurrence of the word *par* reminds us that the first *par*—the absolute incipit of the fable—is being quoted. The quotation institutes a repetition or an originary reflexivity that, even as it divides the inaugural act, at once the inventive event and the relation or archive of an invention, also allows it to unfold in order to say nothing but the same, itself, the dehiscent and refolded invention of the same, at the very instant when it takes place. And already heralded here, expectantly, is the desire for the other—and to break a mirror. But the first *par*, quoted by the second, actually belongs to the same sentence as the latter one, that is, to the sentence that points out the operation or event, which nonetheless takes place only through the descriptive quotation and neither before it nor anywhere else. In the terms of speech-act theory, we might say that the first *par* is used, the second quoted or mentioned. This distinction seems pertinent when it is

applied to the word *par*. Is it still pertinent on the scale of the sentence as a whole? The used *par* belongs to the mentioning sentence but also to the mentioned sentence; it is a moment of quotation, and it is as such that it is used. What the sentence cites integrally, from *par* to *par*, through and through, is nothing other than itself in the process of citing, and the use values within it are only subsets of the mentioned values. The inventive event is the quotation and the narrative. In the body of a single line, on the same divided line, the event of an utterance mixes up two absolutely heterogeneous functions, "use" and "mention," but also heteroreference and self-reference, allegory and tautegory. Is that not precisely the inventive force, the masterstroke of this fable? But this *vis inventiva*, this inventive power, is inseparable from a certain syntactic play with the places in language; it is also an art of *disposition*.

If "Fable" is both *performative* and *constative* from its very first line, this effect is propagated across the totality of the poem thus generated. As we shall have to verify, the concept of invention distributes its two essential values between these two poles: the constative—discovering or unveiling, pointing out or saying what is—and the performative—producing, instituting, transforming. But the sticking point here has to do with the figure of co-implication, with the configuration of these two values. In this regard, "Fable" is exemplary from its very first line. It invents by means of the sole act of enunciation that performs *and* describes, operates *and* states. Here the conjunction "and" does not link two different activities. The constative statement is the performative itself, since it points out nothing that is prior or foreign to itself. Its performance consists in the "constation" of the constative—and nothing else. A quite unique relation to itself, a reflection that produces the self of self-reflection by producing the event in the very act of recounting it. An infinitely rapid circulation—such are the *irony* and the temporality of this text. This text is what it is, a text, this text here, inasmuch as—*all at once*—it shunts the performative into the constative and vice versa. De Man has written of undecidability as an infinite and thus untenable acceleration. That he says it about the impossible distinction between fiction and autobiography is not unrelated to Ponge's text.[10] The play of our fable also lies between fiction and the implicit intervention of a certain *I* that I shall bring up shortly. As for irony, Paul de Man always describes its particular temporality as a structure of the instant, of what becomes "shorter and shorter and always

climaxes in the single brief moment of a final *pointe*."[11] "Irony is a synchronic structure,"[12] but we shall soon see how it can be merely the other face of an allegory that always seems to be unfolded in the diachronic dimension of narrative. And there again "Fable" would be exemplary. Its first line speaks only of itself, it is immediately metalingual, but its metalanguage has nothing to set it off; it is an inevitable and impossible metalanguage, since *there is no language before it*, since it has no prior object beneath or outside itself. So that in this first line, which states the truth of (the) "Fable," everything is put simultaneously in a first language and in a second metalanguage—and nothing is. There is no metalanguage, the first line repeats; there is only that, says the echo, or Narcissus. The property of language whereby it always can and cannot speak of itself is thus graphically enacted, in accord with a paradigm. Here I refer you to a passage from *Allegories of Reading* where de Man returns to the question of metaphor and the role of Narcissus in Rousseau. I shall simply extract a few assertions that will allow you to recall the thrust of his full demonstration: "To the extent that all language is conceptual, it already speaks about language and not about things. . . . All language is language about denomination, that is, a conceptual, figural, metaphorical language. . . . If all language is about language, then the paradigmatic linguistic model is that of an entity that confronts itself."[13]

The infinitely rapid oscillation between the performative and the constative, between language and metalanguage, fiction and nonfiction, autoreference and heteroreference, and so on, does not just produce an essential instability. This instability constitutes that very event—let us say, the work [*l'œuvre*]—whose invention normally disturbs, as it were, the norms, the statutes, and the rules. It calls for a new theory and for the constitution of new statutes and conventions that, capable of recording the possibility of such events, would be able to account for them. I am not sure that speech-act theory, in its present state and dominant form, is capable of this, nor, for that matter, do I think the need could be met by literary theories either of a formalist variety or of a hermeneutic inspiration (i.e., semanticist, thematicist, intentionalist, etc.).

The fabulous economy of a very simple little sentence, perfectly regular in its grammar, spontaneously *deconstructs* the oppositional logic that relies on an untouchable distinction between the performative and the constative and so many other related distinctions.[14] It deconstructs that

logic without disabling it totally, to be sure, since it also needs it in order to detonate the speech event. Now, in this case, does the deconstructive effect depend on the force of a literary event? What is there of literature, and what of philosophy, here, in this fabulous staging of deconstruction? Without being able to attack this problem head on here, I shall merely venture a few remarks.

1. Suppose we even knew what literature was, and that in accord with prevailing conventions we classified "Fable" as literature: we still could not be sure that it is integrally literary (it is hardly certain, for example, that this poem, as soon as it speaks of the truth and expressly claims to state it, is nonphilosophical). Nor could we be sure that its deconstructive structure cannot be found in other texts that we would not dream of considering literary. I am convinced that the same structure, however paradoxical it may seem, also turns up in scientific and especially in judicial utterances, and indeed can be found in the most foundational or institutive of these utterances, thus in the most inventive ones.

2. On this subject, I shall quote and comment briefly on another text by de Man where all the motifs that concern us at this point are crossing in a very dense fashion: performative and constative, literature and philosophy, possibility or impossibility of deconstruction. This is the conclusion of the essay "Rhetoric of Persuasion (Nietzsche)" in *Allegories of Reading*:

> If the critique of metaphysics is structured as an aporia between performative and constative language, this is the same as saying that it is structured as rhetoric. And since, if one wants to conserve the term "literature," one should hesitate to assimilate it with rhetoric, then it would follow that the deconstruction of metaphysics, or "philosophy," is an impossibility to the precise extent that it is "literary." This by no means resolves the problem of the relationship between literature and philosophy in Nietzsche, but it at least establishes a somewhat more reliable point of "reference" from which to ask the question. (131)

This paragraph shelters too many nuances, shadings, and reserves for us to be able, in the short time we have here, to lay open all the issues it raises. I hope to deal with it more patiently some other time. For now, I will merely venture a somewhat elliptical gloss. In the suggestion that a deconstruction of metaphysics is impossible "to the precise extent that it is 'literary,'" I suspect there may be more irony than first appears. At least for the reason, among others, that the most rigorous deconstruction

has never claimed to be foreign to literature, nor above all to be *possible*. And I would say that deconstruction loses nothing from admitting that it is impossible; also that those who would rush to delight in that admission lose nothing from having to wait. For a deconstructive operation, *possibility* is rather the danger, the danger of becoming an available set of rule-governed procedures, methods, accessible approaches. The interest of deconstruction, of such force and desire as it may have, is a certain experience of the impossible: that is, as I shall insist in my conclusion, of the other—the experience of the other as the invention of the impossible, in other words, as the only possible invention. Where, in relation to this, might we place that unplaceable we call "literature"? That, too, is a question I shall leave aside for the moment.

"Fable" gives itself then, by itself, by herself, a patent of invention. And its double blow is its invention. This singular duplication, from "par" to "*par*," from "with" to "*with*," is destined for an infinite speculation, and the specularization at first seems to seize or freeze the text. It paralyzes it, or makes it spin in place at an imperceptible or infinite speed. It captivates it in a mirror of misfortune. The breaking of a mirror, according to the superstitious saying, announces seven years of bad luck. Here, in typographically different letters and in parentheses, it is after seven years of misfortune that she broke the mirror. *APRÈS*—"after"—is in capital letters in the text. This strange inversion, is it also a mirror effect, a sort of reflection of time? But if, on a first reading, this falling-off and conclusion of "Fable," which in parentheses assumes the classic role of a sort of "moral" or lesson, retains an element of forceful *reversal*, it is not only because of this paradox, not just because it inverts the meaning or direction of the superstitious proverb. In an *inversion* of the classical fable form, this "moral" is the only element that is explicitly narrative, and thus, let us say, allegorical. A fable of La Fontaine's usually does just the opposite: there is a narrative, then a moral in the form of a maxim or aphorism. But reading the narrative we get here in parentheses and in conclusion, in the place of the "moral," we do not know where to locate the inverted time to which it refers. Is it recounting what would have happened before or what happens after the "first line"? Or again, what happens throughout the whole poem, of which it would be the very temporality? The difference in the grammatical tenses (the simple past of the allegorical "moral" following a continual present) does not

allow us to decide. And there will be no way of knowing whether the "misfortune," the seven years of misfortune that we are tempted to synchronize with the seven preceding lines, are being recounted by the fable or simply get confused with the misfortune of the narrative, this distress of a fabulous discourse able only to reflect itself without ever moving out of itself. In this case, the misfortune would be the mirror itself. Far from being expressible in the breaking of a mirror, it would consist (and this is the infinity of the reflection) of the very presence and possibility of the mirror, of the specular play for which language provides. And by playing a bit with these misfortunes of performatives or constatives that are never quite themselves because they are parasites of one another, we might be tempted to say that this misfortune is also the essential "infelicity" of these speech acts.

In any case, through all these inversions and perversions, through this fabulous revolution, we have come to the crossroads of what Paul de Man calls allegory and irony. In this regard, we could pick out three moments or motifs to be pursued, for example, in "The Rhetoric of Temporality":

1. A "provisional conclusion" (222) links allegory and irony in the discovery—we can say the invention—"of a truly temporal predicament." The word "predicament" is difficult to translate: embarrassing situation, dilemma, aporia, impasse, these are a few of the ordinary meanings that have won out over the philosophical sense of *predicamentum* without entirely erasing it. Here are some lines that seem to have been written for "Fable":

> The act of irony, as we now understand it, reveals the existence of a temporality that is definitely *not organic*, in that it relates to its source only in terms of distance and difference and allows for *no end, for no totality* [this is indeed the mirror, a technical and nonorganic structure]. Irony divides the flow of temporal experience into a past that is pure mystification and a future that remains harassed forever by a relapse within the inauthentic. It can know this inauthenticity but can never overcome it. It can only restate and repeat it on an increasingly conscious level, but it remains endlessly caught in the impossibility of making this knowledge applicable to the empirical world. It dissolves in the narrowing spiral of a linguistic sign that becomes more and more remote from its meaning, and it can find no escape from this spiral. The temporal void that it reveals is the same void we encountered when we found *allegory always implying an unreachable anteriority. Allegory and irony are thus linked in their common discovery of a truly temporal predicament.* (222; my emphasis—JD)

Suppose we let the word "predicament" (and the word is a predicament) keep all its connotations, including the most adventitious ones. Here the mirror is the *predicament*: a necessary or fateful situation, a quasi-nature; we can give a neutral formulation of its predicate or category, and we can state the menacing danger of such a situation, the technical machinery, the artifice that constitutes it. We are caught in the mirror's fatal and fascinating trap. Here I am fond of the French word *piège*, meaning trap: it was, a few years ago, a favorite theme in elliptical discussions, as lighthearted as they were hopeless, between Paul de Man and myself.

2. A bit later, Paul de Man presents irony as the inverted specular image of allegory: "The fundamental structure of allegory reappears here [in one of Wordsworth's Lucy Gray poems] in the tendency of the language toward narrative, the spreading out along the axis of an imaginary time in order to give duration to what is, in fact, simultaneous within the subject. *The structure of irony, however, is the reversed mirror-image of this form*" (225; my emphasis—JD).

3. These two inverted mirror images come together in the same: the experience of time. "Irony is a synchronic structure, while allegory appears as a successive mode capable of engendering duration as the illusion of a continuity that it knows to be illusionary. *Yet the two modes, for all their profound distinctions in mood and structure, are the two faces of the same fundamental experience of time*" (226; my emphasis—JD).

"Fable," then: an allegory stating ironically the truth of allegory that it is in the present, and doing so while stating it through a play of persons and masks. The first four lines are in the third person of the present indicative (the evident mode of the constative, although the "I," about which Austin tells us that it has, in the present, the privilege of the performative, can be implicit there). In these four lines, the first two are declarative, the next two interrogative. Lines five and six could make explicit the implicit intervention of an "I" insofar as they address the reader; they dramatize the scene by means of a detour into apostrophe or parabasis. Paul de Man gives much attention to parabasis, to *parekbasis*, notably as it is evoked by Schlegel in relation to irony. He brings it up again in "The Rhetoric of Temporality" (222) and elsewhere. Now the *tu juges* ("you judge," line 6) is also *both* performative and constative; and *nos difficultés* (line 7) are also

the difficulties of, first, the author, second, the implicit "I" of a signatory, third, the fable that presents itself, and, fourth, the community fable-author-readers. For everyone gets tangled up in the same difficulties, all reflect them, and all can judge them.

But who is *elle* (the "she" of the last line)? Who "broke her mirror?" Perhaps "Fable," the fable itself (feminine in French), which is here, really, the subject. Perhaps it is the allegory of truth, indeed, Truth itself, which is often, in the realm of allegory, a Woman. But the feminine can also countersign the author's irony. She would speak of the author, she would state or show the author himself in her mirror. One might then say of Ponge what Paul de Man says of Wordsworth. Reflecting upon the "she" of a Lucy Gray poem ("She seemed a thing that could not feel"), he writes: "Wordsworth is one of the few poets who can write proleptically about their own death and speak, as it were, from beyond their own graves. The 'she' in the poem is in fact large enough to encompass Wordsworth as well" (225).

She, in this "Fable," we'll call Psyche, the one in Apuleius's *Metamorphoses* who loses Eros, her fiancé, for having wanted to see him even though it was forbidden. But in French a *psyché*, a homonym and common noun, is also a large double mirror mounted on a rotating stand. The woman, let us say Psyche, the soul, her beauty or her truth, can be reflected there, can admire or adorn herself from head to foot. Psyche is not named by Ponge, who might well have dedicated his fable to La Fontaine, celebrated in French literature both for his fables and his retelling of the Psyche myth. Ponge often expresses his admiration for La Fontaine: "If I prefer La Fontaine—the least fable—to Schopenhauer or Hegel, I do know why," Ponge writes in *Proêmes* (II, "Pages Bis," V).

As for Paul de Man, he does name Psyche—not the mirror, but the mythical character. And he does so in a passage that matters much to us since it also points up the distance between the two "selves," the two myselves, the impossibility of seeing oneself and touching oneself at the same time, the "permanent parabasis" and the "allegory of irony":

> This successful combination of allegory and irony also determines the thematic substance of the novel as a whole [*La Chartreuse de Parme*], the underlying *mythos* of the allegory. This novel tells the story of two lovers who, like Eros and Psyche, are never allowed to come into full contact with each other. . . . When they can touch, it has to be in a darkness imposed by a totally arbitrary and irrational decision, an act of the gods. The myth is that of the unovercomable distance which must always prevail between the selves, and it thematizes the ironic distance that Stendhal the writer always believed prevailed between his pseudonymous and nominal identities. As such, it reaffirms Schlegel's definition of irony as a "permanent parabasis" and singles out this novel as one of the few novels of novels, as the allegory of irony.

These are the last words of "The Rhetoric of Temporality" (228).

Thus, in the same blow, but a double blow, a fabulous invention becomes the invention of truth: of its truth as fable, of the fable of truth, of the truth of truth *as fable*. And of that which in the fable depends on language (*fari*, fable). It is the impossible mourning of truth in and by the word. For as we have seen, if the mourning is not announced by the breaking of the mirror, but comes about as the mirror itself, if it comes with the specularization, well, then, the mirror comes to be itself solely through the intercession of the word. It is an invention, and an intervention of the word, and here even of the word "word" [*mot*]. The word itself is reflected in the word *mot* as it is in the name "name." The tain, which prohibits transparency and authorizes the invention of the mirror, is a trace of language [*langue*]:

> Par le mot *par* commence donc ce texte
> Dont la première ligne dit la vérité,
> Mais ce tain sous l'une et l'autre
> Peut-il être toléré?

Between the two *par*'s the tain that is deposited beneath the two lines is language itself; it depends on words, and on the word "word"; it is the "word" that distributes, separates, on each side of itself, the two appearances of *par*: "Par le mot *par*. . . . " It opposes them, puts them opposite or vis-à-vis each other, links them indissociably yet also dissociates them forever. Eros and Psyche. This does an unbearable violence that the law should prohibit (can this tain be tolerated under the two lines or between the lines?); it should prohibit it as a perversion of usage, a hijacking of linguistic convention. Yet it happens that this perversion obeys the law of language. This rhetoric is quite normal and no grammar can make any objection to it. We have to get along without that prohibition, such is both the observation and the command conveyed by the *igitur* of this fable—the simultaneously logical, narrative, and fictive *donc* of the first line: "*Par le mot* par *commence* donc *ce texte*. . . . "

This *igitur* speaks for a psyche, to it/her and before it/her, on the subject of psyche as well, which would be only the pivoting speculum that has come to relate the same to the other: "Par le mot *par.* . . . " Of this relation of the same to the other, we might say, playfully: It is *only* an invention, a mirage, or an admirable mirror effect, its status remains that of an invention, of a simple invention, by which is meant a technical mechanism. The question remains: Is the psyche an invention?

The analysis of this fable would be endless. I abandon it here. "Fable" in speaking the fable does not only invent insofar as it tells a story that does not take place, that has no place outside itself and is nothing other than itself in its own inaugural in(ter)vention. This invention is not only that of a poetic fiction whose production becomes the occasion for a signature, for a patent, for the recognition of its status as a literary work by its author and also by its reader. The reader, the other who judges ("Cher lecteur déjà tu juges . . . ")—but who judges from the point of his or her inscription in the text, from the place that, although first assigned to the addressee, becomes that of a countersigning. It is the son as the veritable addressee, that is, the signatory, the author himself, whose rights we began by stating. The son as the other, his other, is also the daughter, Psyche perhaps. "Fable" has this status of invention only insofar as, from the double position of the author and the reader, of the signatory and the countersignatory, it also proposes a machine, a technical mechanism that one must be able, under certain conditions and limitations, to reproduce, repeat, reuse, transpose, set within a public tradition and heritage. It thus has the value of a procedure, model, or method, furnishing rules for exportation, for manipulation, for variations. Taking into account other linguistic variables, a syntactic invariable can, recurringly, give rise to other poems of the same type. And this *typed* composition, which presupposes a first instrumentalization of the language, is indeed a sort of *tekhnē*. Between art and the fine arts. This hybrid of the performative and the constative that, from the first line (*premier vers* or first line) at once says *the* truth ("dont la première ligne dit la vérité," according to the description and reminder of the second line), and *a* truth that is nothing other than its own truth producing itself, this is indeed a unique event; but it is also a machine and a general truth. While appealing to a preexistent linguistic background (syntactic rules and the fabulous treasure of language), it furnishes a rule-governed or regulating mechanism capable of generating other poetic utterances of the same type, a sort of printing matrix. So we can propose the following example: "Avec le mot *avec* s'inaugure donc cette fable," that is, with the word "with" begins then this fable; there are other regular variants, more or less distant from the model, that I do not have the time to list here. Then again, think of the problems of citationality, both inevitable and impossible, that are occasioned by a self-quoting invention. If, for example, I say, as I have done already, "With the word *with* begins then this text by Ponge entitled 'Fable,' for it begins as follows: 'With the word *with* . . . ' and so forth." This is a process without beginning or end that nonetheless is only beginning, but without ever being able to do so since its initiating phrase or phase is already secondary, already the *sequel* of a first one that it describes even before it has properly taken place, in a sort of exergue as impossible as it is necessary. It is always necessary to begin again in order finally to arrive at the beginning and reinvent invention. Let us try, here in the margin of the exergue, to begin.

It was understood that we would address here the status of invention. You are well aware that an element of disequilibrium is at work in this contract of ours, and that there is thus something provocative about it. We have to speak of the status of invention, but it is better to invent something on this subject. However, we are authorized to invent only within the statutory limits set by the contract and by the title (status of invention or inventions of the other). An invention that refused to be dictated, ordered, programmed by these conventions would be out of place, out of phase, out of order, impertinent, transgressive. And yet some eagerly impatient listeners might be tempted to retort that indeed there will be no invention here today unless that break with convention, into impropriety, is made; in other words, that there will be invention only on condition that the invention transgress, in order to be inventive, the status and the programs with which it was supposed to comply.

As you will already have suspected, things are not so simple. No matter how little we retain of the semantic charge of the word "invention," no matter how indeterminate we leave it for the moment, we have at least the feeling that an invention ought not, as such and as it first emerges, have a status. At the moment when it erupts, the inaugural invention[15] ought to overflow, overlook, transgress, negate (or, at least—this is a supplementary complication—avoid or deny) the status that people have tried to assign to it or grant it in advance; indeed, it ought to overstep the space in

which that status itself takes on its meaning and its legitimacy—in short, the whole environment of *reception* that by definition ought never to be ready to welcome an authentic innovation. On this hypothesis (which is not mine, for the time being), it is here that a theory of reception either encounters its essential limit or else complicates its claims with a theory of transgressive breaks. About the latter we can no longer tell whether it would still be theory and whether it would be a theory of something like reception. Let's stick with this commonsense hypothesis a while longer. It adds that an invention ought to produce a disordering mechanism, open up a space of unrest or turbulence for every status assignable to it when it suddenly arrives. Is it not then spontaneously destabilizing, even deconstructive? The question would then be the following: What can the deconstructive effects of an invention be? Or, conversely, in what respect can a movement of deconstruction, far from being limited to the negative or destructuring forms that are often naïvely attributed to it, be inventive in itself, or be the signal of an inventiveness at work in a sociohistorical field? And finally, how can a deconstruction of the very concept of invention, moving through all the complex and organized wealth of its semantic field, still invent? Invent over and beyond the concept and the very language of invention, beyond its rhetoric and its axiomatics?

I am not trying to conflate the problematics of invention with that of deconstruction. Moreover, for fundamental reasons, there can be no *problematics* of deconstruction. My question lies elsewhere: why is the word "invention," that tired, worn-out classical word, today experiencing a revival, a new fashionableness, and a new way of life? A statistical analysis of the Western *doxa* would, I am sure, bring it to light: in vocabulary, book titles,[16] the rhetoric of advertising, literary criticism, political oratory, and even in the passwords of art, morality, and religion. A strange return of a desire for invention. "One must invent," one has had to or one would have had to invent: not so much create, imagine, produce, institute, but rather invent; and it is precisely in the interval between these meanings (invent/create, invent/imagine, invent/produce, invent/institute, etc.) that the singularity of this desire to invent dwells. To invent not this or that, some *tekhnē* or some fable, but to invent the world—a world, not America, the New World, but a novel world, another habitat, another person, another desire even, and so forth. A closer analysis should show why it is then the word "invention" that imposes itself, more quickly and more often than other neighboring words ("discover," "create," "imagine," "produce," and so on). And why this desire for invention, which goes so far as to dream of inventing a new desire, remains, to be sure, contemporary with a certain experience of fatigue, of weariness, of exhaustion, but also accompanies a desire for deconstruction, going so far as to lift the apparent contradiction that might exist between deconstruction and invention.

Deconstruction is inventive or it is nothing at all; it does not settle for methodical procedures, it opens up a passageway, it marches ahead and marks a trail; its writing is not only performative, it produces rules—other conventions—for new performativities and never installs itself in the theoretical assurance of a simple opposition between performative and constative. Its *process* [démarche] involves an affirmation, this latter being linked to the coming—the *venire*—in event, advent, invention. But it can only do so by deconstructing a conceptual and institutional structure of invention that neutralizes by putting the stamp of reason on some aspect of invention, of inventive power: as if it were necessary, over and beyond a certain traditional status of invention, to reinvent the future.

Coming, Inventing, Finding, Finding Oneself

A strange proposition. We have said that every invention tends to unsettle the status that one would like to assign it at the moment when it takes place. We are saying now that deconstruction must assume the task of calling into question the traditional status of invention itself. What does this mean?

What is an invention? What does it do? It *finds* something for the first time. And the ambiguity lies in the word "find." To find is to invent when the experience of finding takes place for the first time. An event without precedent whose novelty may be either that of the (invented) thing found (for example, a technical apparatus that did not exist before: printing, a vaccine, nuclear weapons, a musical form, an institution—good or bad—a device for telecommunications or for remote-controlled destruction, and so on), or else the act and not the object of "finding" or "discovering" (for example, in a now dated sense, the invention of the Cross—by Helena, the mother of Constantine, in Jerusalem in 326 CE—or the invention of the body of Saint Mark by Tintoretto). But in both cases, from both

points of view (object or act), invention does not create an existence or a world as a set of existents, it does not have the theological meaning of a veritable creation of existence ex nihilo. It discovers for the first time, it unveils what was already found there, or produces what, as *tekhnē*, was not already found there but is still not created, in the strong sense of the word, is only put together, starting with a stock of existing and available elements, in a given configuration. This configuration, this ordered totality that makes an invention and its legitimation possible, raises all the problems you know about, whether we refer to cultural totality, weltanschauung, epoch, *epistemē*, paradigm, or what have you. However important and difficult these problems may be, they all call for an elucidation of what inventing means and implies. In any event, Ponge's "Fable" creates nothing, in the theological sense of the word (at least this is apparently the case); it invents only by having recourse to a lexicon and to syntactical rules, to a prevailing code, to conventions to which in a certain fashion it submits itself. But it gives rise to an event, tells a fictional story, and produces a machine by introducing a disparity or gap into the customary use of discourse, by upsetting to some extent the mind-set of expectation and reception that it nevertheless needs; it forms a beginning *and* it speaks of that beginning, and in this double, indivisible movement, it inaugurates. This double movement harbors the singularity and novelty without which there would be no invention.

In every case and through all the semantic displacements of the word "invention," this latter remains the "coming," the *venire*, the event of a novelty that must surprise, because at the moment when it comes about, there could be no statute, no status, ready and waiting to reduce it to the same.

But this coming about [*survenue*] of the new must be due to an operation of the human subject. Invention always belongs to man as the inventing subject. This is a defining feature of very great stability, a semantic quasi-invariant that we must take rigorously into account. For whatever may be the history or the polysemy of the concept of invention as it is inscribed under the influence of Latin culture, even if not in the Latin language itself, never, it seems to me, has anyone assumed the authority to speak of invention without implying in the term the technical initiative of the being called man.[17] Man himself, the human world, is defined by the human subject's aptitude for invention, in the double sense

of narrative fiction or historical fabulation and of technical or technoepistemic innovation (just as I am linking *tekhnē* and *fabula*, I am recalling the link between *historia* and *epistemē* here). No one has ever authorized himself—it is indeed a question of status and convention—to say of God that he invents, even if, as people have thought, divine creation provides the ground and support for human invention; and no one has ever *authorized* himself to say of animals that they invent, even if, as is sometimes said, their production and manipulation of instruments resembles human invention. On the other hand, men can invent gods, animals, and especially divine animals.

This techno-epistemo-anthropocentric dimension inscribes the value of invention in the set of structures that binds the technical order and metaphysical humanism differentially. (By value of invention, I mean its dominant sense, governed by conventions.) If today it is necessary to reinvent invention, it will have to be done through questions and deconstructive performances bearing upon this traditional and dominant value of invention, upon its very status, and upon the enigmatic history that links, within a system of conventions, a metaphysics to technoscience and to humanism.

Let us turn away from these general propositions and take up again the question of invention's legal or institutional status. If an invention seems to have to surprise or unsettle statutory conditions, it must in turn imply or produce other statutory conditions; these are necessary not only for it to be recognized, identified, legitimized, institutionalized as invention (to be patented, we might say), but for invention even to occur, or, let us say, for it to *come about* [survenir]. And here we have the context of the great debate, which is not limited to the historians of science or of ideas in general, over the conditions of emergence and legitimation of inventions. How can we sort out and name the cultural groupings that make a given invention possible and admissible once the invention in question has in its turn modified the structure of the context itself? Here again I have to make do with mentioning many discussions pursued in recent decades concerning "paradigm," "epistemē," "epistemological break," and "themata." Ponge's "Fable," however inventive it may be, and in order to be so, is like any fable in that it calls for linguistic rules, social modes of reading, and reception, stabilized competences, a historical configuration of the poetic domain and of literary tradition, and so forth.

What is a statute? Like "invention," the word "statute," and this is not insignificant, is first defined in the Latin code of law and thus also that of juridicopolitical rhetoric. Before belonging to this code, it designates the stance or standing (cf. *status* in English) of that which, holding itself upright in a stable way, stays erect and causes or attains stability. In this sense, it is essentially *institutional.* It defines while prescribing; depending on the concept and language, it determines what is stabilizable in institutional form, within a system and an order that are those of a human society, culture, and law, even if this humanity conceives of itself on the basis of something other than itself—God, for example. A statute (or concomitantly, a status) is always, as such, human; it cannot be animal or theological. Like invention, as we were saying a moment ago. So the paradox gets sharper: no invention should care in the least about the statutory, but without a prevailing statutory context, there would be no invention. In any case neither the inventive nor the statutory belongs to nature, in the usual sense of the term, that is, in the sense statutorily established by the dominant tradition of metaphysics.

What are we asking when we raise questions about the status of invention? We are asking, first, what an invention is, and what concept is appropriate to its essence. More precisely, we are asking about the essence *we agree to recognize for it*: what concept is guaranteed, what concept is held to be legitimate for invention? This moment of recognition is essential to the move from essence to status. The status is the essence considered as stable, established, and legitimated by a social or symbolic order in an institutionalizable code, discourse, or text. The moment proper to status is social and discursive; it supposes that a group arrives, by what is at least an implicit contract, at the following agreement: (1) given that invention *in general* is this or that, can be recognized by given criteria, and is accorded a given status, then (2) this singular event is indeed an invention, a given individual or group deserves the status of inventor, he, she, or they will have shown invention [*il aura eu de l'invention*]. This status can take the form of a Prix Goncourt or a Nobel Prize.

Patents: Invention of the Title

"Status" is thus understood at two levels, the one concerning invention in general, the other concerning some particular invention whose status or value is determined in relation to the general status. The juridicopolitical dimension is essential; thus the most useful index here would perhaps be what we call the patent of an invention, or the *brevet* in French. A *brevet* was first of all a brief text, a "brief," a written act by which royal or public authority accorded a reward or a title, indeed, a diploma; it is significant that today we still speak in French of an engineer's or technician's *brevet* to designate an established competency. The *brevet* is then the act whereby political authorities confer a public title, that is, a status. The patent of an invention creates a status or an author's right, a title—and that is why our problematics should reckon with the very rich and complex problematics of the positive law of written works, both its origins and its current history, which is visibly affected by all sorts of disturbances, especially those resulting from new techniques of reproduction and telecommunication. The inventor's patent, *strictu sensu*, sanctions only technical inventions that give rise to reproducible instruments, but we can extend it to any author's right. The meaning of the expression "status of invention" is presupposed in the idea of "patent" but cannot be reduced to it.

Why have I insisted on the matter of patents? Because it may be one of the best indices of our present-day situation. If the word "invention" is going through a rebirth, on a ground of anguished exhaustion but also out of a desire to reinvent invention itself, including its very status, this is perhaps because, on a scale incommensurable with that of the past, what is called a patentable "invention" is now programmed, that is, subjected to powerful movements of authoritarian prescription and anticipation of the widest variety. And that is as true in the domains of art or the fine arts as in the technoscientific domain. Everywhere the enterprise of knowledge and research is first of all a programmatics of inventions. We could evoke the politics of publishing, the orders of booksellers or art merchants, studies of the market, cultural policies, whether state-promoted or not, and the politics of research and, as we say these days, the "orientations" that this politics imposes throughout our institutions of higher education; we could also evoke all the institutions, private or public, capitalist or not, that declare themselves to be organs for producing and orienting invention. But let us consider again, as a symptom, just the politics of patents. Today we have comparative statistics on the subject of inventions patented each year by all the countries of the world. The competition that rages, for obvious politicoeconomic reasons, determines

the decisions taken at the governmental level. At a time when France, for example, believes it must be competitive in this race for patents on inventions, the government decides to beef up a given budgetary position and to pour public funds, through a given ministry, into an effort to orient, stimulate, or regulate patented inventions. We know that such programming efforts, following trajectories that may be more subtle or still more heavily overdetermined, can infuse the dynamics of inventions that are said to be the "freest," the most wildly "poetic" and inaugural. The general logic of this programming, if there were one, would not necessarily be that of conscious representations. This programming claims—and it sometimes succeeds up to a point—to extend its determinations all the way to the margin of chance—a chance it has to reckon with and that it integrates into its probabilistic calculations. A few centuries ago, invention was represented as an erratic occurrence, the effect of an individual stroke of genius or of unpredictable luck. That was often so because of a misunderstanding, unequally shared it is true, of the detours by means of which invention let itself be constrained, prescribed, if not foreseen. Today, perhaps because we are too familiar with at least the existence, if not the operation, of machines for programming invention, we dream of reinventing invention on the far side of the programmed matrices. For is a programmed invention still an invention? Is it an event through which the future [*l'avenir*] comes to us?

Let's now recall briefly the ground we have covered so far. The status of invention in general, like that of a particular invention, presupposes the *public* recognition of an origin, more precisely, of an originality. The latter has to be assignable to a *human subject*, individual or collective, who is responsible for the *discovery* or the *production* of something new that is henceforth *available* to everyone. Discovery or production? This is a first hesitation, at least if we refrain from reducing the *producere* to the sense of bringing to light by the action of putting forward or advancing, which would amount to unveiling or discovering. In any case, discovery or production, but not creation. To invent is to reach the point of finding, discovering, unveiling, producing *for the first time* a thing, which can be an artifact but which in any case could already be there existing in a virtual or invisible state. The first time of invention never creates an existence, and underlying the present-day desire to reinvent invention there is doubtless a certain reserve with respect to a creationist theology. This reserve is not necessarily atheistic; it can on the contrary insist precisely on reserving creation to God and invention to human beings. So it could no longer be said that God invented the world as the totality of existences. It can be said that God invented the laws, the procedures or the calculations for the creation (*dum calculat fit mundus*), but not that he invented the world. Likewise, today one would no longer say that Christopher Columbus invented America, except in that now archaic sense, as in the expression "the invention of the Cross," which amounts simply to the discovery of an existence that was already to be found there. But the use or the system of modern conventions—relatively modern ones—prohibits us from speaking of an invention whose object would be an existence as such. If we spoke today of the invention of America or of the New World, that would rather designate the discovery or production of new *modes* of existence, of new ways of seeing things, of imagining or inhabiting the world, but not the creation or discovery of the very existence of the territory named America.[18]

You can see then a dividing line or shift in the semantic development or regulated use of the word "invention." One must describe it without making the distinction hard and fast, or at least while keeping it within the great and fundamental reference to the human *tekhnē*, to this mythopoetic power that associates the fable with historical and epistemic narrative. What is this dividing line? To invent has always signified "come to find for the first time," but until the dawn of what we might call technoscientific and philosophical "modernity" (let us say in the seventeenth century, as a very rough and inadequate empirical marker), it was still possible to speak of invention (but later this would no longer be true) in regard to existences or truths that, without, of course, being created by invention, were discovered or unveiled by it for the first time—were found to be there. Examples: again, the invention of the body of Saint Mark, but also the invention of truths, of true things. Such is Cicero's definition in *De inventione* (1.7). As the first part of oratorical art, invention is "excogitatio rerum verarum, aut verisimilium, quae causam probabilem reddant." The "cause" in question here is the juridical cause, debate, or controversy between specified persons. It belongs to the status of invention that it *also always* concerns juridical questions about statutes.

Subsequently, according to a displacement already under way that, it seems to me, was stabilized in the seventeenth century, perhaps between

Descartes and Leibniz, invention is almost never regarded as an unveiling discovery of what was already there (an existence or truth), but is more and more, if not solely the productive discovery of an apparatus that we can call technical in the broad sense, technoscientific or technopoetic. It is not simply that invention gets technologized. It was always tied to the intervention of a *tekhnē*, but in this *tekhnē*, it is henceforth the production—and not only the unveiling—of a relatively independent mechanical apparatus, which itself is capable of a certain self-reproductive recurrence and even of a certain reiterative simulation, that will dominate the use of the word "invention."

The Invention of Truth

A deconstruction of these common rules and thus of this concept of invention, if it also wishes to be a reinvention of invention, presupposes a prudent analysis of the double determination at the core of the hypothesis we have been elaborating here. This double determination or double inscription also offers a sort of scansion that one must hesitate to qualify as "historical" and especially, for obvious reasons, hesitate to date. The hypothesis being advanced cannot fail to have ramifications for the concept and practice of history itself.

The "first" dividing line would cut across *truth*: the relation to truth and the use of the word "truth." This is the place of decision, and of the full gravity of the ambivalence.

Thanks to certain contextual constraints, it is easy enough to master a certain polysemy of the word "invention." For example, in French, the word designates at least three things, according to the context and syntax of the sentence in which it is used. But each of these three things can in turn be affected, indeed, split, by an ambivalence that is harder to eliminate because it is essential.

So what are these first three meanings that shift fairly innocuously from one place to another? In the first place, we can call "invention" the capacity or aptitude to invent, inventiveness. It is often assumed to be a natural genius. One can say of scientists or novelists that "ils ont de l'invention," they are inventive. Next, we can call "invention" the moment, act, or experience, the "first time" of the new event, the novelty of this newness (I note in passing that this newness is not necessarily the other). Then, in the third place, we can take "invention" as referring to the content of this novelty, the invented thing. To recapitulate these referential values with an example: (1) Leibniz is a man of invention, he is inventive; (2) his invention of the *characteristica universalis* took place at a certain time and had certain effects; (3) the *characteristica universalis* was his invention, the content and not just the act of that invention.

If these three meanings are easily discerned from context to context, the *general* semantic structure of "invention," even before this triple capacity is considered, is much harder to elucidate. Prior to the division just mentioned, two competing meanings seem to have coexisted: (1) "first time," the event of a *discovery*, the invention of what was already there and came into view as an existence or as meaning and truth; (2) the productive invention of a technical apparatus that was not already there as such. In this case, the inventor gave it a *place*, and thus gave rise to it, upon *finding it*, whereas in the former case, its place was found there where it was already *located*. And the relation of invention to the question of place—in all senses of the word—is obviously essential. Now if, in accord with our hypothesis, the first meaning of invention, which we might term "veritative," has tended to disappear since the seventeenth century to the benefit of the second one, we must still find the place where this division begins to function, a place that is not empirical or historico-chronological. How does it happen that we no longer speak of the invention of the Cross or the invention of truth (in a certain sense of the truth) while we speak more and more, if not exclusively, of the invention of printing, of steamships, of a logico-mathematical apparatus, that is, of another form of relation to truth? Despite this tendency toward transformation, it is still in both cases the truth that is at issue. A fold or a joint separates, even as it joins, these two senses of the meaning, which are also two forces or two tendencies, relating to each other, the one settling over the other, in their very difference. We may have a furtive and unsure snapshot in those texts where "invention" *still* means the invention of truth in the sense of a discovery unveiling what is already there, while also meaning, *already*, the invention of another type of truth and another sense of the word "truth": that of a judicial proposition, thus of a logico-linguistic mechanism. Then the concern is with production, that of the most appropriate *tekhnē*, with the construction of a machinery that was not previously there, even if this new mechanism of truth must in principle still be modeled on the first

type. The two meanings remain very close, to the point of being confused in the relatively common expression "invention of the truth." Yet I believe they are heterogeneous. And it seems to me moreover that they have never stopped accentuating what separates them, and that the tendency of the second, since its appearance, has been to assert its undivided hegemony. It is true that it has always haunted and thus magnetized the first meaning. The whole question of the difference between premodern *tekhnē* and modern *tekhnē* lies at the heart of what I have just referred to hastily as a haunting or magnetization. In the examples I am going to recall, it may seem that the first meaning alone (unveiling discovery and not productive discovery) is still operative. But it is never so simple. Initially, I shall consider a passage from *La logique, ou L'art de penser* [*Logic, or the Art of Thinking*, by Antoine Arnauld and Pierre Nicole (1662)], the so-called *Logic* of Port-Royal. This text, written in French, played a major role in the spread of Cartesian thought. I have chosen it because it refers frequently to a whole tradition that interests us here, notably that of Cicero's *De inventione*. In the chapter entitled "Of Places, or of the Method of Finding Arguments" (3.17), we read the following:

> What the Rhetoricians and Logicians call Places, *loci argumentorum*, are certain general headings, to which all the proofs one uses in the various subjects treated can be related: and the part of Logic that they call *invention*, is nothing other than what they teach about these Places. Ramus quarrels with Aristotle and the academic philosophers about this, because they deal with the Places after having given the rules for argument, and in opposition to them, he claims that it is necessary to explain the Places and matters relating to invention before dealing with these rules. Ramus's reason is that one should have found the subject matter before thinking about how to arrange it. The explanation of Places teaches how to find this subject matter, whereas the rules for argument can only teach about its disposition. But this reasoning is very weak, for while it may be necessary for the subject matter to be found for it to be arranged, it is nonetheless not necessary to learn to find the subject matter before learning to arrange it.

This question as to whether disposition, or *collocatio*, ought to precede the moment of *finding the subject matter* (or that of finding the truth of the thing, the idea, the content, etc.) is nothing other than that of the two truths to be invented: the truth of unveiling, and the truth as a propositional mechanism.

But the question is always one of *finding*, a word of powerful and enigmatic obscurity, especially in the constellation of its relations to places, to the place where one finds something, to the place one finds, to the place found (located) somewhere or in which something is located. What does the verb *trouver*—to find—mean? However interesting it may be, the answer is not to be found in the word's etymology. For the time being let us leave this question, which also has to do with the particularity of a given tongue, in abeyance.[19]

The *ars inveniendi* or *ordo inveniendi* concerns the *searching* as well as the *finding* in the analytic discovery of a truth that is already to be found there. In order not to find the truth already there through a chance encounter or a lucky find, one needs a research program, a method—an analytic method that is called the method of invention. It follows the *ordo inveniendi* or analytical order (as opposed to the *ordo exponandi*). The *Logic* of Port-Royal puts it as follows: "There are two sorts of method: one is for discovering the truth, called *analysis*, or *method of resolution*, that can also be called the *method of invention*; and the other, which is for conveying truth to others when it has been found, is called *synthesis*, or *method of composition*, and can also be called *method of doctrine*" (4.11). Now, transposing the distinctions of this discourse on invention, let us ask what we can say of a fable like that of Francis Ponge? Does its first line discover, does it invent something? Or does it expose, does it teach what it has just invented? Is its mode resolution or composition? Invention or doctrine? Everything interesting about it has to do with the fact that it interests us in both, *between* the two, to the extent of making any decision impossible and the alternative secondary. In the *Logic* of Port-Royal, as in Descartes or Leibniz, we observe a common approach to the truth: even if it must be based upon a truth "that has to be found in the thing itself independently of our desires" (ibid., 3.20a.1–2), the truth that we must *find* there where it *is found*, the truth to be invented, is first of all the nature of our *relation* to the thing itself and not the nature of the thing itself. And this relation has to be stabilized in a proposition. It is usually to the proposition that the name "truth" is given, especially when it is a matter of truths in the plural. The truths are true propositions (ibid., 2.9, 3.10.20b.1, 4.9, 5.13), mechanisms of predication. When Leibniz speaks of the "inventors of truth," we must recall, as Heidegger does in *Der Satz vom Grund*, that he means producers of propositions and not just sources

of revelation. The truth qualifies the connection of subject and predicate. A person has never invented something, that is, a thing. In short, no one has ever invented *anything*. Nor has anyone invented an essence of things in this new universe of discourse, but only truth as a proposition. And this logico-discursive mechanism can be named *tekhnē* in the broad sense. Why? For there to be invention, the condition of a certain generality must be met, and the production of a certain objective ideality (or ideal objectivity) must occasion recurrent operations, hence a utilizable apparatus. Whereas the *act* of invention can take place only once, the invented artifact must be essentially repeatable, transmissible, and transposable. Therefore, the "one time" or the "a first time" of the act of invention finds itself divided or multiplied in itself, in order to have given rise and put in place an iterability. The two extreme types of invented things, the mechanical apparatus on the one hand, the fictional or poematic narrative on the other, imply both a first time and every time, the inaugural event and iterability. Once invented, if we can say that, invention is invented only if repetition, generality, common availability, and thus publicity are introduced or promised in the structure of the first time. Hence the problem of institutional status. If at first we might think that invention calls all status back into question, we also see that there could be no invention without status. To invent is to produce iterability and the machine for reproduction and simulation, in an indefinite number of copies, utilizable outside the place of invention, available to multiple subjects in various contexts. These mechanisms can be simple or complex instruments, but they can just as well be discursive procedures, methods, rhetorical forms, poetic genres, or artistic styles. And in all cases they are "stories": a certain sequentiality must be able to take a narrative form, which is to be repeated, cited, re-cited. We must be able to recount it and to render an account of it in accord with the principle of reason. This iterability is marked, and thus remarked, at the origin of the inventive foundation; it constitutes it, forms a pocket of the first instant in it, a sort of retroverted anticipation: "*Par le mot* par. . . . "

The structure of language—or as I prefer to say here for crucial reasons, the structure of the mark or of the trace—is not at all foreign or inessential to all this. It is not fortuitous that the articulation joining the two meanings of the word "invention" in the phrase "invention of truth" is more readily perceptible than anywhere else in Descartes or Leibniz when

each of them speaks of the invention of a language or a universal characteristic (a system of marks independent of any natural language).[20] Both justify this invention by grounding the technological or technosemiotic aspect in the "veritative" or truthful aspect, in truths that are discovered truths *and* predicative connections in true propositions. But this common recourse to the philosophical truth of technical invention does not work in Descartes and in Leibniz in the same way. This difference should be important to us here. Both speak of the invention of a language or a universal characteristic. Both think about a new machinery that remains to be *forged* even if the logic of this artifact has to be based and indeed to be *found* in that of an analytic invention. Descartes twice uses the word "invention" in his famous letter to Mersenne of November 20, 1629, in regard to his project of a universal language and writing:

> [T]he *invention* of this language depends on the true philosophy; for it is otherwise impossible to enumerate all the thoughts of men, and to record them in order, or even to distinguish them so that they are clear and simple, which in my opinion is the great *secret* one must have in order *to acquire correct knowledge*. . . . Now I hold that this language is possible, and that one can find the knowledge on which it depends, by means of which peasants could better *judge the truth* of things than philosophers do now. (my emphasis—JD)[21]

The invention of the language depends on the knowledge of truths; but it is still necessary to find this knowledge or science through which everyone, including peasants, would be able to judge the truth of things, thanks to the invention of the language it would make possible. The invention of the language presupposes *and* produces science, it intervenes between two states of knowledge as a methodic or technoscientific procedure. On this point, Leibniz does follow Descartes, but while he recognizes that the invention of this language depends on "the true philosophy," he adds that "it does not depend on its perfection." This language can be "established, although the philosophy is not perfected: and as the knowledge of men grows, this language will grow as well. In the interim, it will be a marvelous aid for the utilization of what we know, and for the perception of what is missing in our knowledge, and for the invention of the means to find it, but most of all for the extermination of controversy in those areas where knowledge depends on reasoning. For to reason and to calculate will then be the same thing."[22]

The artificial language is not only located at the arrival point of an invention from which it would proceed, it also proceeds to invent, its invention serves to invent. The new language is itself an *ars inveniendi*, or the idiomatic code of this art, the space of its signature. In the manner of an artificial intelligence, owing to the independence of a certain automatism, it will anticipate the development and precede the completion of philosophical knowledge. The invention comes all at once *and* comes in advance [*survient* et *prévient*]; it exceeds knowledge or science, at least in its present state and status. This difference in rhythm confers on the time of invention a capacity of productive facilitation, even if the inaugural adventure has to be kept under an ultimately teleological surveillance by a fundamental analyticism.

The Signature: Art of Inventing, Art of Sending

Inventors, says Leibniz, "proceed to the truth"; they invent the way, the method, the technique, the propositional apparatus; in other words, they *posit* and they institute. They are persons of status as much as they are persons of the way when this becomes a method. And that never occurs without the possibility of reiterated application, thus without a certain generality. In this sense, the inventor always invents a general truth, that is, the connection of a subject to a predicate. In Leibniz's *New Essays Concerning Human Understanding*, Theophilus stresses this point: "If the inventor finds only a particular truth, he is but a half-inventor. If Pythagoras had only observed that a property of the triangle with sides of 3, 4, and 5 is to have the square of its hypotenuse equal to the sum of the squares of its sides (i.e., that 9 + 16 = 25), would he then have been the inventor of this great truth that includes all right triangles and that has become a theorem in geometry?" (4.7).

Universality is also ideal objectivity, thus unlimited recurrence. This recurrence lodged in the unique occurrence of invention is what blurs, as it were, the signature of inventors. The name of an individual or of a singular empirical entity cannot be associated with it except in an inessential, extrinsic, accidental way. We should even say aleatory. This gives rise to the enormous problem of property rights to inventions, a problem that, in its legislative form, began to inscribe itself only relatively recently in the history of the West and then of the entire world. We have recently

celebrated a centennial. It was in 1883 that the Convention of Paris, the first great international convention legislating industrial property rights, was signed. It was countersigned by the Soviet Union only in 1964, and since World War II, it has been evolving rapidly. Its complexity, the intricacy of its casuistry as well as of its philosophical presuppositions, make it a redoubtable and intriguing object of inquiry. Its juridical mechanisms are themselves inventions, conventions instituted by performative acts. Two essential distinctions mark the axioms underlying this legislation: (1) the distinction between the author's right and the patent, and (2) the distinction between the scientific idea (that is, the theoretical discovery of a truth) and the idea of its industrial exploitation. Only in the case of an exploitation of the industrial type can one lay claim to a patent, which presupposes that literary or artistic invention, when an origin or an author can be assigned to it, does not occasion an industrial exploitation; it also supposes that we should be able to discern in theoretical discoveries the technoindustrial mechanisms that can be derived from them. These distinctions are not just hard to put into practice (hence they spawn a very refined casuistry); they draw their authority from "philosophemes" that have in general received little criticism; but above all the distinctions belong to a new interpretation of technique as industrial technique. And it is the advent of this new regime of invention, which launches technoscientific or technoindustrial "modernity," that we are trying to locate here by reading Descartes and Leibniz.

I spoke a moment ago of an aleatory signature. The term "aleatory" was certainly not used by chance. The modern politics of invention tends to integrate the aleatory into its programmatic calculations. This is equally true of the politics of scientific research and the politics of culture. Moreover, an attempt is made to weld the two together and to associate both with an industrial politics of "patents," which would allow them both to support the economy (as the notion "overcoming the crisis by means of culture" or by means of the culture industry suggests) and to be supported by it. Appearances notwithstanding, this present-day trend does not run counter to the Leibnizian project: the aim is to take the aleatory into account, to master it by integrating it as a calculable margin. Although conceding that chance can, by chance, serve the invention of a general idea, Leibniz does not see it as the best approach:

> It is true that often an example, envisaged by chance, serves as the *occasion*

that prompts an *ingenious* [I underscore this word at the borderline of natural genius and technical cunning] man to *search* for general truth, but it is very often quite another matter to *find* it; aside from the fact that this path of invention is not the best or the most used by those who proceed by order and method, and that they make use of it only on those *occasions* where better methods come up short. While some have believed that Archimedes found the quadrature of the parabola by weighing a piece of wood hewn into parabolic shape, and that this particular experiment led him to find the general truth, those who know the penetration of this great man see well enough that he had no need of such an *aid*. However, even if this empirical path of particular truths had been the occasion of all discoveries, it would not have been sufficient to give rise to them. . . . Moreover, I admit that there is often a difference between the method we use to *teach* bodies of knowledge and the one by which they were *found*. . . . Sometimes . . . *chance has occasioned inventions*. If all these occasions had been noted and their memory preserved for posterity (which would have been very useful), this detail would have been a very considerable part of the *history of the arts*, but it would not have been adequate for producing their *systems*. Sometimes the inventors have proceeded rationally to the truth, but along circuitous paths.[23]

(Here I would like insert a parenthetical note. If a deconstructive activity were to arise from this account of invention, if what it invented were to belong to the order of "general truths" and systematic knowledge, one should continue to apply to it this system of distinctions, notably those between chance and method, and between the method of invention and the method of pedagogical exposition. But it is exactly this logic of invention that calls for deconstructive questioning. Precisely to this extent, deconstructive questions and invention are no longer subject to this logic or to its axiomatics. "*Par le mot* par . . . " teaches, describes, and *performs at the same time* exactly what "Fable" seems to record.)

Let us now move on with our retracing of Leibniz's thought. If luck, chance, or occasion has no essential relation to the system of invention, only to its history as the "history of art," the chance occurrence fosters invention only insofar as necessity is revealed in it, is found there. The role of the inventor (a genius or ingenious) is precisely to have that chance—and, in order to do so, not to fall upon the truth by chance, but, as it were, *to know chance, to know how to be lucky*, to recognize the luck of chance, to anticipate a chance, decipher it, grasp it, inscribe it on the charter of the necessary and turn a throw of the dice into work. This

transfiguration, which both preserves and nullifies chance as such, goes so far as to affect the very status of the aleatory event.

Such is what all governmental policies on modern science and culture attempt when they try—and how could they do otherwise?—to program invention. The aleatory margin that they seek to integrate remains homogeneous with calculation, within the order of the calculable; it devolves from a probabilistic quantification and still resides, we might say, in the same order and in the order of the same. An order where there is no absolute surprise, the order of what I will call the invention of the same. This invention comprises *all* invention, or almost. And I shall not *oppose* it to invention of the other (indeed, I shall oppose nothing to it), for opposition, dialectical or not, still belongs to this regimen of the same. The invention of the other is not opposed to that of the same, its difference beckons toward another coming about, toward this other invention of which we dream, the invention of the entirely other, the one that allows the coming of a still unanticipatable alterity, and for which no horizon of expectation as yet seems ready, in place, available. Yet it is necessary to prepare for it; to allow the coming of the entirely other, passivity, a certain kind of resigned passivity for which everything comes down to the same, is not suitable. Letting the other come is not inertia ready for anything whatever. No doubt the coming of the other, if it has to remain incalculable and in a certain way aleatory (one happens upon the other in the encounter), escapes from all programming. But this aleatory aspect of the other has to be heterogeneous in relation to the integrable aleatory factor of a calculus, and likewise to the form of undecidable that theories of formal systems have to cope with. This invention of the entirely other is beyond any possible status; I still call it invention, because one gets ready for it, one makes this step destined to let the other come, *come in*. The invention of the other, the incoming of the other, is certainly not *constructed* as a subjective genitive, and just as assuredly not as an objective genitive either, even if the invention comes from the other—for this other is thenceforth neither subject nor object, neither a self nor a consciousness nor an unconscious. To get ready for this coming of the other is what can be called deconstruction. It deconstructs precisely this double genitive and, as deconstructive invention, itself comes back in the step [*pas*]—and also as the step—of the other. To invent would then be to "know" how to say "come" and to answer the "come" of the other. Does that ever come about? Of this event one is never sure.

But we are getting ahead of ourselves.

Let's return to the *New Essays Concerning Human Understanding*. Between the integration of the aleatory under the authority of the Principle of Reason and the modern politics of invention, there is a deep continuum of homogeneity, whether we are considering civil or military technoscientific research (and how can the civil and military be distinguished any longer?), or programming, private or governmental, of the sciences and arts (and all these distinctions are disappearing today). This homogeneity is homogeneity itself, the law of the same, the assimilatory power that neutralizes novelty as much as chance. This power is at work even before the integration of the aleatory other, of the other chance event, actually occurs; it suffices that it be possible, projected, potentially significant. It suffices that it acquire meaning on the ground of an *economic* horizon (the domestic law of the *oikos* and the reign of productivity or profitability). The political economy of modern invention, the one that dominates or regulates its present status, belongs to the recent tradition of what Leibniz called in his time "a new species of logic":

> We would need a *new species* of *logic*, which would deal with the degrees of probability, since Aristotle in his *Topics* did no such thing as that, and satisfied himself with putting in some order certain popular rules, distributed according to the commonplaces, that may be of use on some occasion in which it is a matter of amplifying the discourse and giving it credibility, without taking pains to give us a necessary scale for weighing the probabilities and for forming a solid judgment. He who would wish to treat this question would be well advised to pursue the examination of *games of chance*; and in general I would wish that a clever mathematician would produce a substantial work, well detailed and well reasoned, on all sorts of games, as that would be very useful for perfecting the art of invention, the human mind coming better into view in games than in more serious matters. (4.16; "Of the Degrees of Assent," trans. Langley, 541)

These games are mirror games: the human mind "appears" there better than elsewhere, such is Leibniz's argument. The game here occupies the place of a psyche that would send back to man's inventiveness the best image of his truth. As if through a fable in images, the game states or reveals a truth. That does not contradict the principle of programmatic rationality, or of the *ars inveniendi* as the enactment of the principle of reason, but illustrates its "new species of logic," the one that integrates the calculation of probabilities.

One of the paradoxes of this new *ars inveniendi* is that it both liberates the imagination and liberates *from* it. It passes beyond the imagination and passes through it. Such is the case of the *characteristica universalis*, which is not just one example among others. It

> saves the mind and the imagination, the use of which must above all be controlled. That is the principal aim of this great science that I have come to call *Characteristics*, in which what we call algebra or analysis is only a very small branch, since it is this science that gives words to the languages, numbers to arithmetic, notes to music, and that teaches us the secret of determining rational argument, and compelling it to leave something like a modest amount of visible traces on paper to be examined at leisure; and it is finally this science that causes us to reason at little cost, by putting written characters in place of things, so as to disencumber the imagination.[24]

The Invention of God: Politics of Research, Politics of Culture

What we have there is an economy of the imagination. It has a history. The status of the imagination shifts, we know, in and after Kant, and that cannot fail to affect the status of invention. One witnesses a rehabilitation of the transcendental imagination or the productive imagination from Kant to Schelling and Hegel.[25] Can one say that this productive imagination (*Einbildungskraft*, like *produktive Vermögen*, which Schelling and Hegel distinguish from the reproductive *Imagination*) liberates philosophical inventiveness and the status of the invention from their subjection to an order of theological truth or to an order of infinite reason, that is, to what is *always found there already*? Can one say that it interrupts the invention of the same in accord with the same, and that it exposes the status of invention to the interruption of the other? I think not. An attentive reading would show that the argument that passes by way of the finite, as implied by this rehabilitation of the imagination, remains a passage, a required passage, to be sure, but a passage. Nonetheless, we cannot say that nothing happens there, and that the event of the other is absent from it. For example, when Schelling called for a philosophical poetics, for an "artistic drive in the philosopher," for productive imagination as a

vital necessity for philosophy; when, turning the Kantian heritage against Kant, he declared that the philosopher must invent forms, and that "every so-called new philosophy must have taken a new step forward in the formal sphere" (*einen neuen Schritt in der Form*), or that a philosopher "can be original"[26]—that was something very new in the history of philosophy. It was an event and a sort of invention, a reinvention of invention. No one had said before that a philosopher could and should, as a philosopher, display originality by creating new forms. It is original to say that the philosopher must be original, that he is an artist and must innovate in the use of form, in a language and a writing that are henceforth inseparable from the manifestation of truth. No one had said that philosophical invention was an *ars inveniendi* poetically and organically supported by the life of a natural language. Descartes himself had not said it when he recommended the return to French as a philosophical language.

Despite its originality, Schelling's point nevertheless remains within the paradoxical limits of an invention of the same in the guise of a *supplement of invention*. For invention is always *supplementary* for Schelling; it adds on, and thus inaugurates, it is an addition that serves to complete a whole, to fill in where there is a gap and thus to carry out a program. A program that is still theological, still the program of an "original knowledge" (*Urwissen*) that is also an "absolute knowledge," a total "organism" that must articulate but also represent and *reflect* itself in all the regions of the world or of the encyclopedia. And even in the state, the modern state, despite the apparently "liberal" conception of philosophical institutions in these texts by Schelling. One could bring out, in the *Vorlesungen* to which I have just been referring, this logic of the picture (*Bild*) and of specular reflection between the real and the ideal.[27] Total knowledge has the unity of an absolute manifestation (*absolute Erscheinung*, invention as unveiling or discovery) that is finite in reality but ideally infinite, necessary in its reality, free in its ideality. The invention of the other, which is both the limit and the chance of a finite being, thus gets caught up in an infinite amortization. And we meet up again with the law of rationalistic humanism that has concerned us from the start,[28] here in the form of the spectacularly *supplementary* logic of an anthropo-theocentrism:

> Man, the rational being in general, is destined by his position [*hineingestellt*] to be a complement [*Erganzung*] of the manifestation of the world: it is out of man, from his activity, that what is missing in the totality of God's revelation [*zur Totalität der Offenbarung Gottes fehlt*] must develop since nature is of course the bearer of divine essence in its entirety, but only in reality; the rational being must then express the image [*Bild*] of this same divine nature, as it is in itself and consequently in the ideal.[29]

Invention manifests, it is the revelation of God, but it completes that revelation as it carries it out, it reflects revelation as it supplements it. Man is the *psyché* of God, but this mirror captures the whole only by supplying a lack. A *psyché* is this total mirror that cannot be reduced to what is called a "soul supplement" [*un supplément d'âme*]; it is the soul as supplement, the mirror of human invention as the desire *of/for* God, in the place where something is missing from God's truth, from his revelation: "zur Totalität der Offenbarung Gottes fehlt." By allowing the new to emerge, by inventing the other, the psyche reflects the same, it offers itself as a mirror for God. It also carries out, in this speculation, a program.

This logic of the *supplement of invention* could be verified, beyond Schelling, in every philosophy of invention, indeed, in every account of philosophical invention, in all political economies, all the programmings of invention, in the implicit or explicit jurisdiction that evaluates and legislates today each time we speak of invention. How is this possible? Is it possible?

Invention comes down or back to the same, and this is always possible, as soon as it can receive a status and thereby be legitimized by an institution that it then becomes in its turn. For what is being invented in this way are always institutions. Institutions are inventions and the inventions to which a status is conferred are in turn institutions. How can an invention *come back* to being the same, how can the *invenire*, the advent of the future-to-come, come around to coming back, to folding back toward the past a movement said to be always innovative? For that to happen, it suffices that invention be possible and that it invent what is possible. Then, right from its origin ("Par le mot *par* commence donc ce texte"), it envelops in itself a repetition, it unfolds only the dynamics of what was already *found there*, a set of comprehensible possibilities that come into view as ontological or theological truth, a program of cultural or technoscientific politics (civil or military), and so forth. By inventing the possible on the basis of the possible, we relate the new—that is, something quite other that can also be quite ancient—to a set of present possibilities, to the present and state of the order of possibility that provides for the new

the conditions of its status. This statutory economy of public invention does not break the *psyché*, does not pass beyond the mirror. And yet the logic of supplementarity introduces into the very structure of the psyche a fabulous complication, the complication of a fable that does more than it says and invents something other than what it offers for copyrighting. The very movement of this fabulous repetition can, through a crossing of chance and necessity, produce the new of an event. Not only with the singular invention of a performative, since every performative presupposes conventions and institutional rules—but by bending these rules with respect for the rules themselves in order to allow the other to come or to announce its coming in the opening of this dehiscence. That is perhaps what is called deconstruction. The performance of the "Fable" respects the rules, but does so with a strange move—one that others might judge perverse, although it is thereby complying faithfully and lucidly with the very conditions of its own poetics. This move consists in defying and exhibiting the precarious structure of these rules, even while respecting them, and through the mark of respect that it invents.

A singular situation. Invention is always possible, it is the invention of the possible, the *tekhnē* of a human subject within an ontotheological horizon, the invention in truth of this subject and of this horizon; it is the invention of the law, invention according to the law that confers status; invention of and according to the institutions that socialize, recognize, guarantee, legitimize; the programmed invention of programs; the invention of the same through which the other comes down to the same when its event is again reflected in the fable of a *psyché*. Thus it is that invention would be in conformity with its concept, with the dominant feature of the word and concept "invention," only insofar as, paradoxically, invention invents nothing, when in invention the other does not come, and when nothing comes to the other or from the other. For the other is not the possible. So it would be necessary to say that the only possible invention would be the invention of the impossible. But an invention of the impossible is impossible, the other would say. Indeed. But it is the only possible invention: an invention has to declare itself to be the invention of that which did not appear to be possible; otherwise, it only makes explicit a program of possibilities within the economy of the same.[30]

It is in this paradoxy that a deconstruction gets under way. Our current

lassitude results from the invention of the same and the possible, from the invention that is always possible. It is not against this possible invention but beyond it that we are trying to reinvent invention itself, another invention, or rather an invention of the other that would come, through the economy of the same, indeed, while miming or repeating it ("*Par le mot* par . . ."), to offer a place for the other, to let the other come. I am careful to say "let it come," because if the other is precisely what is not invented, the initiative or deconstructive inventiveness can consist only in opening, in uncloseting, destabilizing foreclusionary structures so as to allow for the passage toward the other. But one does not make the other come, one lets it come by preparing for its coming. The coming of the other or its coming back is the only possible arrival, but it is not invented, even if the most genial inventiveness is needed to prepare to welcome it and to prepare to affirm the chance of an encounter that not only is no longer calculable but is not even an incalculable factor still homogeneous with the calculable, not even an undecidable still in the labor of bringing forth a decision. Is this possible? Of course it is not, and that is why it is the only possible invention.

Would we then be searching, as I said a moment ago, to reinvent invention? No, it is not a matter of *research* as such, whatever Greek or Latin tradition we may find behind the politics and the modern programs of research. Nor is it any longer possible for us to say that *we* are searching: what is promised here is not, is no longer or not yet, the identifiable "we" of a community of human subjects, with all those familiar features we wrap up in the names society, contract, institution, and so forth. All these traits are linked to that concept of invention that remains to be deconstructed. It is another "we" that is given over to this inventiveness, after seven years of misfortune, with the mirror broken and the tain crossed, a "we" that does not find *itself* anywhere, does not invent *itself*: it can be invented only by the other and from the coming of the other that says "come" and to which a response with another "come" appears to be the only invention that is desirable and worthy of interest. The other is indeed what is not inventable, and it is therefore the only invention in the world, the only invention of the world, *our* invention, the invention that invents *us*. For the other is always another origin of the world and *we are to be invented*. And the being of the we, and being itself. Beyond being.

By the other, beyond the performance and the *psychē* of "*par le mot* par." Performativity is necessary but not sufficient. In the strict sense, a performative still presupposes too much conventional institution to break the mirror. The deconstruction I am invoking only invents or affirms, lets the other come insofar as, in the performative, it is not only performative but also continues to unsettle the conditions of the performative and of whatever distinguishes it comfortably from the constative. This writing is liable to the other, opened to and by the other, to the work of the other; it works at not letting itself be enclosed or dominated by this economy of the same in its totality, which guarantees both the irrefutable power and the closure of the classical concept of invention, its politics, its technoscience, its institutions. These are not to be rejected, criticized, or combated, far from it—and all the less so since the economic circle of invention is only a movement for reappropriating exactly what sets it in motion, the differance of the other. And that movement cannot be reduced to meaning, existence, or truth.

Passing beyond the possible, it is without status, without law, without a horizon of reappropriation, programmation, institutional legitimation, it passes beyond the order of demand, of the market for art or science, it asks for no patent and will never have one. In that respect, it remains very gentle, foreign to threats and wars. But it is felt to be all the more dangerous.

Like the future-to-come, for that is its only concern: allowing the adventure or the event of the entirely other to come. Of an entirely other that can no longer be confused with the God or the Man of ontotheology or with any of the figures of this configuration (the subject, consciousness, the unconscious, the self, man or woman, and so on). To say that this is the only future is not to advocate amnesia. The coming of invention cannot make itself foreign to repetition and memory. For the other is not the new. But its coming extends beyond this past present that once was able to construct—to invent, we must say—the techno-onto-anthropo-theological concept of invention, its very convention and status, the status of invention and the statue of the inventor.

What am I going to be able to invent again, you wondered at the beginning, when it was the fable.

And of course you have seen nothing coming.

The other, that's no longer inventable.

"What do you mean by that? That the other will have been only an invention, the invention of the other?"

"No, that the other is what is never inventable and will never have waited for your invention. The call of the other is a call to come, and that happens only in multiple voices."

—*Translated by Catherine Porter*

§ 2 The *Retrait* of Metaphor

to Michel Deguy

What is going on, today, with metaphor?

And what gets along without metaphor?

It is a very old subject. It occupies the West, inhabits it or lets itself be inhabited: representing itself there as an enormous library in which we move about without perceiving its limits, proceeding from station to station, going on foot, step by step, or in a bus (with the "bus" I've just named, we are already circulating in translation, and, within the element of translation, between *Übertragung* and *Übersetzung*, given that *metaphorikos* is still a designation today, in so-called modern Greek, for what concerns means of transportation). *Metaphora* circulates in the city, it conveys us like its inhabitants, along all sorts of routes, with intersections, red lights, one-way streets, no-exits, crossroads or crossings, and speed limits. We are in a certain way—metaphorically, of course, and as concerns the mode of habitation—the content and tenor of this vehicle: passengers, comprehended and displaced by metaphor.

Lecture delivered on June 1, 1978, at the University of Geneva during a "Philosophy and Metaphor" colloquium in which Roger Dragonetti, André de Muralt, and Paul Ricœur also participated. Its reading will show that it was to Michel Deguy that I first destined the approaching draft of this detour (*Umriss* in the other language, to say "proximity" in a parallel way). First published version in *Poésie* 7 (1978).

A strange statement to start off—you might say. Strange at least because it implies that we know what it means to *inhabit*, and *to circulate*, and *to transport oneself*, to *have* or *let* oneself be transported. In general and in this case. Strange too because it is not only metaphoric to say that we inhabit metaphor and that we circulate in it as in a sort of vehicle, an automobile. It is not simply metaphoric. Nor is it any more proper, literal, or usual, and I should make clear right away that I do not mean to confuse these notions with each other by mentioning them together. Neither metaphoric nor a-metaphoric, this "figure" consists singularly in changing places and functions: it constitutes the so-called subject of utterances (the speaker or the writer who we claim to be, or anyone who believes he *makes use* of metaphors and speaks *more metaphorico*) as the *content* or the—still partial, and always already "embarked," "aboard"—*tenor* of a vehicle that comprehends the subject, carries him away, displaces him at the very moment when the said subject believes he is designating it, saying it, orienting it, driving it, steering it "like a pilot in his ship."

Like a pilot in his ship.

I have just changed elements and means of transport. We are not in metaphor like a pilot in his ship. With this proposition, I drift. The figure of the vessel or the boat, which was so often the exemplary vehicle of rhetorical pedagogy, of discourse teaching rhetoric, makes me veer toward a quotation of Descartes whose displacement in turn would draw me much further afield than I can allow myself to go here.

Therefore I ought to interrupt decisively the drifting or skidding. And I would if that were possible. But what is it I have been doing for the past few moments? I am skidding and drifting irresistibly. I am trying to speak *about* metaphor, to say something proper or literal on this subject, to *treat* it as my subject, but I am obliged, by metaphor (if one can say that) to speak of it *more metaphorico*, in its own manner. I cannot *treat it* without *dealing with it* [traiter avec elle], without negotiating the loan I take out from it in order to speak about it. I cannot produce a *treatise* on metaphor that is not *treated with* metaphor, which suddenly appears intractable.

That is why since I began I have been moving from aside to aside, from one vehicle to another, unable to brake or stop the bus, its automaticity or automobility. Or at least, I can brake only by letting skid, in other words, letting my control as driver slip away up to a certain point. I can no longer stop the vehicle or anchor the ship, master without remainder the drifting, skidding, or sideslipping [*dérapage*] (I have pointed out somewhere that the word *dérapage*, before its greatest metaphorical skid,

has to do with a certain play of the anchor in nautical language, or rather, I should say, with the language of the fleet and the surrounding waters). Or, at least, I can stop only the engines of this floating vehicle, here my discourse, which would still be a good way of abandoning it to its most unforeseeable drifting. The drama—for this is a drama—is that even if I decided to *speak no longer* metaphorically about metaphor, I would not succeed; metaphor would continue to get along without me in order to make me speak, ventriloquizing me, metaphorizing me. How not to speak? These are other ways of saying, or rather other ways of responding, to my first questions. What is going on *with* metaphor? Well, everything: there is nothing that does not go on with metaphor and through metaphor. Any statement concerning anything whatsoever that goes on, metaphor included, will have been produced *not without* metaphor. There will not have been a metaphorics consistent enough to dominate all its statements. And what gets along *without* metaphor? Nothing, therefore, and one ought to say instead that metaphor gets along without anything else, here without me, at the very moment when it appears to be going on by way of me. But if it gets by without everything that does not go on without it, then maybe, in a bizarre sense, it dispenses with itself; it no longer has a name, a literal or proper meaning, all of which might begin to make the double figure of my title readable to you: in its withdrawal [*retrait*], one should say in its withdrawals, metaphor perhaps retires, withdraws from the worldwide scene, and does so at the moment of its most invasive extension, at the instant it overflows every limit. Its withdrawal would then have the paradoxical form of an indiscreet and overflowing insistence, an overabundant remanence, an intrusive repetition, always marking with a supplementary trait, with one more turn, with a re-turn and *re-tracing* or *re-drawing* [re-trait] the trait that it will have left right on the text.

So if I wanted to interrupt the skidding, I would fail, run aground. And this at the very moment when I would refrain from remarking it.

The third of the little sentences by which I seemed to attack my subject, and which in sum I have been explaining and quoting for a while, was "Metaphor is a very old subject." A subject: this is at once certain and dubious, depending on the direction in which this word—"subject"—displaces itself in its sentence, its discourse, its context, and depending on the metaphoricity to which it will itself be subjected, for nothing is more metaphoric than this subject value. I drop the subject in order to interest

myself, rather, in its predicate, in the predicate of the subject "subject," namely, its age. I said it is *old* for at least two reasons.

And here I begin: another way of saying that I am going to do my best to slow the skidding.

The first reason is astonishment before the fact that a subject so old in appearance, a character or an actor appearing so tired, so used up, should return today to take the stage—and the Western scene of this drama—with so much force and insistence over the past few years, in a way that seems to me fairly new. It's as if it wanted a rejuvenating makeover or to be reinvented, the same again or the other. A socio-bibliography would show it just by counting the articles and (national and international) colloquia that have busied themselves with metaphor for about a decade, perhaps a little less, and again this year: in the past few months there have been at least three international colloquia on this subject, if I am correct, two in the United States and this one right here, all of them international and interdisciplinary, which is no less significant (a conference at the University of California-Davis is titled "Interdisciplinary Conference on Metaphor").

What is the historical or historial import (as to the very value of historiality or epochality) of this preoccupation and this uneasy convergence? Where does this pressure come from? What is at stake here? What is going on today with metaphor? So many questions, whose necessity and magnitude I wanted only to indicate, it being understood that I can make here no more than a small gesture in their direction. The astonishing youthfulness of this old subject is considerable and, to tell the truth, somewhat staggering. Metaphor—Western also in this respect—is retiring, it is in the evening of its life. "Evening of life" for "old age": this is one of the examples Aristotle chooses in his *Poetics* for the fourth type of metaphor, the one that proceeds *kata* to *analogon*, by analogy; the first, which goes from genus to species, *apo genous epi eidos*, for which the example is, as if by chance: "'Here stands my ship [*nēus de moi ēd estēken*],' for to be anchored is one among many ways of being stopped" [*Poetics* 1457b]. The example is already a quotation from the *Odyssey*. In the evening of its life, metaphor is still a very generous, inexhaustible subject; it can't be stopped, and I could comment indefinitely on the adherence, the pre-belonging of each of these utterances to a metaphoric corpus, and even—hence the repetition of the trait [*re-trait*]—to a metaphoric corpus of utterances on the subject of this old subject, of metaphoric utterances on metaphor. I stop this movement here.

The other reason that drew me to the phrase "old subject" is a value of apparent exhaustion that it seemed to me necessary to recognize once again. An old subject is an apparently exhausted subject, worn to the bone or threadbare. Now this value of wear and tear, but first of all of use, this value of use value, utility, of use or utility as being *useful* or *usual*, in short, this whole semantic system that I am going to abbreviate under the title of the *us*, will have played a determinant role in the traditional problematic of metaphor. Metaphor is perhaps a subject, not only worn to the bone, but one that has maintained itself through an essential relation to the *us* or to *usance* (an old French word, out of use today, whose polysemy deserves a whole analysis in itself). So perhaps what is worn out today in metaphor is precisely this value of *us* that has determined its whole traditional problematic: metaphor dead or alive.

So then, why return to the *us* of metaphor? And why do we privilege in this return the text signed with Heidegger's name? And how does this question of the *us* join with the necessity of privileging the Heideggerian text in this *epoch* of metaphor, a suspensive withdrawal and return supported by the line [*trait*] delimiting a contour? This question is sharpened by a paradox. The Heideggerian text appeared impossible to get around, for others and for myself, from the moment it was a question of thinking the worldwide epoch of metaphor in which we say we are, even though Heidegger treated metaphor only very allusively as such and by that name. And this very rarity will not have been insignificant. That is why I speak of the Heideggerian *text*: I do so to underscore with a supplementary line [*trait*] that for me it is not a matter of considering only the stated propositions, the themes and theses on the subject of metaphor as such, the content of his discourse treating rhetoric and this trope, but of his writing, his treatment of language and, more rigorously, his treatment of the trait, of the trait in every sense, and more rigorously still of the trait as a word in his language, and of the trait as a tracing incision [*entame*] of language.[1]

Heidegger will not then have spoken very much about metaphor. Two places are always cited (*Der Satz vom Grund* and *Unterwegs zur Sprache*)[2] where he seems to take a position with respect to metaphor—or more precisely with respect to the rhetorico-metaphysical concept of metaphor—but still he does so as if in passing, briefly, laterally, in a context where metaphor does not occupy the center. Why would such an elliptical text, in appearance so ready to elude the question of metaphor, have something so necessary to perform with respect to the metaphorical? Or yet again, reversing the same question: why would a text inscribing something so decisive with respect to metaphorics have remained so discreet, scant, reserved, retiring when it comes to metaphor as such and by this name, by its proper and literal name, so to speak? For if metaphor has always been spoken of metaphorically or metonymically, then how might one determine the moment when it is given its own theme, under its proper name? Would there then be an essential relation between this withdrawal, this reserve, this withholding and what is written, metaphorically or metonymically, about metaphor *under* Heidegger's signature?

Taking into account the magnitude of this question and all the limits imposed upon on us here, beginning with that of time, I will not claim to propose anything other than a brief note, and so as to narrow down my topic even more, a *note on a note*. I hope to convince you along the way that although the quotation of this note on a note comes from a text signed by me, "White Mythology: Metaphor in the Text of Philosophy,"[3] I am not referring to it like an author who cites his own writings in order to steer things immodestly back around to himself. My gesture is all the less complacent, I hope, in that I will take my point of departure from a certain insufficiency of the said note. And I do so for reasons of economy, to save time, so as to reconstruct as quickly as possible a context that will be as broad and strictly determined as possible. It so happens that (1) this note refers to Heidegger and quotes at length one of the principal passages where he seems to take a position with respect to the concept of metaphor; (2) a second contextual trait: this note is called for by a development concerning the *us* [the usual, usage, wear and tear, or usury] and the recourse to this *us*-value in the dominant philosophical interpretation of metaphor; (3) a third contextual trait: this note quotes one of Heidegger's sentences, "Das Metaphorische gibt es nur innerhalb der Metaphysik" ("The metaphoric exists only within the boundaries of metaphysics"), which Paul Ricœur "discusses"—the word is his—in *The Rule of Metaphor*, to be specific, in the "Eighth Study: Metaphor and Philosophical Discourse."[4] And this sentence, which Ricœur regularly calls an *adage*, is also placed in "epigraph"—again, the word is his—for what he defines, following the discussion of Heidegger, as a "second navigation," which is to say the critical reading of my 1971 essay, "White Mythology." I prefer to quote here the third paragraph of the introduction to the "Eighth Study":

> A completely different—and even inverse—manner of involving philosophy in the theory of metaphor must also be considered. It is the inverse of that investigated in the two earlier sections, insofar as it establishes philosophical presuppositions at the very source of the distinctions that make a discourse on metaphor possible. This hypothesis does more than reverse the order of priority between metaphor and philosophy: it reverses the manner of philosophical argumentation. Our earlier discussion will have been situated at the level of stated intentions of speculative or even onto-theological discourse, and thus at issue there will have been only the order of its argumentation. For another "reading," it is the unavowed movement of philosophy and the unseen play of metaphor that are in complicity. Placing in epigraph Heidegger's assertion that "the metaphoric exists only within the boundaries of the metaphysical," we shall take Jacques Derrida's essay "White Mythology" as our guide in this "second navigation." (324–25; 258–59)

I leave aside the implication that is common to us, Paul Ricœur and myself, in this colloquium, and I take merely the three contextual elements I have just brought up, for these suffice to justify a return, here, once again, to Heidegger's short sentence. By the same token, they commit me to elaborating further the note I devoted to it seven or eight years ago.

The place and import of this note seem to me to have been neglected by Paul Ricœur in his discussion; and if I permit myself to say that in a totally preliminary way, it is not at all in a polemical spirit, to defend or attack any positions, but only in order better to illuminate the premises of the reading of Heidegger that I will attempt later. I regret that I must limit myself, for lack of time, to a few principial indications; it will be impossible for my argument to measure up to all the richness of *The Rule of Metaphor*, and through a detailed analysis, even if it had to accentuate disagreement, bear witness in that way to my gratitude to Paul Ricœur. As you'll see, when I say "disagreement," I am simplifying. The logic here is sometimes disconcerting: it is often because I subscribe to Ricœur's propositions that I am tempted to protest when I see him turn them back against me as if they were not already readable in what I wrote. I will limit myself, for examples, to two of the most general lines [*traits*], which point the way for Ricœur's whole reading, in order to resituate the place of a possible debate, rather than to open it, and still less to close it. Whoever wishes to engage in this debate now has a large and detailed corpus at his or her disposal.

First trait: Ricœur makes his entire reading of "White Mythology" depend on his reading of Heidegger and on this "adage," as if I had attempted no more than an extension or a *continuous* radicalization of the Heideggerian movement. Hence the function of the epigraph. Everything takes place as if I had merely generalized what Ricœur calls Heidegger's "limited criticism" and extended it inordinately, beyond all bounds. A passage, Ricœur says, "from the limited criticism of Heidegger to Jacques Derrida's unbounded 'deconstruction' in 'White Mythology'" (362; 284). A little further on, in the same gesture of assimilation or at least of continuous derivation, Ricœur relies on the figure of a "theoretical core common to Heidegger and to Derrida, namely, the supposed collusion between the metaphoric couple of the proper and the figurative and the metaphysical couple of the visible and the invisible" (373; 294).

This continuist assimilation or this framing of a subsidiary affiliation surprised me. For it is precisely on the subject of these couples and particularly of the couple "visible/invisible," "sensible/intelligible" that I had marked, in my note on Heidegger, a clear and unequivocal reservation; a reservation that, at least in its letter, even resembles Ricœur's. Thus, after being assimilated to Heidegger, I see myself the object of an objection whose principle I had myself formulated previously. Here is this principle (pardon these quotations, but they are useful for the clarity and the economy of this colloquium), in the first line of note 19: "This explains the mistrust that the concept of metaphor inspires in Heidegger [I emphasize: *the concept* of metaphor]. In *The Principle of Reason*, he stresses especially the 'sensible/non-sensible' opposition, an important trait but not the only, nor doubtless the first to appear, nor the most determinant for the value of metaphor."

Is not this reservation clear enough to exclude, on this point in any case, both the "common theoretical core" (not to mention that here, for essential reasons, there is no core and especially no theoretical core) and the complicity between the two couples in question? I limit myself in this regard to what is clearly said in this note. I do so in the interest of conciseness, for in reality the whole of "White Mythology" constantly calls into question the common and commonly philosophical interpretation (in Heidegger as well) of metaphor as a transfer from the sensible to the intelligible, as well as the privilege accorded this trope (by Heidegger as well) in the deconstruction of metaphysical rhetoric.

Second trait: The whole reading of "White Mythology" proposed in *The Rule of Metaphor* takes shape around what Ricœur distinguishes as "two assertions in the tight fabric of Derrida's demonstration" (362; 285). One of the two assertions, then, I have already mentioned; it is, says Ricœur, "the deep-seated unity of metaphoric and analogical transfer of visible being to intelligible being." I have just underscored that this assertion is not mine but rather the one I am treating in, to go quickly, let's say a deconstructive mode. The second assertion concerns the *us* and what Ricœur calls the "efficacy of worn-out metaphor." In a first movement, Ricœur recognized that the tropical play on *usure* in "White Mythology" was not limited to its sense of "wear and tear," erosion, impoverishment, or exhaustion, to the wear and tear of usage, the worn, the worn out, or used up. But then Ricœur no longer takes into account what he himself calls a "disconcerting tactic." This "tactic" does not correspond to some wily, manipulative, or triumphant perversity on my part, but to the intractable structure in which we are implicated and carried away in advance. So, Ricœur does not take at all into account this twist and reduces my entire statement to the assertion that, far from assuming, I am precisely calling into question: namely, that the relation of metaphor to the concept and in general the process of metaphoricity could be understood under the concept or the scheme of *usure*, wear and tear, as a becoming-worn or becoming-worn-out, and not as *usure*, in the sense of usury, the production of surplus value according to laws other than those of a continuous and linearly accumulative capitalization. This latter sense not only led me into other problematic regions (to go quickly, let's say psychoanalytic, economico-political, and, in the Nietzschean sense, genealogical regions) but to deconstruct what is already treated as dogma or accredited in these regions. But Ricœur devotes a long analysis to criticizing this motif of "worn-out" metaphor in order to demonstrate that "the hypothesis of a specific fecundity of worn-out metaphor is strongly contested by the semantic analysis developed in preceding studies . . . the study of the lexicalization of metaphor by Le Guern contributes much to dissipate the false enigma of worn-out metaphor" (368; 290).

Here as well, it is to the extent that I subscribe to this proposition that I am not in agreement with Ricœur when, in order to "combat" them (that's his word), he attributes statements to me that I had begun by calling into question myself. I did so constantly in "White Mythology" and even, to a degree of literal explication beyond all doubt, starting with the

"Exergue" (starting with the chapter titled "Exergue"), then again in the immediate context of the note on Heidegger, in the very paragraph where the quotation of this note is found. The "Exergue" announces clearly that it is not a question of accrediting the schema of the *us* but indeed of deconstructing a philosophical concept, a philosophical construction erected on this schema of worn-out metaphor or privileging, for significant reasons, the trope named metaphor:

> It was also necessary to subject this value of *wear and tear* [usure] to interpretation. It seems to have a systematic link with the metaphoric perspective. It will be found again any place wherever the theme of metaphor is privileged. It is also a metaphor that imports a *continuist presupposition*: the history of a metaphor would not essentially move along like a displacement, with ruptures, reinscriptions in a heterogeneous system, mutations, digressions without origin, but like a progressive erosion, a regular semantic loss, an uninterrupted exhaustion of the primitive meaning. An empirical abstraction without extraction beyond its native soil. . . . This trait—the concept of *usure*, wear and tear—no doubt does not belong to a narrow historico-theoretical configuration, but more certainly to the concept of metaphor itself and to the long metaphysical sequence that it determines or that determines it. It is with this sequence that we will concern ourselves initially. (256; 215–16)

The phrase "long metaphysical sequence" marks out clearly that for me it was not a question of taking "metaphysics" ["la" *métaphysique*] as the homogeneous unity of an ensemble. I have never believed in the existence or the consistency of something like "the" metaphysical. I bring this up again in order to respond to another of Ricœur's suspicions. Although I may have had occasion, if one counts certain demonstrative sentences or a particular contextual constraint, to say "the" metaphysical or "the" closure of "the" metaphysical (a phrase that is the target of *The Rule of Metaphor*), I have also very often—elsewhere, but also in "White Mythology,"—put forward the proposition according to which there is never "the" metaphysical, the "closure" being here not a circular limit bordering a homogeneous field but a more twisted, wily structure, one that today, according to another figure, I would be tempted to call "invaginated." Representation of a linear and circular closure surrounding a homogeneous space is, precisely—and this is the theme to which I give the greatest emphasis—a self-representation of philosophy in its ontoencyclopedic logic. I could multiply the quotations from as far back as "Differance" where it

was said, for example, that "the text of metaphysics [*la métaphysique*]" is "not surrounded but traversed by its limit," "marked on its inside by the multiple track of its margin," "a simultaneously traced and effaced trace, alive and dead simultaneously."[5] I shall limit myself to these few lines of "White Mythology" in the vicinity of the note:

> Each time that a rhetoric defines metaphor, it implies not only a philosophy but a conceptual network within which philosophy as such has been constituted. Moreover, each thread in this network forms a *turn*, one might say a metaphor, if this notion were not too derivative here. The defined is therefore implied in the defining term of the definition.
>
> As is self-evident, no appeal is being made here to some homogeneous continuum, one which would ceaselessly relate tradition back to itself, the tradition of metaphysics as well as that of rhetoric. Nevertheless, if we did not begin by paying attention to these more durable constraints, exerted on the basis of a very long systematic chain, and if we did not take the trouble to delimit their general functioning and their effective limits, we would run the risk of taking the most derivative effects for the original traits of a historical subset, a hastily identified configuration, an imaginary or marginal mutation. Through an empiricist and impressionistic rush toward alleged differences—in fact toward cross-sections that are in principle linear and chronological—we would go from discovery to discovery. A rupture beneath every step! For example, we would present as a physiognomy proper to "eighteenth-century" rhetoric, a whole set of traits (such as the privilege of the name) passed down, although not in a direct line and with all kinds of deviations and inequalities of transformation, from Aristotle or the Middle Ages. Here we are led back to the program, still entirely to be elaborated, of a new delimitation of bodies of work, and of a new problematic of the signature. (274–75; 230–31)

I take advantage of the "privilege of the name" indicated in parentheses in order to emphasize that, like Paul Ricœur, I have constantly called into question—in "White Mythology" and elsewhere, and with an insistence that might be judged tiresome, but which in any case cannot be neglected—the privilege of the name and the word, like all those "semiotic conceptions which," Ricœur says precisely, "impose the primacy of denomination" (368; 290). I have regularly opposed this primacy with attention to the syntactic motif dominant in "White Mythology" (e.g., 317; 265). I was therefore once again surprised to see myself criticized from the same angle at which I had already aimed the critique. If I had

time I would even say the same, and a fortiori, about the problem of etymologism or the interpretation of the Aristotelian *idion*. All these misunderstandings form a system with the attribution of a thesis to "White Mythology" and one that has been confused with the presupposition that, precisely, I have fought doggedly against, namely, a concept of metaphor dominated by the concept of wear and tear as *being-worn-out* or *becoming-worn-out*, along with the whole machinery of its implications. In the ordered array of these implications, one finds a series of oppositions that include precisely those of living and dead metaphor. To say, as Ricœur does, that "White Mythology" makes death or dead metaphor its watchword is to abuse that text by marking it with what it clearly marks itself off from, for example, when it says that there are two deaths or two self-destructions of metaphor (and when there are two deaths, the problem of death *itself* is infinitely complicated), or, for yet another example and to be done with this apparent *pro domo*, in this paragraph to which is appended the note that today calls for another note:

> Here the opposition between actual, effective metaphors and inactive effaced metaphors corresponds to the value of wear and tear (*Abnutzung* [this is Hegel's word on which, far from "depending," as Ricœur would have it, I bring to bear a deconstructive analysis: I lean on it as on a patiently studied text but I do not depend on it myself]), whose implications we have already recognized. This is an almost constant trait of discourses on philosophical metaphor: there would be inactive metaphors, which have no interest at all, since the author was not thinking of them and since the metaphoric effect is studied in the field of consciousness. The traditional opposition between living metaphors and dead metaphors corresponds to the difference between effective and extinct metaphors. (268–69; 225–26)

I just said a moment ago why it seemed necessary to me, outside of any plea *pro domo*, to begin by resituating the note on Heidegger that today I would like to annotate and relaunch. By showing in what way, in his two most general premises, Paul Ricœur's reading of "White Mythology" appeared to me, let's say, too vividly metaphoric or metonymic, I did not want, of course, either to polemicize or extend my questions to a vast systematics that can no more be limited to this "Eighth Study" of *The Rule of Metaphor* than "White Mythology" can be enclosed by the two isolated assertions that Ricœur tried to attribute to it. To take up once again Ricœur's watchword, the "intersection" that I have just situated does not

gather up into a single point the difference, indeed, the incommensurable distance of the paths crossing there, like parallel lines that, as Heidegger will say in a moment, can cut across each other at infinity. I would be the last to reject a criticism under the pretext that it is metaphoric or metonymic or both at the same time. Every reading is, in one way or another, and the partition does not pass between a figurative reading and an appropriate or literal, correct or true reading, but between tropic capacities. Thus leaving aside, intact in reserve, the possibility of a completely different reading of these two texts ("White Mythology" and *The Rule of Metaphor*), I come finally to the promised note on a note.

A problem is now imposed on me that I seek to entitle as briefly as possible. For reasons of economy, I seek a title for it as formalizing and thus as economical as possible: well, precisely, it is *economy*. My problem is: economy. While respecting the constraints of this colloquium, which are above all temporal constraints, how shall I determine the most inclusive and most interlaced guiding thread possible through so many virtual trajectories in Heidegger's immense corpus, as one says, and in his tangled writing? How to order the readings, interpretations, or rewritings of them that I am tempted to offer? I could have chosen, among many other possibilities, the one that has just presented itself to me under the name of entanglement or interlacing—something I have long been interested in and on which I am currently working in another manner. In the form of the German noun *Geflecht*, it plays a discreet but irreducible role in "Der Weg zur Sprache" and designates this singular, unique interlacing between, on the one hand, *Sprache* (a word I will not translate, so as not to have to choose between *language*, *tongue*, and *speech*) and, on the other, path (*Weg*, *Bewegung*, *Bewegen*, etc.), a binding-unbinding interlacing (*entbindende Band*) toward which we are incessantly and properly being led back, following a circle that Heidegger proposes thinking or practicing otherwise than as a regression or vicious circle. The circle is a "particular case" of the *Geflecht*. Just like "path," *Geflecht* is not one figure among others. We are implicated in it, interlaced in advance when we wish to speak of *Sprache* and of *Weg*, which are "already in advance of us" (*uns stets schon voraus*).

But after a first anticipation, I had to decide to leave this theme in the background [*en retrait*]: it would not have been economical enough. And I must speak here economically of economy. For at least four reasons, which I will name algebraically.

a. Economy in order to articulate what I am going to say with the other possible tropical system of *usure*, in the sense of usury, thus of interest, surplus value, fiduciary calculation, or interest rate, which Ricœur indicates but leaves in the shadows, although it forms a heterogeneous and discontinuous supplement, a tropical divergence irreducible to that of being-worn-out or worn down.

b. Economy in order to articulate this possibility with the law-of-the-house and the law of the proper, *oiko-nomia*, which led me to reserve a particular place for the two motifs of light and home (Du Marsais cites "borrowed home" in his metaphoric definition of metaphor: "Metaphor is a species of Trope; the word that one uses in metaphor is taken in another sense than the proper meaning, *it is*, so to speak, in a *borrowed home*, says an ancient; this is common and essential to all Tropes" [*Des tropes*, ch. 10]).

c. Economy in order to steer, if one can say that, toward the value of *Ereignis*, so difficult to translate and whose entire family (*ereignen*, *eigen*, *eigens*, *enteignen*) is intersecting, with increasing density in Heidegger's last texts, with the themes of the proper, of propriety, of propriation, of de-propriation, and with that of light, the clearing, the eye (Heidegger says that one may hear *Er-aügnis* in *Ereignis*), and finally, in current usage, with what *comes* as event: what is the place, the taking-place, the metaphoric event, or the event of the metaphoric? What is going on, what is happening, today, with metaphor?

d. Economy, finally, because the economic consideration appears to me to have an essential relation with the determinations of the passage or of path-breaking according to the modes of trans-fer or trans-lation (*Übersetzen*) that I believe must be linked here to the question of metaphoric transfer (*Übertragung*). By reason of this economy of economy, I proposed to give this discourse the title of *retrait*. Not economies in the plural, but *retrait*, withdrawal/redrawing.

Why withdrawal and why withdrawal of metaphor?

I am speaking in what I call, or rather, in what is called, *my* language or, in an even more obscure fashion, my "mother tongue." In "Sprache und Heimat" (a 1960 text on Hebbel in which one could find much to consider on the subject of metaphor, of the *gleich*, of *Vergleich* and of *Gleichnis*, etc., but which lends itself poorly to the acceleration of a colloquium), Heidegger says that *das Sprachwesen*, the essence or being of

language, is rooted in the "dialect" (another word for *Mundart*), in the idiom, and if the idiom is the mother's language, then also rooted there is "das Heimische des Zuhaus, die Heimat." And he adds, "Die Mundart ist nicht nur die Sprache der Mutter, sondern zugleich and zuvor die Mutter der Sprache," the idiom is not only the language of the mother, but is at the same time and above all the mother of language.[6] According to a movement whose law we will analyze, this reversal would lead us to think that not only the *idion* of the *idiom*, the proper of the dialect, is the mother of language, but that, far from knowing before this what a mother is, such a reversal alone allows us perhaps to approach the essence of maternity. A mother tongue would not be a metaphor for determining the sense of language, but the essential turn that must be taken to understand what "mother" means.

And the father? That which is called the father? He attempts to occupy the place of form, of formal language. This place is untenable, and therefore he can *attempt* to occupy it, speaking only to this extent the language of the father, merely for form's sake. In sum, it is this place and this impossible project that Heidegger would be designating at the beginning of "Das Wesen der Sprache" with the names of "metalanguage" (*Metasprache*, *Übersprache*, *Metalinguistik*)—or of Metaphysics. For, finally, one of the dominant names for this impossible and monstrous project of the father—as well as for this mastery of form for form's sake—is indeed Metaphysics. Heidegger insists on it: "metalinguistics" not only "sounds" like "metaphysics," it is the metaphysics of the "technicization" integral to all languages; it is intended to produce a "single, both functional and interplanetary instrument of information." "*Metasprache* and *Sputnik* . . . are the same" (160; 58).

Without going into all the questions that rush to the fore here, I will first of all remark that in "my language" the word *retrait* is endowed with a rather rich polysemy. For the moment I leave open the question of whether or not this polysemy is governed by the unity of a focus or a horizon of sense that promises it a totalization or some joining together in a system. This word imposed itself on me for economic reasons (again, the law of the *oikos* and the idiom), if one takes, or attempts to take, into account its capacities for translation, for capture, or for a translating abduction [*captation*], for translation or transfer in the traditional and ideal sense, that is, the sense of the transport of an intact signified into the

vehicle of another language and of another fatherland or motherland, or even in the more disquieting and more violent sense of an inveigling [*captatrice*], seductive, and transformative capture (more or less regulated and faithful, but what then is the law of this violent fidelity?) of a language, discourse, and text by another language, another discourse, and another text. These translating capacities can at the same time (as will be the case here) violate in the same gesture their proper mother tongue at the moment they import into it and export from it the maximum of energy and information. I presumed that the word *retrait*—at once intact and forced, save/safe in my language, and simultaneously altered—would be the most proper to capture the greatest quantity of energy and information in the Heideggerian text from within the context that here is our own, and only within the limits of this context. The testing of such a transfer (at the same time as your patience) is what I will try here with you, in an obviously schematic and programmatic form. I begin.

I. *First trait.* I take my departure again from these two apparently allusive and digressive passages where Heidegger posits very quickly that *the* concept of metaphor, as if there were only one, belongs to metaphysics itself, as if there were only one and as if it were one. The first passage, as I recalled a moment ago, is the one I quote in the note ("Das Metaphorische gibt es nur innerhalb der Metaphysik"). The other, in the three-part lecture "The Nature of Language" (1957), says notably: "Wir blieben in der Metaphysik hängen, wollten wir dieses Nennen Hölderlins in der Wendung 'Worte wie Blumen' für eine Metapher halten"; "It would mean that we stay bogged down in metaphysics if we were to take the name Hölderlin gives here to 'words, like flowers' as being a metaphor" (206; 99).

Probably because of their univocal and sententious form, these two passages have constituted the sole focus of the discussion of metaphor in Heidegger that has been taken up, on the one hand, in an article by Jean Greisch, "Les mots et les roses: La métaphore chez Martin Heidegger (1973),"[7] and on the other, in *The Rule of Metaphor* (1975). These two analyses are differently oriented. Greisch's essay says it is closer to the movement begun by "White Mythology." Nevertheless, the two texts have the following motifs in common, which I mention quickly, without coming back to what I said a moment ago about *The Rule of Metaphor*. The first motif, with which I do not feel at all in agreement, but on which I will not expand—having done so and having had to do so elsewhere (notably

in *Glas*, "Le sans de la coupure pure," "Survivre," etc.)—is the ontoanthological motif of the flower. Both Greisch and Ricœur identify what I say about dried flowers at the end of "White Mythology" with what Heidegger reproaches Gottfried Benn for saying in order to transform Hölderlin's poem into a "herbarium," a collection of dried plants. Greisch speaks of a kinship between Benn's attitude and my own. And Ricœur uses this motif as a transition into the topic of "White Mythology." For multiple reasons, which I do not have time to enumerate, I would read this quite differently.

Of more importance to me for the moment is the other of the two motifs common to Greisch and Ricœur, namely, that the metaphoric power of the Heideggerian text is richer, more determinant than his thesis on metaphor. The metaphoricity of Heidegger's text would exceed the boundaries of what he says thematically, in the mode of simplifying denunciation, about the so-called metaphysical concept of metaphor (Greisch, 441ff.; Ricœur, 359; 282). I would quite willingly subscribe to this assertion. What remains to be determined, however, is the meaning and necessity that between them link this apparently univocal, simplifying, and reductive denunciation of the "metaphysical" concept of metaphor, on the one hand, and, on the other, the apparently metaphoric power of a text whose author no longer wishes what is going on in that text, and what claims to get along there without metaphor, to be understood as, precisely, "metaphysical," or even according to any concept of metalinguistics or rhetoric.

The first schematic response I will make, under the title of *retrait*, is the following. The so-called metaphysical concept of metaphor would belong to metaphysics *itself* insofar as the latter corresponds, in the epochality of its epochs, to an *epochē*, in other words, to a suspensive withdrawal of Being, to what is often translated as withdrawal, reserve, shelter, whether it is a question of *Verborgenheit* (being-hidden), of dissimulation or of veiling (*Verhüllung*). Being withholds itself, hides, removes itself, *withdraws* (*sich entzieht*) in that movement of withdrawal that is indissociable, according to Heidegger, from the movement of presence or of truth. Withdrawing by displaying itself or determining itself *as* or *under* this mode of Being, for example, as *eidos* according to the divergence or opposition of invisible/visible that constructs Platonic *eidos*, whether it determines itself as *ontōs on* in the form of *eidos* or in some wholly other form, it already submits, *autrement dit*, *sozusagen*, so to speak, to a sort of metaphorico-metonymic displacement. All of the aforesaid history of Western metaphysics would be a vast structural process where the *epochē* of Being withholding itself, holding itself in withdrawal, would take or rather *would present* an (interlaced) series of guises, turns, modes, that is to say, of figures or tropical movements that we might be *tempted* to describe with the aid of rhetorical conceptuality. Each of these words—form, guise, turn, mode, figure—would already be in a tropical situation. To the extent of this *temptation*, "metaphysics" would not only be the enclosure in which *the* concept of metaphor *itself* has been produced and enclosed. Metaphysics *itself* has not only constructed and treated *the* concept of metaphor, for example, beginning with a determination of being as *eidos*; it would itself be situated tropically with respect to Being or the thought of Being. This metaphysics *as* tropics and singularly as a metaphoric detour, would correspond to an essential *withdrawal* of Being: unable to reveal itself, to present itself except by dissimulating itself as a "species" of epochal determination, as a species of an *as* that obliterates its *as such* (Being *as* eidos, *as* subjectivity, *as* will, *as* work, etc.), Being does not let itself be named except through a metaphorico-metonymical divergence. One is tempted to say, then: the metaphysical, which corresponds in its discourse to the withdrawal of Being, tends to assemble, in resemblance, all its metonymic divergences in a great metaphor of Being or of the thought of Being. This assembly is *the* language of *the* metaphysical.

What, then, would be going on with metaphor? Everything: the totality of existence [*l'étant*]. Here's what would be happening: we ought to get along without it, without being able to get along without it, and this defines the structure of withdrawals that interests me here. On the one hand, we must be able to dispense with it because the relation of (ontotheological) metaphysics to the thought of Being, this relation (*Bezug*) that marks the withdrawal (*retrait*, *Entziehung*) of Being, can no longer be named—*literally*—metaphoric as soon as, in order to describe relations among beings, usage (and I do mean to say usage, the becoming-usual of the word and not its original meaning, to which no one has ever referred, in any case, not I) was fixed in place starting from this couple of metaphysical opposition. Being being nothing, not being a being, it cannot be expressed or named *more metaphorico*. And therefore it does not have, in the context of the dominant metaphysical usage of the word "meta-

phor," a proper or literal meaning that could be intended metaphorically by metaphysics. Consequently, we can no more speak metaphorically on its subject, than we can properly or literally. We will always speak of it only *quasi*-metaphorically, according to a metaphor of metaphor, with the overload of a supplementary trait, a re-trait. A supplementary fold of metaphor articulates this retreat/retracing, repeating the intra-metaphysical metaphor by displacing it, that is, the very metaphor that the withdrawal of Being has made possible. The graphics of this withdrawing/redrawing then would take the following turn, which I describe in very dry terms:

1. What Heidegger calls *the* metaphysical corresponds to a withdrawal of Being. Therefore metaphor, as a so-called metaphysical concept, corresponds to a withdrawal of Being. Metaphysical discourse, producing and containing the concept of metaphor, is itself quasi-metaphorical with respect to Being: as metaphor, therefore, it encompasses the narrow-limited-strict concept of metaphor that has, itself, no sense that is not strictly metaphoric.

2. The so-called metaphysical discourse can be exceeded, *insofar as* it corresponds to a withdrawal of Being, only according to a withdrawal of metaphor *insofar as* it is a metaphysical concept, thus according to a withdrawal of metaphysics, a withdrawal of the withdrawal of Being. But because this withdrawal of the metaphoric does not free up the place for a discourse of the proper or the literal, it will at the same time have the sense of a re-folding, of what retreats like a wave on the shoreline, and of a re-turn, the overloading repetition of a supplementary trait, of yet another metaphor, a *re*-tracing of metaphor, a discourse whose rhetorical border is no longer determinable according to a simple and indivisible line, a linear and non-decomposable trait. This trait has the internal multiplicity, the folded-refolded structure of a re-trait. The retreat of metaphor gives rise to an abyssal generalization of the metaphoric—metaphor of metaphor in both senses—that opens out the borders, or rather, invaginates them. This paradoxy proliferates overabundantly by itself. I will draw from it, very quickly, just two provisional conclusions.

1. The word *retrait*, which is "French" up to a certain point, *is not too abusive*, not too much so, I believe, as a translation of the *Entziehung*, the *Sich-Entziehen* of Being, insofar as, suspending, dissimulating, giving way, and veiling itself, and so on, it withdraws into its crypt. To this extent, that of the "not-too-abusive" (a "good" translation must always *abuse*), the French word is suitable for designating the essential and in itself double, equivocal movement that makes possible everything I am speaking about at this moment in the Heideggerian text. The withdrawal of Being, its being in-withdrawal, gives rise to metaphysics as ontotheology producing the concept of metaphor, producing itself and calling itself in a quasi-metaphorical manner. In order to think Being in its withdrawal, it would thus be necessary to let *produce* and *reduce* itself a withdrawal of metaphor that, leaving all the same no room for anything that might be *opposed*, opposable to the metaphoric, will limitlessly extend and load any metaphoric trait with supplementary surplus value. Here the word *re-trait* (an added trait to supplement the subtracting withdrawal, *re-trait* bespeaking at once, at one stroke [*d'un trait*], the plus and the minus) designates the generalizing and supplementary return only in a kind of quasi-catachrestic violence, a kind of abuse I impose on language, but one that I hope is more than justified by the necessity of good, economic formalization. *Retrait* is neither a translation nor a nontranslation (in the ordinary sense) in relation to the Heideggerian text; it is neither proper nor literal, neither figurative nor metaphoric. "Withdrawal of Being" cannot have a literal and proper sense to the extent that Being is not *something*, a determinate being that one might designate. For the same reason, because the withdrawal of Being gives rise to both the metaphysical concept of metaphor and its withdrawal, the expression "withdrawal of Being" is not *stricto sensu* metaphoric.

2. Second provisional conclusion: because of this chiasmatic invagination of the borders, and because the word *retrait* functions here neither literally nor by metaphor, I do not know what I mean to say before having thought, so to speak, the withdrawal of Being *as* withdrawal/redrawing of metaphor. It is not at all the case that I am starting out from a word or a known or determinate meaning (*retrait*) to think about Being or metaphor; rather, I will come to comprehend, understand, read, think, allow the withdrawal in general to manifest itself only if I begin with the withdrawal of Being as a withdrawal/redrawing of metaphor in all the polysemous *and* disseminal potential of the *retrait*. In other words: if one wished *withdrawal-of* to be understood as a metaphor, it would be a curious, overturning metaphor—one might almost say *catastrophic*, catastropic: its aim would be to state something new, still unheard-of about the

vehicle and not about the apparent subject of the trope. *Withdrawal-of-Being-or-of-metaphor* would be on the way toward giving us to think less Being or metaphor than the Being or the metaphor *of the withdrawal*, on the way toward giving us to think about the way and the vehicle, or their making-way. Habitually, usually, a metaphor claims to procure access to the unknown and indeterminate by the detour of something recognizably familiar. "The evening," a common experience, helps us to think "old age," something more difficult to think or to endure, as "the evening of life," and so on. According to this common schema, we would know in a familiar way what *withdrawal* means, and we would try to think the withdrawal of Being or of metaphor by way of it. But what comes about here is that for once we can think the trait of *re-trait* only starting from the thought of this ontico-ontological difference, on the withdrawal of which has been traced, with the borders of metaphysics, the common structure of metaphoric usage.

Such a catastrophe therefore inverts the metaphoric trajectory at the moment when, having overflown all borders, metaphoricity no longer allows itself to be contained in its so-called metaphysical concept. Would this catastrophe produce a general dilapidation, a destructuration of discourse—for example, that of Heidegger—or rather a simple conversion of meaning and direction that repeats in its depths the circulation of the hermeneutic circle? I do not know if this is an alternative, but if it were, I would be unable to respond to this question, and not solely for reasons of time: a text, for example, that of Heidegger, necessarily entails and crosses the two motifs within itself.

II. I will therefore emphasize—and this is the *second* major trait I announced—only what unites (like their hyphen [*trait d'union*], if you will) Heidegger's statements concerning the so-called metaphysical concept of metaphor, on the one hand, and, on the other, his own text insofar as it appears more "metaphorical" or *quasi*-metaphorical than ever, at the very moment when he defends himself against that. How is this possible?

In order to find the path, the form of the path between the two, it is necessary to glimpse what I have just called the generalizing catastrophe. I will take two examples from among a number of possibilities. These are always typical moments when, resorting to formulas that one might be tempted to take as metaphors, Heidegger specifies that they are not and throws suspicion on what we think is certain and clear in this word.

He makes this gesture not only in the two passages cited by Ricœur and Greisch. In the "Letter on Humanism," in a movement that I cannot reconstitute here, one finds this sentence: "Das Denken baut am Haus des Seins," "Thought works at [constructing] the house of Being," the joining of Being (*Fuge des Seins*) coming to assign, enjoin (*verfügen*) man to inhabit the truth of Being. And a little further, after a quotation from Hölderlin: "The talk about the house of Being (*Die Rede vom Haus des Seins*) is no transfer (*Übertragung*) of the image 'house' to Being. But [by implication: inversely] one day we will, by thinking the essence of Being (*sondern aus dem sachgemäss gedachten Wesen des Seins*), more readily be able to think what 'house' and 'to dwell' are."[8]

"House of Being" does not operate, in this context, in the manner of a metaphor in the common, usual, that is to say, literal sense of metaphor, if there is one. This current and cursive sense—I understand it also in the sense of direction—transports a familiar predicate (and here nothing is more familiar, familial, known, domestic, and economic, or so it is thought, than the house) toward a less familiar, more remote, *unheimlich* subject, which it would be a question of better appropriating for oneself, knowing, understanding, and which one thus designates by the indirect detour of what is nearest: the house. Now, what goes on here, *with* the quasi-metaphor of the house of Being, and what gets along *without* metaphor in its cursive direction, is that Being, from its very retreat, would give or promise to give one to think the house or the habitat. One could be tempted to use all kinds of terms and technical schemes borrowed from this or that metarhetoric in order to master *formaliter* that which resembles, according to this bizarre *Übertragung*, a tropical inversion in the relations between the predicate and subject, signifier and signified, vehicle and tenor, discourse and referent, and so on. One might be tempted to formalize this rhetorical inversion where, in the trope "house of Being," Being tells us more or *promises* us more about the house than the house does about Being. But this would be to miss what the Heideggerian text means to say in this place, to miss what is, if you will, most proper to it. Through the inversion we're considering, Being has not become the proper essence of this supposedly known, familiar, nearby being, which is what one believed the house to be in the common metaphor. And if the house has become a bit *unheimlich*, this is not because it has been replaced by "Being" in the role of what is nearest. We are therefore no

longer dealing with a metaphor in the usual sense or with a simple inversion permutating places in a usual tropical structure. All the more since this utterance (which moreover is not a judicative statement, a common proposition, of the constative type S is P) is not one utterance among others bearing on relations between ontic predicates and subjects. First of all, because it implies the economic value of the domicile and of the proper, both of which often or always intervene in the definition of the metaphoric. Second, the statement speaks above all *of* language and therefore in it *of* metaphoricity. In fact, the house of Being, as we will already have read in the "Letter on Humanism," is *die Sprache* (language in general or a particular language):

> The one thing [*Das Einzige*] thinking would like to attain and for the first time tries to articulate in *Being and Time* is something simple [*etwas Einfaches*]. As such [i.e., simple, unique], Being remains mysterious [*geheimnisvoll*], the simple nearness of an unobtrusive power. The nearness occurs essentially [*west*; is essenced] as *die Sprache selbst.* (164; 212)

This is another way of saying that one will be able to think the proximity of the near (which itself is not near or proper: nearness is not near, propriety is not proper) only from and in language. And further down:

> And so it is proper to think the essence of language [*das Wesen der Sprache*] from its correspondence to Being and indeed as this correspondence, that is, as the home of man's essence [*Behausung des Menschenwesens*]. But man is not only a living creature who possesses *die Sprache* along with other capacities. Rather, *die Sprache* is the house of Being in which man ek-sists by dwelling, in that he belongs to the truth of Being, guarding it. (164; 213)

This movement is no longer simply metaphoric. (1) It bears on language in general and on a particular language as element of the metaphoric. (2) It bears on being, which is nothing and which one must think according to the ontological difference that, with the withdrawal of Being, makes possible both metaphoricity and its withdrawal. (3) Consequently, there is no term that is proper, usual, and literal in the divergence without divergence [*écart*] of this phrasing. Despite its resemblance or its movement, this phrasing is neither metaphoric nor literal. Stating the condition of metaphoricity nonliterally, it frees both its unlimited extension and its withdrawal. Withdrawal by which what is distanced (*entfernt*)

in the non-near of proximity is withdrawn and sheltered in it. As one reads at the beginning of "The Nature of Language," no more / still more [*plus de*] metalanguage, no more / still more metalinguistics, therefore no more / still more metarhetoric, and no more / still more metaphysics. Always one more metaphor when metaphor withdraws / is retraced in opening out its limits.

One finds the trace of this torsion, this twisted movement and step, this *detour* of the Heideggerian path everywhere that Heidegger writes and writes about the path. Its trail can be followed and deciphered according to the same rule, which is neither simply a rhetorical rule nor the rule of a tropical system. I will situate only one other occurrence, because it enjoys some privileges. What are they? (1) In "The Nature of Language" (1957–58), the occurrence precedes the passage cited earlier on "Worte wie Blumen." (2) It concerns not only the supposed metaphoricity of certain statements on language in general, and, within it, on metaphor. It initially takes aim at a supposedly metaphoric discourse bearing on the relation between thought and poetry (*Denken und Dichten*). (3) It determines this relation as that of neighborness, neighborhood, or vicinity (*voisinage*, *Nachbarschaft*), according to that type of proximity (*Nahe*) called neighborness or neighborhood in the space of the home and the economy of the house. Now, here again, to call metaphor—as if we knew what it was—some value of neighborness between poetry and thought, to act as if one were first of all certain of the proximity of proximity and of the neighborhood of neighborhood, is to close oneself to the necessity of the other movement. Conversely, it is by renouncing this security of what we believe we recognize under the names of metaphor and neighborhood that we will perhaps approach the proximity of neighborhood. Not that neighborhood would be strange to us before this access to what it is between *Denken* and *Dichten*. Nothing is more familiar to us than this, as Heidegger points out right away. We dwell and move in it. But it is necessary (and this is what is most enigmatic about this circle) to come back to where we are without properly being there (184; 79 and passim). Heidegger has just named "neighborhood" the relation marked by the "and" between *Dichten* and *Denken*. By what right, he then asks, does one speak here of "neighborhood"? The neighbor (*Nachbar*) is one who lives in proximity (*in der Nahe*) of another and with another (I note provisionally and subject to correction that Heidegger does not exploit the chain

vicus, *veicus*, which perhaps refers to *oikos* and to the Sanskrit *veca*, house [cf. "vicinity"]). Neighborness is thus a relation (*Beziehung*)—let us be attentive to this word—that results when one draws (*zieht*) the other into one's proximity so that it may settle there. We might think, then, that in the case of *Dichten und Denken*, this relation, this trait that draws one into the neighborhood of the other, is named according to a "bildlicher Redeweise" (an imagistic way of speaking). That would indeed be reassuring. Unless, Heidegger then notes, we have not thereby already said something about the thing itself, namely, about the essential thing that remains to be thought, namely, neighborhood, whereas it still "remains unclear what is talk [*Rede*], and what is imagery [*Bild*], and in what way language speaks in images [*Die Sprache in Bildern spricht*], if indeed language does so speak at all" (187; 82).

III. Hastening to my conclusion in this *third* and last *trait*, I would now like to come, not to the last word, but to this plural word *trait* itself. And not to come to it but to come back to it. Not to the withdrawal of metaphor but to what might at first resemble the metaphor of withdrawal. Behind all this discourse and sustaining it more or less discreetly, in withdrawal, is there not, in the last instance, a metaphor of withdrawal that authorizes one to speak of the ontological difference and, starting from there, of the withdrawal of metaphor? To this somewhat formal and artificial question, one could respond, right away, that this would at least confirm the de-limitation of the metaphoric (there is nothing metametaphoric because there are only metaphors of metaphors, etc.). It would also confirm what Heidegger says of the metalinguistic project as metaphysics, of its limits, and indeed of its impossibility. I will not be satisfied with this form of response, even if it is sufficient in its principle.

There is—and in a decisive way in the instance of the *es gibt* that is translated as "there is"—there is the trait, an outline or a tracing of the trait operating discreetly, underlined by Heidegger, but each time in a decisive place, and incisive enough to lead us to think that he is naming precisely the most grave, engraved, and engraving signature of the decision. Two families, so to speak, of words, nouns, verbs, and syncatagorems come to ally, engage, cross with each other in this contract of the trait in the German language. They are, on the one hand, the "family" of *Ziehen* (*Zug*, *Bezug*, *Gezüge*, *durchziehen*, *entziehen*), and, on the other, the "family" of *Reissen* (*Riss*, *Aufriss*, *Umriss*, *Grundriss*, etc.). To my knowledge the

role this crossing plays has never been remarked or at least thematized. It is more or less than a lexicon since it will come to name the trait or differential traction as the possibility of language, of *logos*, of *lexis* in general, of spoken no less than written inscription. This quasi-archi-lexicon imposes itself on Heidegger very early, at least so it seems to me (but one would need to make a more systematic inquiry), as early as "The Origin of the Work of Art" (1935–36). For this initial mapping, I will restrict myself to three types of remarks.

1. Let us remark first something about the *neighboring* trait. The neighborhood between *Denken* and *Dichten* gave us access to neighborhood, to the proximity of neighborhood, following a path that, being no more metaphorical than it is literal, would re-open the question of metaphor. Well, the neighboring trait, or as I will say the *approaching* trait, the proper trait that relates (*bezieht*) *Dichten* (which must not be translated, without precaution, as poetry) and thought (*Denken*) one to the other in their neighboring proximity, the trait that sets them *apart* and of which they both *partake*, this common differential trait that attracts them reciprocally, even while signing their irreducible difference, this trait is the *trait*: *Riss*, a tracing-out that breaks a path [*tracement de frayage*], that incises, tears, marks the divergence, the limit, the margin, the mark (at one point, Heidegger names the "march," "*Mark*" as limit, *Grenz-*, *Grenzland* [171; 67]). And this trait (*Riss*) is a *cut* that the two neighbors, *Denken und Dichten*, make into each other somewhere in infinity. In the notch of this cut, they open up, one could say, one to another, they open up from their difference and even, to take up the word *recouper*, whose use I have attempted to regulate elsewhere (in *Glas*), they cut each other again [*se recoupent*; also they coincide, support, and confirm each other] with/off from their trait and thus with/from their respective withdrawal [re-*trait*]. This trait [*Riss*] of *recoupe* relates one to the other but belongs to neither. That is why it is not a common trait or a general concept, but neither is it a metaphor. If a trait could be something, if it could be properly and fully originary, then we might say that it is more originary than the two (*Dichten* and *Denken*) that it notches and *recoupe*, that it is their common origin and the seal of their alliance, remaining for that reason singular and different from them. But, if it makes way for a differential gap, then a trait is neither fully originary and autonomous, nor, as a path-breaking, is it purely derivative. And to the extent that such a trait makes way for

the possibility of naming in language (written or spoken, in the common meaning of these words), it is not itself nameable, as spacing, either literally, properly, or metaphorically. *The trait has nothing approaching it as such.*

At the end of the second part of "The Nature of Language," Heidegger has just marked how, in the *es gibt das Wort*, "es, das Wort, gibt," but in such a way that the jewel (*Kleinod*) of the poem one is reading ("The Word" by Stefan George), which the poem gives as a present and which is nothing other than a certain relation of the word to the thing, this unnamed jewel withdraws (*das Kleinod entzieht sich*). The *es gibt* withdraws what it gives, giving only to withdraw; and to whoever knows how to renounce. The jewel withdraws into the "astonishing secret," where secret (*geheimnisvoll*) comes to qualify the astonishing (*das Erstaunende, was staunen lässt*) and designates the intimacy of the house as the place of withdrawal (*geheimnisvoll*). Coming back then to the theme of neighborhood between *Denken* and *Dichten* and to their irreducible alterity, Heidegger speaks of their "tender," delicate (*zarte*) but "clear" difference that must leave no room for any confusion. *Dichten* and *Denken* are parallels (*para allelo*), one beside or along the other, but not separate, if separate means "to be distanced in the without-relation" (*ins Bezuglose abgeschieden*), without the traction of this trait (*Zug*), of this *Bezug* that relates or transports one toward the other.

What therefore is the trait of this *Bezug*, this relation between *Denken* and *Dichten*? It is the trait of a first cut, of a broaching and breaching incision [*entame*], of an opening that traces and cuts a path (the word *Bahnen* appears often in this context with the figures of *Bewegen*), of an *Aufriss*. The word *entame*, which I have used a good deal elsewhere, best approaches, it seems to me, a translation of *Aufriss*, which is a decisive word, a word of decision in this context of non-"voluntary" decision, and one that French translators render sometimes by *tracé-ouvrant*, opening sketch, and sometimes by *gravure*, engraving.

Breached and broached, the two parallels cut each other at infinity, re-cut and confirm each other, notch each other and each signs in some way in the body of the other, the one in the place of the other. They sign there the contract without contract of their neighborhood. If the parallels cut one another, intersect (*schneiden sich*) at infinity (*im Un-endlichen*), they do not make this cut, this notch (*Schnitt*) to themselves; they re-cut each

other [*se recoupent*] without touching each other, without affecting each other, without wounding each other. They only breach and broach each other and are cut (*geschnitten*) in the *Aufriss* of their neighboringness, of their neighboring essence (*nachbarlichen Wesens*). And with this incision that leaves them intact, they are *eingezeichnet*, "signed": designed or drawn, characterized, assigned, consigned. *Diese Zeichnung ist der Riss*, Heidegger says next. It breaches and broaches (*er reisst auf*), it traces while opening *Dichten* and *Denken* in the approach of one to the other. This approaching does not bring them closer from out of another place where they would already be themselves and then let themselves be drawn (*ziehen*) to each other. The approaching is the *Ereignis* that sends *Dichten* and *Denken* back into the proper (*in das Eigene*) of their essence (*Wesen*). The trait of the breaching-broaching incision, therefore, marks the *Ereignis* as propriation, event of propriation. It does not precede the two "propers" that are made by it to come into their propriety, for it is nothing without them. In this sense, it is not an autonomous, originary instance, itself proper in relation to the two that it breaches-broaches and allies. Being nothing, it does not itself appear, it has no proper and independent phenomenality, and not showing itself, it withdraws; it is structurally in withdrawal, as gap, opening, differentiality, trace, border, traction, effraction, and so on. From the moment that it withdraws in drawing and pulling itself out, the trait is a priori *retrait*, withdrawal, unappearance, and effacement of the mark in its first cut.

Its inscription, as I have attempted to articulate with regard to trace or differance, *succeeds only in/by being effaced.*

It happens and comes about only by effacing itself. Inversely, the trait is not derived. It is not secondary, in its arrival, in relation to the domains, the essences, or existences that it cuts out, makes way for, and refolds in their *recoupe*. The *re-* of *retrait* is not an accident occurring to the trait. It takes itself away, stands aside by allowing every propriety to stand out, as one says of a figure on a ground. But it stands aside neither before nor after the breaching, broaching incision that permits the standing out, neither substantially, accidentally, materially, formally, nor according to any of the oppositions that organize so-called metaphysical discourse. If metaphysics had a unity, it would be the regime of these oppositions that appears and is determined only *starting* from the retreat of the trait, the retreat of the retreat, and so on. The "starting from" ruins itself there in a

mise en abyme. We have thus just recognized the relation between the *re-* of the *retrait* (which states the repetition of the incision no less violently than the negative suspension of the *Ent-Ziehung* or the *Ent-fernung*) and the *Ereignen* of the *es gibt* that focuses all of Heidegger's "late" thinking in precisely this trait where the movement of the *Enteignen* (de-propriation, retraction of propriety) comes to hollow out every *Ereignis* ("Dieses enteignende Vereignen ist das Spiegelspiel des Gevierts"; "This dis-propriating appropriation is the mirror play of the Fourfold").[9]

2. Let us remark, secondly, the performance or, in a very open sense of this word, the performative of writing with which Heidegger names, calls *Aufriss* (*entame*, breaching/broaching incision), what he decides, decrees, or allows himself to decide to call *Aufriss*, what is called according to him *Aufriss*, and whose translation I sketch, according to the traction of an equally performative gesture, with *entame*: breaching, broaching incision. The trenchant decision to call *Aufriss* what was in a certain way still unnamed or unknown under its name is already in itself an incision; it can be named, self-named, and breached/broached only in its own writing. Heidegger often makes the same gesture, for example, with *Dasein* at the beginning of *Being and Time*. One should understand neither neologism nor metawriting in the gesture that *there is* here. Here is what signs and is broached *under* Heidegger's signature. It is at the point when, in "The Way to Language," he has just suggested that the unity of the *Sprache* still remains *unnamed* (*unbennant*). Traditional names have always arrested the essence in this or that aspect or predicate. Heidegger then opens a new paragraph: "Die gesuchte Einheit des Sprachwesens heisse der Aufriss," "The unity of the being of *Sprache* for which we are looking shall be called *Aufriss* [*entame;* 'design' in the English translation; henceforth here 'incision']" (251; 121). Heidegger does not say: I arbitrarily decide to baptize it *Aufriss* but it "shall be called," or "let it be called," in the language that decides, incision. And better yet, it is not called, this name, but it calls us, it calls us to. . . . Let us continue: "Der Name heisst uns," that is, "this name calls us to glimpse [*erblicken*, as in *Der Satz vom Grund*, at the moment of the declaration on metaphor] more distinctly [*deutlicher*] the proper [*das Eigene*] character *des Sprachewesens*, of the being of language." "Riss ist dasselbe Wort wie ritzen [Trait is the same word as marking]."

Now, continues Heidegger, we know *Riss* often only in the "debased" (*abgewerteten*) form that it has in expressions such as "to mark a wall," "to clear and cultivate a field" (*einen Acker auf- und Umreissen*), in order to trace furrows (*Furchen ziehen*) so that the field will shelter, and keep in it (*berge*) the seeds and the crop. The breaching, broaching incision (*Aufriss*) is the totality of the traits (*das Ganze der Zuge*), the *Gefüge* of this *Zeichnung* (inscription, engraving, signature) that throughout *joins* (articulates, spaces, and holds together) the opening of *Sprache*. But this incision remains veiled (*verhüllt*) as long as one does not properly (*eigens*) remark in what sense the spoken and speaking are spoken of. The trait of the incision is therefore veiled, withdrawn, but it is also the trait that brings together and spaces out both the veiling *and* the unveiling, the *withdrawal* and the *withdrawal of the withdrawal*, the *retrait* of the *retrait*.[10]

3. We have just glimpsed the trait contracting with itself, withdrawing, crossing, and intersecting [*recoupant*] itself across these two neighboring circumscriptions of *Reissen* and *Ziehen*. After having drawn them together in language, the intersection crosses and allies the two heterogeneous *genealogies* of the trait, the two words or "families" of words, of "logies." In the intersection, the trait remarks itself by withdrawing itself, by redrawing itself; it succeeds in/by effacing itself in an other, in re-inscribing itself there in a parallel way, hence *heterologically*, and *allegorically*. The trait is withdrawn/re-drawn; the trait is re-trait. One can no longer even say *is*, one can no longer submit withdrawal/redrawing to the instance of an ontological copula whose very possibility it conditions, like *es gibt*. As Heidegger does for *Ereignis* or *Sprache*, one would have to say in a nontautological fashion: the trait treats or treats itself, traces the trait, therefore retraces and re-treats or withdraws the withdrawal, contracts, contracts itself and draws up with itself, with the withdrawal of itself, a strange contract, which no longer precedes, for once, its own signature, *and therefore carries it off*. Right here, again, we ought to perform, incise, trace, tractor, track not only this, or that, but the very capture of this crossing from one language into another, the capture (at once violent and faithful, and yet passive and leaving *safe*) of this crossing that allies *Reissen* and *Ziehen*, that translates them already *in* what is called the German language. This capture would affect the captor himself, translating him into the other, since in French usage *retrait* has never meant *re-tracing* [just as in English usage withdrawal has never implied redrawing]. In order to incise this comprehensive abduction [*captation*] and these dealings [*trac-*

tation] or this transaction with the other's language, I will emphasize one more thing: that these dealings *make for a work* [fait œuvre], are already *at work* [à l'œuvre] in the other's language, or rather, I should say, in the other's languages. For there is always *more than one* language in *the* language. The text of Heidegger that, to my knowledge, seems for the first time to have called (in the sense of *heissen*) for this crossing of *Ziehen* and *Reissen*, is "The Origin of the Work of Art," and it does so in that precise place where truth is stated *as nontruth*: *Die Wahrheit ist Un-wahrheit*. In the nonwithdrawal of truth as truth, in its *Un-verborgenheit*, the *Un* bars, impedes, defends, or causes to split in a twofold way. The truth is this originary combat (*Urstreit*) in which it belongs to the essence of truth to submit to or to feel what Heidegger calls the *attraction* of the work, the attraction toward the work (*Zug zum Werk*), as its outstanding possibility (*ausgezeichnete Möglichkeit*). In particular, the work has been defined above as *sumballein* and *allegoreuein*. In this attraction, truth deploys its essence (*west*) as a battle between clearing and reserve or withdrawal (*Verbergung*), between world and earth. Now this combat is not a trait (*Riss*) like *Aufreissen* incising a simple gulf (*blossen Kluft*) between the adverse sides. Combat attracts the adverse sides in the attraction of a reciprocal belonging. It is a trait that attracts them toward the provenance of their unity starting from a common ground, "aus dem einigen Grunde zusammen." In this sense it is a *Grundriss*: fundamental plan, project, design, sketch, outline. A series of locutions is then printed, whose current, usual, "literal" sense, so to speak, finds itself re-activated at the same time as it is discreetly re-inscribed, displaced, put back into play in what makes for a work in this context. The *Grundriss* is *Aufriss* (breaching, broaching incision and, in the common sense, essential profile, schema, projection) that draws (*zeichnet*) the fundamental traits (*Grundzüge*, and here are crossing the two systems of traits that serve to say *trait* in the language) of the clearing of being. The trait (*Riss*) does not split the adversaries; rather it attracts adversity toward the unity of a contour (*Umriss*), a frame, a framework (in the ordinary sense). The trait is "einheitliches Gezüge von Aufriss und Grundriss, Durch- und Umriss," the united, adjoined (*Ge-*) ensemble of assembled traits, the contraction or the contract between all these forms of traits, these apparent modifications or properties of *Riss* (*Auf-*, *Grund-*, *Durch-*, *Um-*, etc.), among all these traits of the trait that do not happen to it like predicative modifications to a subject, substance,

or being (which the trait is not) but on the contrary that open the de-limitation, the de-marcation against which the ontological discourse on substance, predicate, proportion, logic, and rhetoric can then stand out.[11]

I will arbitrarily interrupt my reading here, cut it off, draw a line at the moment when it would lead us to the *Ge-stell* (framing) of the *Gestalt* in the joining (*Gefüge*) of which "der Riss sich fügt."

The trait is therefore nothing. The breaching and broaching incision of the *Aufriss* is neither passive nor active, neither one nor multiple, neither subject nor predicate; it does not separate any more than it unites. All the oppositions of value have their proper possibility in differance, in the between of its spacing divergence that brings into accord as much as it demarcates. How to speak of it? What writing must one invent here? Can one say of the lexicon and syntax encircling this possibility in French, in German, between the two [or, here again, "in" English] that they are metaphoric? Will they be formalized according to some other rhetorical schema? Whatever may be the pertinence, or even the rich fecundity of a rhetorical analysis determining the totality of what happens along such a path of thought or of language, in this making way of the pathbreaking, there will have been necessarily a line, *divided moreover and from elsewhere*, where the rhetorical determination will have encountered, in the trait, that is to say, in its withdrawal redrawn, its own possibility (differentiality, divergence *and* resemblance). This possibility cannot be strictly comprehended within its assembled set, in the set of all it makes possible; and yet the possibility will not dominate the whole. Rhetoric can then only state itself, and its possibility, by getting carried away in the supplementary trait of a rhetoric of rhetoric, and for example, of a metaphor of metaphor, and so on. When trait or *retrait* is said in a context where truth is at stake and under way, "trait" is no longer a metaphor for what we usually believe we recognize beneath this word. All the same, it does not suffice to invert the proposition and say that the re-tracing (*re-trait*) of truth as nontruth is the proper or the literal in relation to which common language will be in a position of divergence, of abuse, of tropical detour in any form. *Retrait* is no more proper or literal than figurative. Nor can it be confused with the words it makes possible in their delimitation or cut-out form (including the French or German words crossed or grafted here) anymore than it is foreign to words as a thing or a referent. Withdrawal is neither thing, nor being, nor meaning. It *withdraws* itself both from the

Being of being as such and from language, without being or being said to be elsewhere; it breaches and broaches the ontological difference itself. It withdraws/redraws *itself* [se *retire*], but the ipseity of the *itself* by which it would be related to itself in a single stroke does not precede it and already supposes a supplementary trait in order to be traced, signed, withdrawn, retraced in its turn. *Retraits* is thus written in the plural, it is singularly plural in itself, divides itself, and gathers up in the withdrawal of the withdrawal, the retracing of the retracing. It is what I have elsewhere tried to name according to the stepping movement of a certain *pas*.[12] Here again, it is a matter of the path, of what passes there, of what passes it by, of what goes on there, or not—*ou pas*.

What is going on? we will have asked ourselves in breaching and broaching this discourse. Nothing, an answering step but no response, save that the *retrait* of metaphor goes on, happens all by itself—and without itself.

—*Translated by Peggy Kamuf*

§ 3 What Remains by Force of Music

I use the word "force" here in a hasty, somewhat obscurantist, and above all tardy fashion, lagging behind the text of Roger Laporte, who in fact writes and unwrites and counterwrites the language of force; he interrogates it and disqualifies it practically. More precisely, he does not disqualify but inscribes and puts on stage (not only a representative stage), inscribes and counter-inscribes, then, the economic or energetic point of view. I begin by quoting Laporte's *Fugue Supplément*: "Throughout this postscript, I have proceeded as if the structure and the function of the literary enterprise could be described in terms of investment, disinvestment, counterinvestment, overinvestment: I don't renounce this interpretation."[1] In fact, what I will provisionally call the signatory of *Fugue Supplément* has never renounced anything, which is why he writes like the unconscious, like an unconscious person. He applies an extraordinary vigilance, a faultless erudition to the measure of the desire of the unconscious: he never renounces anything but reinscribes with a tireless, implacable interpretation everything he pretends to abandon, cross out, render obsolete, in a space of play that is more powerful and more extensive. Yes, in a space of play. I continue my quotation: "for the economic point of view, far from being rejected, has been extended in a theory of games, or rather integrated into a strategic point of view." But it is a strategy without goal, without certain gain, where winning equals losing, where the play dislocates and risks the calculation: "We already know that I not only puts all its resources ["I"

[1] The first version of this essay was published in *Digraphe*, nos. 18–19 (April 1979), a special issue devoted to Roger Laporte.

is written is the third person], its energy, its desires at the service of the camp that gets weaker but puts itself into play; we also know that this investment is made neither out of generosity nor with the ambition of finding itself skillfully on the side of the victor, but quite on the contrary in order that no camp triumph over the others, a necessary condition for the machine to function properly." So "force"—I will make a delayed use of this word to designate in an inadequate manner what arrives in advance—the fascinating and intimidating force of this text (*Fugue* and *Supplément* to *Fugue*) is perhaps that of never letting itself be apprehended, comprehended by or reduced to any of the discourses one could put forth about it today. The measure of this force of fascination would thus be that of a gap. Gap between, on the one hand, *all* the schemas of criticism, all the codes of theory, all the programs of reading that are available today for constructing a metalanguage that comes to speak *on* this text and, on the other hand, this text *itself*, if one can still say that. That the latter is not apprehensible, dominable, comprehensible does not mean that it hides a secret or dissimulates itself in an occult withdrawal; on the contrary, it has a sort of explanatory transparency, analytic rigor, and rhetorical clarity that are impeccable. But it analyzes with an incomparable patience and rigor all the discourses that one could today deploy about it; it situates them, in any case, averts the principles of their schemas, their typical mechanisms, their metaphors, and in general their rhetoric. This does not imply that such must always be the case and that *Fugue* disrupts or in turn dominates in advance the content of any possible metalanguage in general. But if my historical hypothesis is not too reckless—and in any case one must think *Fugue*, read *Fugue* as *Fugue* reads itself, that is, by inscribing itself in a field that is determined historically, libidinally, economically, politically, as one so often says—no metalanguage is powerful enough today to dominate the working, or rather the unworking of this writing. It is this determined gap that I call its force or its capacity to fascinate. It will be measured *après coup*, but the structure of the historical *après-coup* in the readable or writable is itself recognized as a law by *Fugue* and especially by *Supplément*. Not that these texts are something beyond today's possible metalanguage, whatever its type may be (critical, theorico-philosophical, etc.). It's simply that they deal with metalanguage; they negotiate a transaction with it whose structure, status, and process are too tricky to be easily dominated. And even if new metalinguistic contents

would allow one some day to say things that *Fugue* will not have said, inscribed, or prescribed—which thereby points toward an invisible outside of *Fugue,* its signatory, or its reader—at least the metalinguistic *structure* will have been recognized and reinscribed in advance. That is why the category of history and of future that I pretended to endorse a moment ago would itself have to be reconsidered, at least in its naïve form. *Fugue* inscribes, then, and carries away in advance any metalinguistic resource, making out of this quasi-operation an unheard-of music, beyond genre. Hence the spontaneously defensive attitude, the guarded or warning attitude of the one who reads and a fortiori the one who has to talk about *Fugue* or *Supplément*. Such a one puts on guard, is on guard—which I am (doing) here—against the very thing that he undertakes, that engages him, and that in advance has, as it were, carried him away, making of his reading and his discourse a representation or, rather, since representation does not exhaust the abyssal effects here, a nonrepresentative or even unspoken piece, a partial force in a generalized *mise en abyme.*

So, one tenses up, defends oneself against a *mise en abyme* that has already been done. The *already* is more important than the operation, and the enigma of all this work is perhaps, as we will see in a moment, that of the *already*. So, one defends oneself after the fact and too late. It would be pointless, however, to overlook what this defense and the mechanisms of rejection it provokes can induce in literature's current marketplace. By exhibiting in advance and dismantling all the codes and all the programs with which reading—and all the forces involved in it—could grab hold of, consume, and reproduce such a text; by describing these programs with a rigor, a discretion, and a sort of impassible, but also intransigent, neutrality, the signatory causes himself to be rejected, vomited, and in any case makes himself unassailable [*imprenable*], until the moment when the force of his machination or his stratagem will have transformed, participated in the transformation of the way reading or writing works and their general marketing, which—and this is the absolute risk taken here without any strategic assurance for what is in play—*can always not happen.* The risk that nothing happens in this direction, that nothing happens at all, even that nothing has happened, whatever may be said about it, is expressly marked in the musical machinery of *Fugue*. It is marked, among other places at the end of *Fugue*, as an *insurrectional* risk. And it is even, I believe, on the basis of this risk that the word "biography" has to be

reread. The "living one" who writes itself, the written and counterwritten *I*, signatory who is no longer even the subject of what he describes, signs, designates, the counterfeiting signatory, who is not even a true counterfeiter but a counterfeit counterfeiter ("singular counterfeiter," says *Fugue*, "counterfeiting my own signature, I'm not trying to fool anyone but the added-on pieces are disparate and irregular"; earlier, among all the metaphors that are not dismissed but deformed or altered, there was this one: "It may be that, from the outset of this work, I have written with the ulterior motive of making the mobile function with the sole aim of reading its movement, presupposing therefore that this mobile was a writing machine that necessarily leaves a trace: its signature"), so this counterfeit counterfeiter, this fictive signatory no longer even excludes himself from writing, so as to dominate it, not even so as to put forth on that subject the most pertinent discourses on risk, expenditure, nonproductivity, economy and an economy, and so on. This is what he calls the "second condition of the biographical." Among all the motifs picked up again and relaunched by *Supplément*, here is one: "To speak of the economic life of the literary enterprise, is that not merely a metaphor?" I interrupt my quotation for a moment: the critical questioning of the metaphorical is tireless; it watches over the whole discourse with a severity that is not only that of the law or of some repression with regard to the poetic or the rhetorical. This vigilance, on the contrary, raises and renews the productivity of metaphors that are tried out one after another, are substituted for one another endlessly, with the result that, in this general *retreat/retracing* [retrait] of metaphor, no border, no horizon of properness comes to guard against the infinite extension of metaphoric supplements. This absence of border or enclosure of property gives to this textual music what I will call—with a quotation moreover—its galaxic, galactic structure. By "galaxy" one must understand here, at least, a multiplicity in a space of perpetual unfolding and that has no external limits, no outside, no crest or ridge [*arête*], a constellated autonomy that relates only to itself, nourishes itself, sows itself with seeds, or suckles its own milk. To be sure, it is still a question here of a metaphor made fugue, but one whose theme returns insistently. Thus, first of all, in *Fugue*: "Ordinary language is distinct from the referent it designates or signifies: I dreamed of writing a work [*œuvre*] where form, content, and referent would have been not only inseparable, but forever confused with each other. Certainly, this work [*ouvrage*] is

not the mirror of the world, but, like the game of chess, it to some extent constitutes an autonomous galaxy, and yet I have not created this strictly 'self-referential' Great Work [*Grand-Œuvre*]." In the face of a galactic metaphor, which would presuppose once again an auto-nomy, a propriety and property, a self-referentiality, this movement of *retreat/retracing* or of dispossessing [*déprise*] is accentuated toward the end of *Supplément*. No doubt the galactic metaphor is preferable to some other, for example, to that of a "fabrication of orginarily dilapidated archives": "To write makes one think just as well of an unknown space, a galaxy explorable only by the argonaut-scriptor: to describe my task, I have for a long time now used the metaphor of the cartographer or that of the explorer." But *Supplément* had rendered the galactic metaphor out-of-date in advance. Thus:

> One cannot appropriate a language without properties: its grammar has not yet congealed into rules, its vocabulary is insecure, and there is perhaps neither grammar nor lexicon: I cannot appropriate writing, for it does not belong to me, it does not belong to itself [the It (*Il*) perhaps playing here as in Laporte's *La veille*].[2] I was not vigilant enough [perhaps in the face of the singularity of this It] when I identified its space with that of an autonomous galaxy [thus to something or someone that/who gives it or himself its/his own—autonomous—law, like a starry sky], for if it is correct that writing refers neither to a real that is exterior to it nor even to a text that is immanent to it, it is false to assert that writing is "self-referential": how could writing self-designate itself, since it possesses nothing properly, no interiority, no "itself"!

It was a question, then, only of a metaphor, but there is no beyond of the metaphoric; as metaphor is no longer opposed to any limit, to any contrary, as it no longer depends on anything, it is no longer itself, properly, metaphor. It's a matter, as *Fugue* puts it, of approaching "indirectly by a series of metaphors not destined to be replaced one day by a direct language." One must thus beware not only of metaphors and the proper but also of a play that, seeming to produce these limitless gaps, this nonmetaphorical and this non-proper, could put itself in the position of essentialness or truth, as if one were to say finally: it's play that is writing, writing is play, that is the essence of the essence. A new warning [*mis en garde*] against this last guardrail, a warning from *Supplément* this time, preceding every guard, avant-garde in its noncoded concept:

> With neither beginning nor end, without rules, without unity, always dis-

sident, writing is not assimilable to any codified play or game, but that is precisely why to speak of the senseless play of writing is not a metaphor. One can even say that play is the only nonmetaphorical element in my lexicon, but beware he who would consequently claim to seize the essence of writing! Only by abusing language could reality be attributed to what exceeds the opposition of the metaphoric and the real, to what deceives [*se joue de*] the only hunter who makes prey of the mobility, the swiftness of an interstitial void, to this unstable, always other game that eludes [*déjoue*] all definition, to this counterwriting that breaks through every enclosure and engenders a perpetual flight punctuated by untamed blank ruptures.

After this long detour on the endless detour, I return to the interrupted quotation concerning the *second condition* of the biographical: "To speak of the economic life of the literary enterprise, is that not merely a metaphor? I would really like to know!" After having treated, turned over, altered these questions about working, productivity, expenditure, and so on, *Supplément* defines the second condition of the biographical: not to content oneself with a discourse on economy or production.

It suffices that the writer, as writer and consequently as a man, has been affected or even threatened in his life for the text to be marked by the seal "Biography." But this sole condition does not allow me to realize the project that has always been closest to my heart: to take the opposite tack of every book where someone is content to talk about writing, nonproductive expenditure, senseless waste, where the author, in conscious or unconscious contradiction with his own discourse, taking no risks, draws from his enterprise the benefit of an economic science founded on the potlatch, consumption that he could experience only by first of all ceasing to write. To realize this project, in which I have invested so much, it is not enough to reject every merely theoretical discourse, it is necessary that making a stratigraphic study of the volume, x-raying the scriptor's practice, uncovering the role of double agent played by the unique character of the text, that all this constitute an adventure that is opaque, violent, feverish, one that forms the whole material of the text: this is the second condition.

I therefore prefer to reserve the term "Biography," or even "writing," for the literary enterprise where writing constitutes the only subject, where what is treated, the only object, where what is sought, and the only practice, is inseparable from its *mise en abyme*. It is not a matter of writing a Treatise, of enumerating the operations to be carried out by an unknown practitioner in another place and another time; rather one must institute a practico-theoretical text.

I insist on the fact that this *mise en abyme* is *practical*—and more than practical, since it even works on a traditional notion of practice, a theory or thesis on practice. This *mise en abyme* does not proceed to a thesis on a thesis, a theorization of theory, a representation of representation. No more than the trajectory that preceded them and folds into them are *Fugue* and *Supplément* to be ranged among those saturated and saturating discourses that, in the current literary field, themselves stand, if one may put it this way, on themselves, represent and posit themselves in themselves or at least give themselves that spectacle. And by the same token suture their own space. In the modern topos of the *mise en abyme*, or rather in its modernist extension, one can perceive this self-defense of the text, which, by explaining, teaching, and posing itself, by installing itself complacently in its auto-telicism or its auto-theticism, in the infinite representation of self, protects itself precisely against the abyss that it thus does no more than talk about, with which it fills its mouth after having had its fill of abyss. When one reads here, on the contrary, that the text that *puts itself en abyme* is "practico-theoretical," the whole fugue and supplement structure indicates that the putting-itself is not self-position, self-production, reappropriation by the subjection of his thesis, of his production, and of his *mise* [stake, bet, what is put at risk]. A certain mis-stake [*malmise*], a certain *whoever-wins-loses*, a certain practical unproductivity (that is not negative), a reinscription of the theoretical in an agonistic field that exceeds it: all this prevents the writing from being a harmonious, full extension of the practical and the theoretical, from being what *Fugue* calls somewhere a "homothetic theoretical machine for the practice of writing." By analyzing its mode of production, by writing "to produce its mode of production" and to transform it—which is why this work is also political (beyond the depoliticizing codes and stereotypyings with which a certain literary avant-garde is often satisfied)—the counterwriting regularly and irregularly introduces a dysfunctioning and certain gaps in the working of the machine. These gaps are not negative; they do not open up voids. Like the counterwriting at work in it and determining it, the writing constantly disobeys the logic of the opposition full/empty. The blank is never determined as lack or void that some sort of negative or hypernegative theology could isolate, purify, put in a transcendental position. Against negative theology, which Laporte would be wrong to believe or rather pretend to believe that it still left too great a mark on his previous books, *Fugue—musics*. *Fugue* is not content to erect warnings,

negations, or denials (somewhere there is an explicit treatment of denial); *Fugue musics*. The irreducibility of the musical here does not stem from any melocentrism. And I will try later to relate this unheard-of musical effect to a remainder unassimilable by any possible discourse, that is, by all philosophical presentation in general. First, here is the "insurrectional dimension," which follows soon after a denunciation of the "trap laid by theology, be it negative theology":

> I will not give in to an old nostalgia; I will not fall again into the same error I made at the outset; I will not affirm that one must neither say without doing nor do without saying, or rather I will affirm this third condition even as I know that the experience of writing is impossible. Not coinciding with itself, inseparable from its deportation, the play of writing is not marked, it can only be retraced: one must, and necessarily after the fact, reinscribe the blank of writing, faithfully affirm the lag by constituting a new, nonconforming copy of an unrecognizable text become a banal piece of the archives. As a process, counterwriting, the "heartless heart" of writing, is different in that, never being the object of an immediate intuition, it does not constitute part of lived experience, and therefore writing forges itself against Biography as a genre, or rather brings it back to its correct proportion by giving it only a place within a systasis [*systase*; this is more or less the only neologism or foreign word that Laporte introduces in the long analytical debate he deploys, and in which one would have to trace his monoglottism and attack on the mother tongue; it is a rigorous debate, without grandstanding, suspicious of all pseudo-transgressions, which are immediately recodified], systasis that by definition no term can either encompass or dominate. Nothing but a place, yes, but exactly which one?
>
> The insurrectional dimension of life . . .

This reinscription of the blank of writing has an essential relation to music and rhythm. Rhythm counts more than all the themes it carries off and relaunches and scans constantly. That is why, instead of an inventory—which is both impossible and without pertinence—of all the "themes" that *Fugue* fugues and *Supplément* supplements (the fugue and the supplement are at once the title, the form, and the theme of this musical transport of writing), instead of drawing up a false list of themes treated (the signature, the privilege of the psychoanalytic, metaphor, counterwriting, the feast, the suture, denial, reference, play and game, the code, castration, question and response, truth and fiction, loss, the law, the economic, the machinic, functioning, the fugue, the supplement, etc.), I will briefly mark, so as to send one back as quickly as possible to the text itself, if one can still say that, the affinity between the musical or the "rhythmic beat of a blank" (these are almost the last words of *Supplément*) and the rest. I will mark it not so as to close a subject but as an opening, that is, just barely in the form of a question, an unfinished, unelaborated, open question almost without program. Once all the codes, all the programs, all the metaphors of writing have been exhausted, denounced for their deficiency, exceeded, therefore, once an immense work has been done as if at a total loss, once all the determined traces have been effaced or carried off, once the whole trajectory has as it were eroded itself down to the question "Has something happened?"; "Has something happened to me?"; "Has an event taken place?" and so forth, what remains? Not nothing. But this *not nothing* never presents itself; it is not something that exists and appears. No ontology dominates it. A "having-happened" tears off this strange remainder—and this is why there is reading to be done—from every thematic presentation and even from every reference to some past that might have been present, that might have *been*. Thus the constantly relaunched form of certain utterances that put in the past some writing or some functioning that has never been, never been present, that does not stem from the verb *to be*. For example: "The machine has functioned" or "There has been writing." What relation does this remainder without being, substance, form, content, essence, "glorious tomb to the memory of nothing," what relation does this signature without proper name—for no name bears it—maintain with what affects itself and affects us with music? One cannot even say either that music has happened or that something like music has happened to someone (Laporte somewhere questions and causes to tremble the *me*, the reflexive or auto-affective *m'* in the sentence "Quelque chose m'est arrivé" [Something happened to me]) and yet the strange and troubling past of the "il y a eu écriture" [there has been writing] passes here irreducibly by way of the musical and the rhythmic, and obliges us—this is also the singular force of *Fugue*—to rethink, reinvent what we are placing beneath these words: music-rhythm. A certain remark in *Supplément* puts us on the path, but its argument should also be put into (a) *Fugue*: "To write does not lead to a pure signifier, and it could be that Biography differs from philosophy, and on the contrary comes closer to painting and especially music, insofar as it probably never carries a true content . . . "

—Translated by Peggy Kamuf

§ 4 To Illustrate, He Said . . .

In the beginning, that is the fiction, there was writing. That is to say, a fable, some writing. The other reads and, therefore, writes in his turn, according to his turn. *À partir* you understand, that is, *beginning from/departing from his/her* reading: by letting it also become distant or lost, by going elsewhere. In the best of cases, there will always be *more to say, objections* [*à* redire], the process of the two inscriptions will be interminable. It will always call up its supplement, some added discourse, for I was speaking of verbal texts, I mean to say, words.

Now imagine, another fable, that a read text is rewritten, and altogether otherwise; imagine it transfigured by drawing or color. Transformed, changed in its lines or its forms, but also transported into another element to the point of losing something like its place and its self-relation. It can then happen (sometimes) that it appears preceded by what seconds it, as if *doubled, overtaken* by its consequence—and a kind of peace comes to immobilize in a single stroke the two bodies, the body of words and the body of spaces, the one fascinated by the other. Both of them outside themselves, a kind of ecstasy. You have the feeling—singular ecstasy—that the verbal organism has been x-rayed according to space in spite of space, at that instant traversed by the traits of the painter or draftsman, I mean

This text was published in 1979 by the Centre Georges-Pompidou (Musée national d'art moderne) to accompany a joint exhibition in Ateliers Aujourd'hui of some manuscripts of my book *Éperons: Les styles de Nietzsche* and pen-and-ink drawings by François Loubrieu, meant, as he says, to "illustrate" the book.

to say filmed, fixed, submitted to the developer [*révélateur*] *even before* the time of its production, on the eve of the beginning before the letter.

François Loubrieu, so be it, wants to keep the word "illustration" for these his rays. Yes, on the condition that its use be changed somewhat and it be submitted again to the same process. That one pass it through the developer and insist, in fact, on the *inseparable, the undetachable* of an illustration. Of one that would be one and that would be valid only once, for a single corpus.

Even though this indestructible alliance gets all its energy from an interruption, from an impassable abyss, and from an absolute dissymmetry between the visible and the readable.

And yet: concerning this partition between the visible and the readable, I am not sure of it, I believe neither in the rigor of its limits nor above all that it passes between painting and words. First of all, it crosses no doubt through each of the bodies, the pictural and the lexical, according to the—each time unique but labyrinthine—line of an idiom.

Spurs: in the first place donned for the stage, sharpened for the crypt of a theater. I was playing on the effects of a public reading, one summer in 1972, at the Château of Cerisy-la-Salle. And already in view of a certain *tableau vivant* covered with hieroglyphics. What was then offered to conceal itself on stage, within the folds of a simulacrum—a certain "umbrella" of Nietzsche's—was already a multiplicity of objects, a whole catalogue. I set them in view like silent enigmas; I put them forward through the twists and turns of a slow argumentation, which was cautious but also discontinuous, with leaps and blanks—and some could believe that these objects were awaiting their representation because they naturally lent themselves to it: quill pens, styluses, stilettos, sailboats and sails/veils of every kind and gender, daggers or stingers, spiders, cranes, butterflies, bulls, flame and iron, rocks, ears, a labyrinth, the pregnancy or not of all Nietzsche's women, an enormous matrix, virgin bellies, the eye and teeth, even a dentist who was waiting for Wagner at Basel—or a secret envelope [*pli*], a little package confided to the post one day by the signatory of the sentence "I forgot my umbrella." In short, a salvo of postcards in the rhetoric of an umbrella at Cerisy-la-Salle, not far from a "resewing machine on a castration table."

And yet, with the aim of a demonstration suspended at the end, *without object*, exhibiting only its secret, everything rejected the image. Nothing was supposed to let itself be arrested by the icon, submitted to the pres-

ence of a spectacle, the fixed contours of a painting or, finally situatable, the position of a theme. Especially not woman, the impossible subject of the discourse ("But—woman will be my subject" is at the beginning and later, starting from there, "Woman will not have been my subject"). Heidegger even comes under the suspicion of having neglected her, woman, in one of Nietzsche's writings, and of treating her like an image, "a little as one might skip over a sensory image in a philosophy book, or as one might also rip out an illustrated page or an allegorical representation in a serious book. Which allows one to see without reading or to read without seeing."

François Loubrieu has not sought to *restitute*. His gesture criss-crosses in all directions a space foreign to the debt: nothing to be rendered, given back of these *spurs*, of these traces or wakes (*Spuren*) that are given so as to annul exchange, circulation, the market, the exhibition. This is what he calls, with a word that is finally rather new, *illustration*.

The gentle relentlessness of the graft, the harried incision of the drawing, the telescopings in expansion have not worked *on* present objects, on the past anterior of a writing that would have offered them to the engraver, draftsman, or painter. Loubrieu has *turned* all this with a discreet violence; he has *put to work/put into a work* [mis en œuvre] all these possible objects; he has maneuvered them as instruments rather than as images: instruments, which are henceforth his, for clearing a new space and for laying down with them—unforeseeable switchpoints. Completely other forms and yet a good resemblance line for line, the portrait of a book, a good resemblance like a dream, the dream of the dreamed writing that comes back to me from elsewhere. Through the invention of the other.

Loubrieu "attacked," that's his word.

He attacked what he calls a "material" (but this is not a passive support, as is sometimes believed, any more than it is preferably figured in the feminine [i.e., as *une matière*]).

He did it with bodies that are hermaphroditic, perhaps, according to the "third sex" of which Nietzsche speaks and precisely in this place: pens, spurs, an umbrella.

If you want to know how one draws, engraves, or paints with an umbrella, with *this* umbrella and no other, follow Loubrieu in his studio. You would see there something other, something altogether other than *Hegel's Holidays*, Magritte's umbrella suspended under its glass of water from the virtuosity of a discourse.

And you would know that, armed with this thing, he crosses through all the words that I was taken with, by which I let myself be taken, impressed right on the body for having first loved them, the two spurs, for example.

But slipping through the words, he also lets them slip and does without them, and that is good.

Where this had just happened to me, he knew already.

And here it's happening to me again, like the first time when I was transfixed [*médusé*]. It was a few years ago; he had just shown me the sketches, the dry-points and the etchings, the plans for a Venetian edition in four languages, a cooperative work with Stefano Agosti.

Since then, around several different focal points, the space of Loubrieu will have added other ellipses and continued expanding—see.

—Translated by Peggy Kamuf

§ 5 Envoi

At the beginning of the twentieth century, in 1901, the French philosopher Henri Bergson made a remark about what he called "our word 'representation,'" *our French* word *représentation*: "Our word *représentation* is an equivocal word that, based on the etymology, ought never to designate an intellectual object presented to the mind for the first time. It ought to be reserved . . . ," and so on.[1]

For the moment I leave aside this remark of Bergson's. I shall let it wait on the threshold of an introduction that I propose to entitle simply *envoi*, in the singular.

The simplicity and singularity of this envoi, this sending or dispatch, will name perhaps what is ultimately at stake in the questions that I would like to address and submit to you for discussion.

Imagine that French were a dead language. I could just as well have said: Represent that to yourselves, French, a dead language. And in some stone or paper archive, on some roll of microfilm, we could read a sentence. I read it here, let it be the opening sentence of the introductory address, the *discours d'envoi*, of this congress: "On dirait alors que nous sommes en représentation"; "One might say then that we are in representation." I repeat: "One might say then that we are in representation."

[1] Text of the lecture delivered in July 1980 as the opening address at the 18th Annual Congress of the Sociétés de Philosophie de Langue Française at the University of Strasbourg.

Are we quite sure we know what this means today? Let us not be too quick to think so. Perhaps we will have to invent it or re-invent, discover it or produce it.

I have intentionally begun by allowing the word "representation" to appear already inserted in an idiom, set within the singularity of an expression ("être en représentation"). Its translation into another idiom remains problematic, which is another way of saying it could not be done without remainder. I shall not analyze all the dimensions of this problem but will limit myself to its most apparent outlines.

What do we ourselves know when we pronounce or listen to the sentence I just read? What do we know of this French idiom?

By saying "we," for the moment, I am designating first of all the community that relates to itself as subject of discourse, the community of those who know their way around French, who know that they know that, understand each other, and agree to speak, agree by speaking what we call *our* language.

Now what we already know is that if we are here in Strasbourg, *in representation*, then this event bears an essential relation to a double *body*, whether you understand this word in the figure of a corpus, that is, a body of work, or a corporation. I am thinking, on the one hand, of the corps of philosophy that can itself be considered a corpus of discursive acts or of texts but also as the corps or corporation of subjects, of institutions, and of philosophical societies. We are supposed *to represent* these societies here, in one way or another, under some form or to some degree of legitimacy. We may be considered more or less explicitly mandated *representatives*, delegates, ambassadors, emissaries; I prefer to say envoys. But on the other hand, this representation also maintains an essential relation to the body or corpus of the French language. The agreement that gave rise to this eighteenth congress was made in French between philosophical societies "de langue française," whose very status refers to their linguistic affiliation, to a linguistic difference that does not coincide with a national difference.

It goes without saying that, in this circumstance, we will not be able to set aside the part of the philosophical or philosophico-institutional act that belongs to language, to what is supposed to constitute the unity of a language or a group of "Romance" languages, as they are called [*langues*

dites latines]. It is all the more important not to do so in that the theme chosen by this institution, *representation*, is more difficult than others to detach or dissociate from its linguistic instantiation, even its lexical and above all nominal instantiation, or, as others would be quick to say, from its nominal representation.

I said I would not analyze all the idiomatic resources of the sentence with which such a discourse would have begun ("One might say then that we are in representation"), but let us retain at least this much more: the sentence evokes the more or less representative representatives, the envoys we are supposed to be, under the aspect and in the highly regulated time of a kind of spectacle, exhibition, or discursive, if not oratorical, performance, in the course of ceremonious, coded, ritualized exchanges. To be in representation, *être en représentation*, for an envoy, also means in our language to show oneself, to-represent-oneself-on-behalf-of, to-make-oneself-visible-for, on an occasion that is sometimes called a *manifestation* so as to recognize, with this word, a certain solemnity. Appearing in this circumstance goes together with the apparatus of pomp, and presentation or presence is suddenly remarkable there; it gives itself to be remarked in representation. And what is remarkable makes for an event, a consecrated gathering, a feast or ritual destined to renew the pact, the contract, or the symbol. Well, allow me, as I thank our hosts, to salute with some insistence the place of what is, right here, taking place, the place of this taking-place. The event takes place, thanks to the hospitality of one of our societies, in a city that, although it does not lie outside of France, as was once, very symbolically, the case, is nevertheless not just any French city. This frontier city is a place of passage and of translation, a margin, a privileged site for encounter or competition between two immense linguistic territories, which are also two of the most densely inhabited worlds of philosophical discourse. And it so happens, *il se trouve* (saying "il se trouve," I leave in reserve a chance of the idiom hesitating between chance and necessity) that, if we are to treat representation, we will not, as philosophers, be able to enclose ourselves within latinity. It will be neither possible nor legitimate to overlook the enormous historical stakes of the Latino-Germanic translation, of the relation between *repraesentatio* and the *Stellen* of *Vorstellung, Darstellung*, or *Gestell*. For centuries, as soon as a philosopher, regardless of which

language he belongs to, undertook an inquiry into *repraesentatio*, *Vor-* or *Darstellen*, he has found himself, on both sides of the frontier, on both banks of the Rhine, already caught up, surprised, preceded, anticipated by the linked co-destination, the strange co-habitation, the contamination and the enigmatic co-translation of these two lexicons. The philosophical—and it is after all *philosophical* societies that send us here as their representatives—can no longer in this case allow itself to be shut up within the closure of a single idiom, without thereby being set afloat, neutral and disembodied, far from every body of language. The simply philosophical finds itself caught up in advance in a multiple body, a linguistic duality or duel, in the zone of a bilingualism that it can no longer efface without effacing itself. And one of the numerous supplementary folds of the enigma follows the line of this translation—and of this task of the translator. We are not "in representation" only as representatives, as delegates or placeholders sent to an assembly determined to discuss representation; the problem of translatability that we shall not be able to avoid will also be a problem of representation. Is translation of the same order as representation? Does it consist in representing a sense, the same semantic content, by a different word in a different language? If so, is it a matter of a substitution that has a representative structure? And as a privileged example, both supplementary and abyssal, do *Vorstellung* and *Darstellung* play the role of German representations of French (or more generally Latin) representation or vice versa, is "representation" the pertinent representative of *Vorstellung*, indeed, of *Darstellung*? Or does the so-called relation of translation or of substitution already escape the orbit of representation, and in that case how should we interpret representation? I shall come back to this exemplary question, which I am merely situating at the moment. More than once, so as to send things off while acquitting myself badly of the task with which I am honored, I will have to proceed in this fashion and limit myself to just recognizing, no more, certain *topoi* that today, it seems to me, we should not avoid.

Let us suppose that French were a dead language. We believe we know how to identify a dead language and have at our disposal a set of fairly rigorous criteria. Trusting in this very naïve presumption, represent to yourselves the following scene of decipherment under this condition: Some philosophers, who are busying themselves with a written corpus, a library

or a mute archive, would have not only to reconstitute a French language but by the same token to fix the sense of certain words, to establish a dictionary or at least some entries for a dictionary. For example, for the word *représentation*, whose nominal unity would at some point have been identified. Without any context other than that of written documents, in the absence of subjects who are called living and intervening in this context, the lexicologist would have to elaborate a dictionary of words (as you know, the distinction is made between dictionaries of words and dictionaries of things—more or less as Freud distinguished word representations [*Wortvorstellungen*] from thing representations [*Sach-* or *Dingvorstellungen*]). Confident in the unity of the word and in the double articulation of language, such a lexicon would have to classify the different items of the word "representation" by their meanings and by their functioning in a certain state of the language, while taking account of a certain richness or diversity of corpuses, codes, and contexts. One must thus presuppose both a profound unity of these different meanings and a law regulating this multiplicity. A minimum and shared semantic kernel would justify each time the choice of the "same" word "representation" and would allow itself, precisely, "to be represented" by it, in the most diverse contexts. In the political domain, we can speak of parliamentary, diplomatic, or union representation. In the aesthetic domain, we can speak of representation in the sense of mimetic substitution, notably in the so-called plastic arts, and, in a more problematical manner, of a theatrical representation in a sense that is not necessarily or uniquely reproductive or repetitive but in order to name in this case a presentation (*Darstellung*), an exhibition, a performance. I have just evoked two codes, the political and the aesthetic, leaving aside for the moment the other categories (metaphysics, history, religion, epistemology) inscribed in the program of our congress. But there are also all sorts of subcontexts and subcodes, all sorts of *uses* of the word "representation" where it seems to mean image, perhaps nonrepresentative, nonreproductive, nonrepetitive, simply presented and placed before our eyes, before our sensible or intelligible gaze, according to the traditional metaphor that can also be interpreted and overdetermined as a representation of representation. More broadly, one can also look for what there is in common between the nominal occurrences of the word "representation" and so many idiomatic locutions in which the verb "to represent," indeed, "to represent oneself," does not

appear simply to modulate, in the mode of the "verb," a semantic kernel that one could identify according to the nominal model of (singular absolute) "representation." If the noun "representation," the adjectives "representing," "representable," "representative," the verbs "to represent" or, in the pronominal mode in French, *se représenter* [to represent to oneself] are not only the grammatical modulations of one and the same meaning, if kernels of different meanings are present, at work in or produced by these grammatical modes of the idiom, then the lexicologist, the semanticist, indeed, the philosopher who would try to classify different varieties of "representation" and of "representing," to give account of the variables or the divergences from the identity of an invariant meaning, is going to have a rough time of it.

I am using the hypothesis of the dead language only as a telltale sign. It draws attention to a situation in which a context cannot be saturated so as to permit the determination and identification of a sense. Now in this respect a so-called living language is structurally in the same situation. If there are two conditions for fixing the meaning or overcoming the polysemy of a word—namely, the existence of an invariant beneath the diversity of semantic transformations, on the one hand, and the possibility of determining a saturable context, on the other—these two conditions seem to me in any case as problematical for a living language as for a dead one.

And this is more or less, here and now, our situation, we who are in representation. Whether or not one lays claim to a philosophical use of so-called natural language, the word *représentation* does not have the same semantic field and the same mode of functioning as an apparently identical word ("representation" in English, *Repräsentation* in German) or as the different words that people take to be its equivalents in current translations (once again, and I shall return to this point, *Vorstellung* is not just one example here among others). If we want to understand one another, to know what we are talking about around a theme that is truly common to us, we have before us two types of large problematics. We can ask ourselves, on the one hand, what discourse based on representation means in our common language. And then we will have a task that is not fundamentally different from that of the semanticist-lexicologist who is projecting a dictionary of words. But, on the other hand, presupposing an implicit and practical knowledge on this subject, basing ourselves on

a living contract or consensus, we can believe that in the end all subjects competent in our language understand one another about this word, that the variations are only contextual, and that no essential obscurity will obfuscate discourse about representation; we would then try to give an account, as they say, of representation today, the thing or the things named "representations" rather than of the words themselves. We would have in mind a sort of philosophical *dictionnaire raisonné* of things rather than words. We would presuppose that no irreducible misunderstanding is possible as to the content and the destination of the message or the envoi named "representation." In a "natural" situation (as we also say a natural language), one could always correct the indeterminacy or the misunderstanding; and it is at bottom with philosophy that one would correct philosophy, I mean, the bad effects of philosophy. These would follow from a gesture that is very common and apparently profoundly philosophical: to think what a concept means in itself, to think what representation is, the essence of representation in general. This philosophical gesture first transports the word to its greatest obscurity, in a highly artificial way, by abstracting it from every context and every use value, as if a word were regulated by a concept independently of any contextualized function, and even independently of any sentence. You will recognize in this a type of objection (let us call it roughly "Wittgensteinian," and if we wish to develop it during the colloquium let us not forget that it was accompanied for Wittgenstein, at a given stage of his career, by a theory of representation in language, a picture theory that should be significant for us here, at least as regards what is "problematical" about it). In this situation, a colloquy of philosophers always tries to stop the philosophical vertigo that overtakes them very close to their language, and to do so with a gesture that I said a moment ago was philosophical (philosophy against philosophy), but in fact it is prephilosophical, because one is then behaving as if one knew what "representation" means and as if one had only to adjust this knowledge to a present historical situation, to distribute the articles, the types, or the problems of representation in different regions, but belonging to the same space. A gesture at once very philosophical and prephilosophical. One can understand the legitimate concern of the organizers of this congress, more precisely of its organizing committee [*Conseil scientifique*], who in order to avoid, and I quote, "too great a dispersion" propose to distribute the theme among different sections (Aesthetics, Politics, Metaphysics, History, Religion, Epistemology). "To avoid too great a dispersion": this accepts a certain polysemy, provided that it is not excessive and recognizes a rule, provided that it can be measured and governed in this list of six categories or in this encyclopedia, this circle of six circles or six jurisdictions. Nothing is more legitimate, in theory and practically, than this concern of the organizing committee. Nevertheless, this list of six categories remains problematic, as everyone knows. They cannot be spread out upon the same table, as if one did not imply or never overlapped another, as if everything were homogeneous inside each of the categories, or as if this list were a priori exhaustive. And one can imagine [*vous vous représentez*] Socrates arriving in the early dawn of this Symposium, tipsy, late, and posing his question: "You tell me there is aesthetic and political and metaphysical and historical and religious and epistemological representation, as if each were one among others, but in the end, aside from the fact that you have forgotten some and that you are enumerating too many or too few, you have not answered the question: what is representation *itself and in general*? What makes of all these representations representations to be called by the same name? What is the *eidos* of representation, the being-representation of representation?" As for this well-known schema of the Socratic question, the possibility of this fiction is limited because for essential reasons—questions of language that do not allow of being assigned to a simple and limited place—Socrates would never have been able to ask this kind of question about the word "representation." I think we must begin with the hypothesis that the word "representation" translates no Greek word in any transparent way, without remainder, without reinterpretation and deep historical reinscription. This is not *a* problem of translation, it is *the* problem of translation and of the supplementary fold I pointed to a moment ago. Before knowing how and what to translate by "representation," we must interrogate the concept of translation and of language that is so often dominated by the concept of representation, whether it be a matter of interlinguistic, intralinguistic (within a single language), or even, to revert for convenience to Roman Jakobson's tripartite distinction, intersemiotic translation (between discursive and nondiscursive languages). Each time we again come upon the presupposition or the desire for an invariable identity of sense already present behind all the uses and regulating all the variations, all the correspondences, all the inter-expressive relations (I use this Leibnizian language deliberately, and recall that what Leibniz refers to as the "representative nature" of the monad constitutes this constant

and regulated relation of inter-expressivity). Such a representative relation would organize not only the translation of a natural or a philosophical language into another but also the translatability of all the regions, for example, also of all the contents distributed in the sections arranged by the organizing committee. And the unity of this table of sections would be assured by the representative structure of the table.

This hypothesis and this desire would be precisely those of representation, of a representative language whose destined aim is to represent something (to represent in all the senses of the delegation of presence, of reiteration rendering present once again, by substituting a presentation for another *in absentia* and so on). Such a language would represent something—a sense, an object, a referent, indeed, already another representation in whatever sense—that is supposed to be *anterior* and *exterior* to it. Beneath the diversity of words from diverse languages, beneath the diversity of uses of the same word, beneath the diversity of contexts or of syntactic systems, the same sense or the same referent, the same representative content would keep its inviolable identity. Language, every language, would be representative, a system of representatives, but the content represented, the represented of this representation (meaning, thing, and so on) would be a *presence* and not a representation. As for the represented (the represented content), it would not have the structure of representation, the representative structure of the representing. Language would be a system of representatives or also of signifiers, of placeholders, substituted for what they say, signify, or represent, and the equivocal diversity of the representatives would not affect the unity, the identity, indeed even the ultimate simplicity of the represented. Now, it is only on the basis of these premises—that is to say, a language as a system of representation—that the problematic in which we are tangled up would be set in place. But to determine language as representation is not the effect of an accidental prejudice, a theoretical fault or a manner of thinking, a limit or a closure among others, a form of representation, precisely, that came about one day and that we could get rid of by a decision when the time comes. Today, many people set their thinking *against* representation. In a more or less articulated or rigorous way, this thinking gives in facilely to an evaluation: representation is bad. And this without being able to assign, in the final analysis, the place and the necessity of the evaluation. We should ask ourselves what this place is and, above all, what the various risks (in particular political ones) may be of such a prevalent evaluation, prevalent in the world at large but also among the most diverse fields, from aesthetics to metaphysics (to return to the distinctions of our program), and passing by way of politics, where the parliamentary ideal, to which the structure of representation is so often attached, is no longer very inspiring [*mobilisateur*] in the best of cases. And yet, whatever may be the strength and the obscurity of this dominant current, the authority of representation constrains us, imposes itself on our thought through a whole dense, enigmatic, and heavily stratified history. It programs us, precedes us, and predisposes us too much for us to make a mere object of it, a representation, an object of representation confronting us, set before us like a theme. It is even rather difficult to pose a systematic and historical question on the topic (a question of the type: "What is the system and the history of representation?"), given that our concepts of system and of history are essentially marked by the structure and the closure of representation.

When one tries today to think what is happening with representation, at once the extension of its domain and its being called into question, one cannot avoid (regardless of the importance one finally grants it) this central motif of the Heideggerian meditation when it attempts to determine an epoch of representation in the destiny of Being, a post-Hellenic epoch in which the relation to Being would have been arrested as *repraesentatio* and *Vorstellung*, in the equivalence of the one to the other. Among the numerous texts of Heidegger that we ought to reread here, I will have to limit myself to a passage from "Die Zeit des Weltbildes" in *Holzwege*. Heidegger there inquires into what best expresses itself, the sense [*Bedeutung*] that comes best to expression [*Ausdruck*] in the word *repraesentatio*, as well as in the word *Vorstellung*. This text dates from 1938, and I would like first to draw your attention to one of the particularly timely features of this meditation. It has to do with publicity and publication, the media, the accelerating pace at which intellectual and philosophical production is becoming technical (in short, its becoming productive), in a word, everything that could be included today under the heading of a society of productivity, of representation, and of spectacle, with all the responsibilities it demands. Heidegger initiates in this place even an analysis of the research institution, of the university and of publication in connection with the dominant installation of representative thought, of the determination of appearance or presence as an image-before-one or the determination of the image itself as an object installed before [*vorgestallt*] a subject. I reduce

and oversimplify a train of thought pursued on the side of the determination of what-is [*l'étant*] as object and of the world as a field of objectivity for a subjectivity, the institutionalization of knowledge being unthinkable unless it is put into this setting of objective representation. In passing, Heidegger evokes, moreover, the life of the intellectual who has become a "researcher" and has to participate in programmed congresses, of the researcher tied to "commissions with publishers. The latter now determine along with him which books must be written."[2] Heidegger adds a note here that I want to read because of its date and because it belongs so clearly to our reflection on the epoch of representation:

> The growing importance of the publishing business is not based merely on the fact that publishers (perhaps through the process of marketing their books) come to have the best ear for the needs of the public or that they are better businessmen than are authors. Rather their peculiar work takes the form of a procedure that plans and that establishes itself with a view to the way in which, through the prearranged and limited publication of books and periodicals, they are to bring the world into the picture for the public and confirm it publicly. The preponderance of collections, of sets of books, of series and pocket editions, is already a consequence of this work on the part of publishers, which in turn coincides with the aims of researchers, since the latter not only are acknowledged and given consideration more easily and more rapidly through collections and sets, but, reaching a wider public, they immediately achieve their intended effect.[3]

Here now is the most palpable articulation, which I lift out of a long and difficult development that I cannot reconstitute here. If we follow Heidegger, the Greek world did not have a relation to the what-is as to a conceived image or representation (here *Bild*). For them, the what-is is presence; and this did not, originally, derive from the fact that man would look at what-is and have what is called a representation [*Vorstellung*] of it as the mode of perception of a subject. In a similar way, in another age (and it is about this sequence of ages or epochs, *Zeitalter*, arranged to be sure in a nonteleological fashion but grouped under the unity of a destiny of Being as sending, envoi, *Geschick*, that I would like to raise a question later on), in the Middle Ages one relates essentially to being as to an *ens creatum*. "To be something that-is [*être-un-étant*]" means to belong to the order of the created. This thus corresponds to God according to the analogy of what-is [*analogia entis*], but, says Heidegger, the being of what-is never consists in an object [*Gegenstand*] brought before man, fixed, arrested, available for the human subject who would possess a representation of it. This will be the mark of modernity. "The fact that whatever is comes into being in and through representedness [literally, in the being-represented, *in der Vorgestelltheit*] transforms the age [*Zeitalter*] in which this occurs into a new age in contrast with the preceding one."[4] It is thus only in the modern period (Cartesian or post-Cartesian) that what-is is determined as an ob-ject present *before* and *for* a subject in the form of *repraesentatio* or *Vorstellen*. So Heidegger analyzes the *Vorgestelltheit des Seienden*. What do *Stellen and Vorstellen* mean? I translate, or rather for essential reasons I couple the languages:

> In distinction from Greek apprehending, modern representing [*das neuzeitliche Vorstellen*], whose meaning [*Bedeutung*] the word *repraesentatio* first brings to its earliest expression [*Ausdruck*], intends [*meint*] something quite different. *Vorstellen bedeutet hier*, here "to represent" means: *das Vorhandene als ein Entgegenstehendes vor sich bringen, auf sich, den Vorstellenden zu, beziehen and in diesen Bezug zu sich als das massgebenden Bereich zurückzwingen*, to bring what is present at hand [which is already before one: *Vorhandene*] before oneself as something standing over against, to relate it to oneself, to the one representing it, and to force it back into this relationship to oneself as the normative realm.[5]

It is the self, here the human subject, that is the field in this relation, the domain and the measure of objects as representations, its own representations.

Heidegger thus uses the Latin word *repraesentatio* and settles at once into the equivalence between *repraesentatio* and *Vorstellung*. This is not illegitimate, quite the contrary, but it does require some explanation. As "representation," in the philosophical code or in ordinary language, *Vorstellung* does not immediately seem to imply the meaning that is conveyed by the *re-* of *repraesentatio*. *Vorstellen* seems to mean simply, as Heidegger emphasizes, to pose, to dispose before oneself, a sort of theme on the theme. But this sense or value of being-before is already at work in "present." *Praesentatio* signifies the fact of presenting and *re-praesentatio* that of *rendering* present, of summoning as a power-of-bringing-back-to-presence. And this power-of-bringing-back, in a repetitive way, while keeping the disposition to this recall, is marked simultaneously by the re- of representation *and* in this positionality, this power-of-posing, disposing,

putting, placing, which is to be read in *Stellen* and at the same time refers back to the self, that is, to the power of a subject who can bring back to presence and make present, make something present to itself, indeed, just make itself present. Making-present can be understood in two senses at least, and this duplicity is at work in the term "representation." On the one hand, to render present would be to bring to presence, into presence, cause or allow to come by presenting. On the other hand, but this second sense inhabits the first, because to cause or to allow to come implies the possibility of causing or allowing to return, then to render present, like all "rendering" and like all restitution, would be to repeat, to be able to repeat. Whence the idea of repetition and return that inhabits the very meaning of representation. Concerning a word, which to my knowledge is never used thematically in this context, I will say that it is the "render" that splits: *sometimes* it means, as in "to render present," simply to present, to allow or cause to come to presence, into presentation; *sometimes* it means to cause or allow to return, to restore for the second time to presence, perhaps in effigy, ghost, sign, or symbol, what was not or no longer there, this *not* or *no-longer* having a very great diversity of possible modes. Now, whence comes, in philosophical or more or less scientific language, this semantic determination of *repraesentatio* as something whose place is *in and for the mind*, within the subject and facing it, in it and for it, object for a subject? In other words, how could this meaning of *repraesentatio* be contemporary, as Heidegger claims, with the Cartesian or Cartesian-Hegelian epoch of the *subjectum*? In re-presentation, the present, the presentation of what presents itself comes back, returns as a double, effigy, image, copy, idea in the sense of picture of the thing henceforth at hand, in the absence of the thing, available, disposed and predisposed for, by, and in the subject. *For*, *by*, and *in*, the system of these *prepositions* marks the place of representation or of the *Vorstellung*. The *re-* marks the repetition *in*, *for*, and *by* the subject, *a parti subjecti*, of a presence that otherwise would present itself to the subject without depending upon it or without having its proper place in the subject. Doubtless the present that returns in this way already had the form of what is for and before the subject but was not at its disposition in this preposition itself. Whence the possibility of translating *repraesentatio* by *Vorstellung*, a word that, in its literality and here as a metaphor (to put it rather hastily, but I am setting this problem aside) marks the gesture that consists of posing, of causing to stand up before the self, of installing in front of oneself, of keeping at

one's disposal, of localizing within the disposability of the preposition. And the ideality of the idea as a copy in the mind is precisely what is most readily available, most repeatable, apparently most docile to the reproductive spontaneity of the mind. The value "pre-," "being-before," was certainly already present in "present"; it is only the putting at the disposal of the human subject that gives rise to representation, and this putting at one's disposal is the very thing that constitutes the subject as a subject. The subject is what can or believes it can offer itself representations, disposing them and disposing of them. When I say "offer itself representations," I could just as easily say, changing the context only barely, offer itself representatives (political ones, for instance) or even, and I will come back to this, offer itself in representation or as a representative. We see this positional initiative—which will always be related to a certain highly determined concept of freedom—marked within the *Stellen* of *Vorstellen.* And I must content myself with situating *here*, in this precise place, the necessity of the whole Heideggerian meditation on the *Gestell* and the modern essence of technics.

If *rendering present* is understood as the repetition that restitutes thanks to a substitute, we come once again upon the continuum or the semantic coherence between, on the one hand, representation as idea in the mind pointing to the thing (for instance, as "objective reality" of the idea), as picture in place of the thing itself, in the Cartesian sense or in the sense of the empiricists, and, on the other hand, aesthetic representation (theatrical, poetic, literary, or visual) or, finally, political representation.

The fact that there *is* representation or *Vorstellung* is not, according to Heidegger, a recent phenomenon, characteristic of the modern epoch of science, of technique, and of subjectivity of a Cartesian-Hegelian type. But what would be characteristic of this epoch is rather the authority, the dominant generality of representation. It is the interpretation of the essence of what is as an object of representation. Everything that becomes present, everything that *is*, which is to say, is present or presents itself is apprehended in the form of representation. *Representation* becomes the most general category for determining the apprehension of whatever it is that is of concern or interest in any relation at all. All of post-Cartesian and even post-Hegelian discourse, if not in fact the whole of modern discourse, has recourse to this category to designate the modifications of the subject in its relation to an object. The great question, the matrix question, thus becomes, for this epoch, that of the *value* of representation, of

its truth or its adequation to what it represents. And even the criticism of representation, or at least its de-limitation and there where it is most systematically exceeded—at least in Hegel—seems not to call again into question the very determination of experience as subjective, that is to say, representational. I believe this could be shown in Hegel, who nevertheless reminds us regularly of the limits of representation insofar as it is unilateral, only on the side of the subject ("it is still only a representation," he always says at the moment of proposing a new *Aufhebung*). I will come back to this in a moment. Mutatis mutandis, Heidegger would say the same of Nietzsche, who nevertheless was dogged in his opposition to representation. If he had read him, would he have said the same of Freud, for whom the concepts of representation, under the names *Vorstellung*, *Repräsentanz*, and even *Vorstellungsrepräsentanz*, play such a strongly organizing role in the obscure problematics of drive and of repression, and for whom, in more roundabout ways, the work of mourning (introjection, incorporation, interiorization, idealization, so many modes of *Vorstellung* and of *Erinnerung*), the notions of phantasm, and of fetish all retain a strict relation with a logic of representation or of representativeness? Once again, I set this question aside for the moment.

Of course, Heidegger does not interpret this reign of representation as an accident, still less as a misfortune in the face of which we must fall back shivering. The end of "Die Zeit des Weltbildes" is very clear in this respect, at the point where Heidegger evokes a modern world that is beginning to withdraw from the space of representation and of the calculable. We might say in another language that a criticism or even a deconstruction of representation would remain weak, vain, and irrelevant if it were to lead to some rehabilitation of immediacy, of original simplicity, of presence without repetition or delegation, if it were to induce a criticism of calculable objectivity, of science, of technics, or of political representation. The worst regressions can put themselves at the service of this anti-representative prejudice. Reverting to the Heideggerian position itself, I will specify a point that will prepare from afar a question in its turn about Heidegger's path or procedure: If it is not the accident of a faux pas, this reign of representation must have been destined, predestined, *geschickte*, that is to say, literally sent, dispensed, assigned by a destiny as the gathering of a history (*Geschick, Geschichte*). The advent of representation must have been prepared, prescribed, announced from far off, emitted, I will say telesigned, in a world, the Greek world, where nevertheless representation, the *Vorstellung* or the *Vorgestelltheit des Seienden* had no dominion. How so? Representation is to be sure an image, or an idea as an image in and for the subject, an affection of the subject in the form of a relation to the object that is in it as a copy, a picture or a scene, an idea, if you like, in a more Cartesian sense than a Spinozoistic one, and (a passing remark) that is probably why Heidegger always refers to Descartes without naming Spinoza—or perhaps others—to designate this epoch. Representation is not merely this image, but to the extent that it is, supposes a world previously constituted as visible. As visible, which is to say as image, not in the sense of reproductive representation, but in the sense of manifestation in the visible form, of the formed, informed spectacle, as *Bild*.

Now, if for the Greeks, according to Heidegger, the world is not essentially *Bild*, an available image, a spectacular form offered to the gaze or to the perception of a subject; if the world were first of all presence (*Anwesen*) that grabs or attaches itself to man rather than being seen, intuited (*angeschaut*) by him; if it is rather man who is invested and regarded by what-is, it was nevertheless necessary for the world as *Bild*, and then as representation, to have declared itself already among the Greeks, and this was nothing less than Platonism. The determination of the being of what is as *eidos* is not yet its determination as *Bild*, but the *eidos* (aspect, look, visible figure) would be the distant condition, the presupposition, the secret mediation that would one day permit the world to become representation. Everything happens as if the world of Platonism (and in saying the world of Platonism, I also exclude the idea that something like Platonist philosophy might have produced a world, or that, inversely, it might have been the simple representation, as reflection or as symptom, of a world that sustains it) had prepared, dispensed, destined, sent, put on its way and on its path the world of representation—all the way down to us, passing through the relay of the positions or posts of Cartesian, Hegelian, Schopenhauerian, even Nietzschean types, and so on, that is to say, the whole of the history of metaphysics in its unity *presumed* to be the indivisible unity of a sending.

In any case, there is no doubt that for Heidegger, Greek man before Plato did not inhabit a world dominated by representation; and it is with the world of Platonism that the determination of the world as *Bild* announces itself and is sent on its way, a determination that will itself prescribe and send on the predominance of representation. "Yet, on the other hand [*Dagegen*], that the beingness of whatever-is [*die Seiendheit des*

Seienden] is defined for Plato as *eidos* [aspect, sight, *Aussehen, Anblick*] is the presupposition, destined far in advance [sent: *die weit voraus geschickte Voraussetzung*] and long ruling indirectly in concealment [*lang in Verborgenen mittelbar waltende Voraussetzung*] for the world's having to become a picture [*Bild*]."[6] The world of Platonism would thus have given the send-off for the reign of representation; it would have destined there, it would have destined it without itself being subjected to it. It would have been, at the limit of this sending, like the origin of philosophy. Already and not yet. But this already-not-yet should not be the dialectical already-not-yet that organizes the whole Hegelian teleology of history and, in particular, the moment of representation [*Vorstellung*] that is *already* what it is *not yet*, its own overflowing. The *Geschick*, the *Schicken*, and the *Geschichte* of which Heidegger speaks are not sendings of the representative type. The historiality they constitute is not a representative or representable process, and in order to think it, we need a history of Being, of the *envoi* of Being that is no longer regulated or centered on representation.

What remains then to think here is a history that would no longer be of a Hegelian or dialectical type in general. For Hegelian, even neo-Hegelian, criticism of representation [*Vorstellung*] seems always to have been a sublation (*Aufhebung*) [*relève*] of representation that keeps it at the center of becoming, as the very form, the most general formal structure of the relay from one moment to the next, and this once again in the present form of the already-not-yet. Thus—but one could add many other examples—between aesthetic and revealed religion, between revealed religion and philosophy as absolute knowledge, it is always the *Vorstellung* that marks the limit to be sublated [*à relever*]. The typical syntagma is thus the following: it is *still* only a representation, it is *already* the following stage but that remains *still* in the form of the *Vorstellung*, it is only the subjective unilaterality of a representation. But the "representative" form of this subjectivity is only *sublated* [relevée], it continues to inform the relation to being after its disappearance. It is in this sense and following this interpretation of Hegelianism—at once strong and classic—that the latter would belong to the epoch of subjectivity and of representationality (*Vorgestelltheit*) of the Cartesian world.

What I retain from the last two points I have just evoked all too superficially is that in order to begin to think the multiple bearings of the word "representation" and the history, if there is one that really is one, of *Vorgestelltheit*, the minimal condition would be to raise two presuppositions, that of a language whose structure is representative or representational, and that of a history as a process scanned according to the form or rhythm of *Vorstellung*. One should no longer try *to represent to oneself* the essence of representation, *Vorgestelltheit*. The essence of representation is not a representation, it is not representable, there is no representation of representation. *Vorgestelltheit is* not just a *Vorstellung*. And it does not lend itself to this. It is in any case through a gesture of this type that Heidegger interrupts or disqualifies, in different domains, specular reiteration or infinite referral [*renvoi à l'infini*].

This move on Heidegger's part does not only lead us to think of representation as having become the model of all thinking of the subject, of every idea, of all affection, of everything that happens to the subject and modifies it in its relation to the object. The subject is no longer defined only in its essence as the place and the placing of its representations; it is also, as a subject and in its structure as *subjectum*, itself apprehended *as a representative*. Man, determined first and above all as a subject, as being-subject, finds himself interpreted through and through according to the structure of representation. And in this respect, he is not only a subject represented in the sense in which one can, in one way or another, still say of the subject today that it is represented, for example by a signifier for another signifier: "The subject," Lacan says, "is what the signifier represents . . . for another signifier."[7] The whole Lacanian logic of the signifier works also with this structuration of the subject by and as representation: an "entirely calculable" subject, Lacan says, as soon as it is "reduced to the formula of a matrix of significant combinations."[8] What brings the reign of representation into accord with the reign of the calculable in this way is precisely Heidegger's theme; he insists on the fact that only calculability (*Berechenbarkeit*) guarantees the certainty in advance of what is *to be represented* (*des Vorzustellenden*), and it is in the direction of the *incalculable* that the limits of representation can be overrun. Structured by representation, the represented subject is also a representing subject. A representative of the what-is and thus also an object, *Gegenstand*. The trajectory that leads up to this point is roughly the following: By "modern" *Vorstellung* or *repraesentatio*, the subject causes the what-is to come back before it. The prefix *re-*, which does not have necessarily the value of repetition, signifies at least the availability of the causing-to-come or to-become-present as what-is-there, in front, placed-before [*pré-posé*]. The *Stellen* translates the *re-* insofar as it designates the making available or the

putting in place, whereas the *vor* translates the *prae* of *praesens*. According to Heidegger, neither *Vorstellung* nor *repraesentatio* can translate a Greek thought without diverting it elsewhere, which, moreover, all translation does. It has happened, for example, that *phantasia* or *phantasma* has been translated in French by *représentation*; one finds this in a Plato lexicon, for instance, and the *phantasia kataleptikē* of the Stoics is frequently translated as "comprehensive representation." But this anachronistically supposes the *subjectum* and the *repraesentatio* to be possible and thinkable for the Greeks. Heidegger contests that supposition, and appendix 8 of "Die Zeit des Weltbildes" tends to demonstrate that subjectivism was unknown in the Greek world, even to the Sophists; Being, he maintains, is apprehended there as presence, and appearing is apprehended in presence and not in representation. *Phantasia* names a mode of this appearing that is not representative. "In unconcealment [*Unverborgenheit*], *ereignet sich die Phantasia*, *phantasia* comes to pass; the coming-into-appearance [*das zum Erscheinen-Kommen*], as a particular something, of that which presences as such [*des Anwesenden als eines solchen*]—for man, who himself appears toward what appears."[9] This Greek thought of *phantasia* (whose fate we should follow here in all its displacements, up to the allegedly modern problematic of "fiction" and "phantasm") addresses itself only to some presence, the presence of the what-is for the presence of man, its sense unmarked by the values of representative reproduction or of the imaginary object (produced or reproduced by man as representation). The enormous philosophical question of the imaginary, of the productive or reproductive imagination, even when it assumes once more, for example, in Hegel, the Greek name of *Phantasie*, does not belong to the Greek world but comes up later, in the age of representations and of man as a representing subject: *Der Mensch als das vorstellende Subjekt jedoch phantasiert*. Man as representing subject, however, fantasizes, that is, he moves in *imaginatio* [the Latin word always marks the access to the world of representation], in that his representing [*sein Vorstellen*] imagines, pictures forth, whatever is, as the objective, into the world as picture [the German is still indispensable here: *insofern sein Vorstellen das Seiende als das Gegenständliche in die Welt als Bild einbildet*]."[10]

How is man, having become a representative in the sense of *Vorstellend*, also and at the same time a representative in the sense of *Repräsentant*, in other words, not only someone who has representations, who represents himself, but also someone who himself represents something or some other? Not only someone who sends himself or gives himself objects but who is the envoy of something else or of the other? When he has representations, when he determines everything that is as representable in a *Vorstellung*, man fixes himself by giving himself an image of what is, he makes of it an idea for himself, he is there ("Der Mensch setzt über das Seiende sich ins Bild," Heidegger says). From that point on he puts himself on stage, Heidegger says literally, "setzt er sich selbst in die Szene," that is to say, in the open circle of the representable, of shared and public representation. And in the following sentence, the expression of staging is displaced or folded into itself; and, as in the translation, *Übersetzen*, the placing (*Setzen*) is no less important than the stage. Putting himself forward or putting himself on stage, man poses, represents himself *as/like* the scene of representation ("Damit setzt sich der Mensch selbst als die Szene, in der das Seiende fortan sich vor-stellen, präsentieren, d.h. Bild sein muss"): in that way, man puts himself forward as the stage on which what-is must from now on re-present itself, present itself, that is to say, be an image. And, Heidegger concludes: "Man becomes the representative [this time *Repräsentant*, with all the ambiguity of the Latin word] of that which is, in the sense of that which has the character of object [*im Sinne des Gegenständigen*]."[11]

We thus see the reconstitution of the chain of consequences that sends us back from representation as idea or as the objective reality of the idea (relation to the object), to representation as delegation, perhaps political, therefore to the substitution of subjects identifiable with one another and all the more replaceable in that they are objectifiable (and here we have the other side of the democratic and parliamentary ethics of representation, that is to say, the horror of calculable subjectivities, innumerable but that can be numbered, computed, the crowds in concentration camps or in the computers of the police or other agencies, the world of the masses and of the mass media, which would also be a world of calculable and representable subjectivity, the world of semiotics, of computer science, and of communications). The same chain, *if we assume that its consequences hang together* and if we follow the development of the Heideggerian motif, traverses a certain system of political, pictorial, theatrical, or aesthetic representation in general.

Some of you may perhaps consider this reverential reference to Heidegger excessive, and above all that German is becoming rather invasive for the opening of a congress on French-language philosophy. Before pro-

posing some types of question for the debates that are about to begin, I would like to justify this recourse to Heidegger and to the German of Heidegger in three ways.

First justification. The problematic opened up by Heidegger is to my knowledge the only one today to treat representation as a whole, an ensemble [*dans son ensemble*]. And already I must go beyond even this formula: the procedure or the step taken, the path of thought called Heideggerian is here more than a problematic (a problematic or a *Fragestellung* still owing too much to representative pre-positionality; it is the very quality of *problem* that gives us something to think about here). We have more than a problematic here, and it concerns more than an "ensemble"; in any case, it is not concerned with the ensemble or the assembling only as *system* or as *structure*. This path of Heideggerian thought is the only one to refer the gathering or assembling of representation back to the world of language and of languages (Greek, Latin, and Germanic) in which it unfolded, and to make of languages a question, a question not predetermined by representation. What I shall try to suggest in a moment is that the force of this gathering in the path of Heideggerian thought opens another type of problem and still leaves room for thought, but I think it is not possible today to remain unaware, as is too often the case in francophone philosophic institutions, of the space cleared by Heidegger.

Second justification. If in pointing out—and I have not been able to do more than that—the necessity of the reference to Heidegger, I have often spoken German, it is because, when addressing the question of representation, French-speaking philosophers have to feel the philosophical necessity of exiting from latinity in order to think the event of thought that takes place under the word *repraesentatio*. Not exiting just to exit, to disqualify a language, or to go into exile, but in order to think the relation to one's own language. To indicate only this point, which is an essential one to be sure, what Heidegger situates "before," so to speak, the *repraesentatio* or the *Vorstellung*, is neither a presence, nor a simple *praesentatio*, nor *praesentatio* period. A word that is often translated by "presence" in this context is *Anwesen*, *Anwesenheit*, whose prefix *in this context* (I must insist on this point) announces a coming to disclosure, to unconcealing, to patency, to phenomenality rather than the prepositionality of an objective being-in-front-of. And we know how since *Being and Time*, the questioning concerning the presence of Being is referred back radically to the questioning of temporality, a movement that the latinate problematic

of representation (putting things much too quickly here) no doubt inhibited for essential reasons. It is not enough to say that Heidegger does not recall us to the nostalgia of a presentation hidden under representation. If there remains nostalgia, it does not lead us back to presentation. Not even, I would add, to the presumed simplicity of *Anwesenheit*. *Anwesenheit* is not simple, it is already divided and differing, it marks the place of a splitting, a division, a dissension [*Zwiespalt*]. Engaged in the opening up of this dissension, and above all by it, under its assignation, man is watched by what-is, Heidegger says, and such would be the essence (*Wesen*) of man "during the great Greek epoch." Man thus seeks to gather in saying (*legein*) and to save, to keep (*sozein*, *bewahren*), while at the same time remaining exposed to the chaos of dissension. The theater or the tragedy of this dissension is not yet seen as belonging either to the scenic space of presentation (*Darstellung*) or to that of representation, but the fold of dissension would open up, announce, send on everything that will afterward come to be determined as mimesis, and then imitation, representation, with the whole parade of oppositional couples that will form philosophical theory: production/reproduction, presentation/representation, original/derived, and so on. "Before" all these pairs, if one may say that, there will never have been presentative simplicity but another fold, another difference, unpresentable, unrepresentable, *jective* perhaps, but neither objective, nor subjective, nor projective. What of the unpresentable or the unrepresentable? How to think it? That is now the question, and I will come back to it in a moment.

Third justification. This one really floats on the Rhine. I had thought at first, for this congress of societies of French-language philosophy in Strasbourg on the theme of representation, to take the European measure of the event by referring to what happened eighty years ago, at the turn of the century, at the time when Alsace was on the other side of the frontier, if one can say that. I had first thought of referring to what happened and what was said about *representation* at the French Society of Philosophy. The linguistic altercation with the other as close relative [*germain*] organized a whole debate to stabilize French philosophical vocabulary, and there was even a proposal made to exclude, to scrap the French philosophical term *représentation*, to strike it from our vocabulary, no less, to take it out of service because it was merely the translation of a word that came from beyond the blue line of the Vosges; or at the very least, and confronting historic misfortune with a brave face, to "tolerate" the use of

this word that is, it was said at the time with some xenophobic resentment, "barely French."

One may find the archive of this gallocentric corpus in the *Bulletin de la Société française de philosophie* for 1901, to which what is rightly called the *Vocabulaire technique et critique de la philosophie* by André Lalande refers. In the very rich article on the word "présentation," one may see in the process of formation the proposal to banish both the word "présentation" and the word "représentation." During the discussion that took place at the Society of Philosophy on May 29, 1901, on the subject of the word "présentation," Bergson had this to say: "Our word *représentation* is an equivocal word that, based on the etymology, ought never to designate an intellectual object presented to the mind for the first time. It ought to be reserved for ideas or images that bear the mark of prior *work* carried out by the mind. There would then be grounds for introducing the word 'presentation' (also used by English psychology to designate in a general way all that is purely and simply presented to the intelligence)." This proposal of Bergson's recommending the authorization and official legitimation of the word "presentation" evoked two kinds of highly interesting objection. I continue reading: "I have no objection to the use of this word [*présentation*]; but it seems to me very doubtful that the prefix *re*, in the French word *représentation*, originally had a duplicative value. This prefix has many other uses, for example, in *recueillir, retirer, révéler, requérir, recourir*, etc. Is not its true role, in *représentation*, rather to mark the *opposition* of subject and object, as in the words *révolte, résistance, répugnance, répulsion*, etc.?" (This last question seems to me at once aberrant and hyper-lucid, ingenuously inspired.) And here M. Abauzit rejects, as Jules Lachelier will later, Bergson's proposal to introduce the word *présentation* in place of *représentation*. He disputes the view that the *re* of representation implies a duplication. If there is duplication, it is not, he says, in the sense that Bergson indicates (repetition of a prior mental state) but "the reflection, in the mind, of an object conceived as existing in itself." Conclusion: "Presentation is therefore not justified." As for Lachelier, he recommends a return to French and thus purely and simply the abandonment of the philosophical use of the word *représentation:*

> It seems to me that *représentation* was not originally a philosophical term in French, and that it became one only when a translation was wanted for *Vorstellung* [here Lachelier seems at least to overlook, even if he is not altogether wrong at a certain level, the fact that *Vorstellung* too was a translation of the Latin *repraesentatio*]. But people certainly said *represent* something *to oneself* and I think that the particle *re*, in this expression, indicated, according to its ordinary sense, a reproduction of what had been antecedently given, but perhaps without one's having paid attention to it. . . . M. Bergson's criticism is therefore, strictly speaking, justified; but one ought not to be so strict about etymology. The best thing would be not to talk at all in philosophy of *représentations* and to be content with the verb *se représenter* [*to represent to oneself*—Trans.]; but if there is really a need for a substantive, *représentation* in a sense already consecrated by usage is better than *présentation*, which in French evokes ideas of a wholly different order.

There would be much to say about the reasons adduced for this conclusion, about the necessary distinction, according to Lachelier, between current usage and philosophical usage, about the mistrust of etymologizing, about the transformation of sense and the philosophical development of a sense when one goes from an idiomatic verbal form to a nominal form, about the necessity of speaking "philosophy" in one's own language and of remaining wary of violations imported by translation, about the respect, nevertheless, due to established usages that are better than neologisms or the artifice of a new usage dictated by philosophy, and so on. I would like merely to indicate that this truly xenophobic mistrust with respect to philosophical importations into the idiom is not only concerned, in Lachelier's symptomatic text, with the invasion of French by German, but, in a more general and more internal fashion, with the violent contamination, the grafting of philosophical language onto the body of natural and ordinary language, which is hard to tolerate and, in truth, ought to be rejected. For it is not only in French, and deriving from German philosophy, that this malady would have progressed and left these unfortunate traces. The trouble has already begun within the body of the German language, in the relation of German to itself, in Germano-German. And Lachelier is visibly dreaming of a linguistic therapy that would not only avert this French malady coming from Germany but that could be exported in the form of a European council of languages. For, he murmurs, our German friends themselves have perhaps suffered the effects of philosophical style, they have perhaps been "shocked" by the philosophical use of the word *Vorstellung*:

> [I]n the ordinary sense, "take the place of . . . ," this prefix [*re*] seems rather

to express the idea of a second presence, of an imperfect repetition of the primitive and real presence. It can be said of a person who acts in the name of another, and of a simple image that makes present to us in its way an absent person or thing. From this comes the sense of "representing to oneself" [*se représenter*] internally a person or a thing by imagining them, from which point we have finally arrived at the philosophical sense of *representation*. But this transfer seems to me to involve something violent and illegitimate. It ought to have been possible to say "representation-to-oneself" [*se-représentation*], and not being able to do this, the word should have been renounced. Also it seems to me likely that we did not ourselves derive *representation* from "represent to oneself," but simply copied *Vorstellung* in order to translate it. We are certainly obliged, today, to tolerate this use of the word; but it seems to me barely French.

And after some interesting allusions to Hamelin, Leibniz, and Descartes with respect to the use they nevertheless made of the same word, Lachelier concludes in this way: "There are grounds for inquiring whether *Vorstellung* was not derived from *sich etwas vorstellen* (to represent something to oneself), and whether the Germans themselves were not shocked when people began to use it in the philosophical sense."

I note in passing the interest of this insistence on the "self" of "represent to oneself" as well as on the *sich* of *sich vorstellen*. It indicates to what degree Lachelier is rightly sensitive to this auto-affective dimension that is undoubtedly the essential factor in representation and that is more clearly marked in the reflexive verb than in the noun. In representation, it matters above all that a subject gives *itself*, procures for *itself*, makes room for itself and in front of itself for objects: it represents them to itself and sends them to itself, and it is thereby that it has them at its disposal.

If I consider the reflections I have been presenting to you as adduced reasons [*des attendus*] (which are more or less expected), they are adduced in view of questions and not of conclusions. Here then, to conclude, are some questions that I would like to submit to you in their most economical formulation, indeed, in the telegraphic form suitable for such a dispatch.

First question. This question touches on the history of philosophy, of language, and of French philosophical language. Is there such a language, and is it one language? And what has happened in it or at its borders since the debate in 1901 around the words *présentation* and *représentation* at the Society of French Philosophy? What does the elaboration of this question presuppose?

Second question. This question relates to the very legitimacy of a general interrogation about the essence of representation, in other words, the use of the name and title "representation" in a colloquium in general. This is my principal question, and although I must leave it in a minimally schematic state, I should explain it a little more than the preceding one, the more so because it may perhaps lead me to outline another relation to Heidegger. It is still a matter of language and translation. One might object, and I take this objection seriously, that in ordinary situations of ordinary language (if there are such things, as we ordinarily believe) the question of knowing what we intend by the name of representation is very unlikely to arise, and if it arises, it does not last a second. It is enough that there be a context that, while not saturated, is reasonably well determined, just as it is in what we call ordinary experience. If I read or hear on the radio that the diplomatic or parliamentary representatives [*la représentation diplomatique ou parlementaire*] of some country have been received by the head of state, that representatives [*représentants*] of striking workers or the parents of schoolchildren have gone to the ministry in a delegation, if I read in the paper that this evening there will be a performance [*représentation*] of Molière's *Psyché*, or that such and such a painting represents Eros, and so forth, I understand without the least equivocation and I do not take my head in my hands to figure out what it means. Obviously, it suffices for me to have the average competence required in a certain state of society and of its educational system, and so on. And that the *destination* of the sent message have a high probability and be sufficiently determined. Given that words always function in a (presumed) context destined to assure normally the normality of their functioning, to ask what they can mean before and outside every such determined context is to interest oneself (it might perhaps be said) in a pathology or a linguistic dysfunction. The schema is well known. Philosophical questioning about the name and the essence of "representation" before and outside of every particular context would be the very paradigm of this dysfunction. It would necessarily lead to aporias or to pointless language games, or rather to language games that the philosopher would take seriously without perceiving what, in the functioning of language, makes the game possible. In this perspective, it would not be a matter of excluding philosophical styles or models from ordinary language but of acknowledging their place among others. What we as philosophers in the past few centuries or decades have made of the word "representation"

would come to be more or less well integrated into the ensemble of codes and usages. This would also be a contextual possibility among others.

This type of problematic—and I am indicating only its opening in principle—can give rise, as we know, to the most diverse developments, for example, on the *pragmatic* side of language; and it is significant that these developments should have found a favorable cultural terrain outside the duel or dialogue of the Gallo-Germanic *Auseinandersetzung*, within the Franco-German annals to which I have somewhat confined myself up to now. Whoever one takes to be its more or less Anglo-Saxon representatives, from Peirce (with his problematic of the represented as, already, *representamen*), or from Wittgenstein, if he was English, to the most diverse champions of analytic philosophy or speech-act theory, is there not here a decentering in relation to the *Auseinandersetzung* that we too readily consider a point of absolute convergence? And in this decentering, even if we do not necessarily follow it along the Anglo-Saxon tracks I have just merely alluded to, even if we suspect them of being still too philosophizing in the centralizing sense of the term, and if in truth the eccentricity begins at the center of the continent, will one perhaps find there the incitement to a problematic of a different style? It would not be a matter, then, simply of handing so-called philosophical language back over or submitting it to ordinary law and making it answer before this last contextual court of appeal, but of asking whether, in the very interior of what offers itself as the philosophical or merely theoretical usage of the word "representation," one can presume the unity of some semantic center that would give order to a whole multiplicity of modifications and derivations. Is not this eminently philosophical presumption precisely of a representative type, in the central sense claimed for the term, in that a single self-same presence delegates itself in it, sends, assembles, and finally finds itself in it again? This interpretation of representation would presuppose a representational pre-interpretation of representation, it would still be a representation of representation. Is not this unifying, gathering, derivationist presumption at work in Heidegger up to and including in his strongest and most necessary displacements? Do we not find an indication of this in the fact that the epoch of representation or *Vorstellung* appears there as an epoch in the destiny or the gathered sending (*Geschick*) of Being? And that the *Gestell* continues to relate to it? Although this epoch is neither a mode nor, in the strict sense, a modification of an entity or of a substantial sense, any more than it is a moment or a determination in the Hegelian sense, it is certainly announced by a sending of Being that first

of all uncovers itself as presence, more rigorously as *Anwesenheit*. In order for the epoch of representation to have its sense and its unity as an epoch, it must belong to the assembled gathering [*rassemblement*] of a more originary and more powerful envoi. And if there had not been the gathering of this envoi, the *Geschick* of Being, if this *Geschick* had not announced itself from the start as the *Anwesenheit* of Being, no interpretation of the epoch of representation could come to order it in the unity of a history of metaphysics. No doubt—and here one must be twice as careful and go twice as slowly, which is much more than I can do here—the gathering of the envoi and of destinality, the *Geschick* does not have the form of a *telos*, still less of a certainty (whether Cartesian or Lacanian) of the arrival at destination of the envoi. But at least there is (*es gibt*) an envoi, a sending. At least a sending gives itself, and it gathers itself together with itself; and this gathering is the condition, the being-together of what offers itself to thought so that an epochal figure—here that of representation—can *detach itself* in its contour and order itself in its rhythm within the unity of a destination or rather of a "destinality" of Being. No doubt the being-together of the *Geschick*, and one can say the same of the *Gestell*, is neither that of a totality nor that of a system, nor that of an identity comparable to any other. No doubt we must take the same precautions with respect to the gathering of every epochal figure. Nevertheless, the question remains: if in a sense that is neither chronological nor logical, nor intrahistorical, the whole historial and destinal interpretation orders the epoch of representation (in other words modernity, and in the same text Heidegger translates: the era of the *subjectum*, of objectivism and subjectivism, of anthropology, of aesthetico-moral humanism, and so on) around an originary envoi of Being as *Anwesenheit*, which translates itself as presence and then as representation according to translations that are so many mutations within the same, within the being-together of the same envoi, then the being-together of the originary envoi arrives reflexively [*s'arrive*] at itself in a way, in closest proximity to itself, in *Anwesenheit*. Even if there is dissension [*Zwiespalt*] in what Heidegger calls the great Greek epoch and the experience of *Anwesenheit*, this dissension gathers itself in the *legein*. It rescues and preserves itself and thus assures a sort of indivisibility of the destinal. It is in basing itself on this gathered indivisibility of the envoi that Heidegger's reading can single out [*détacher*] epochs, including the most powerful, the longest, and also the most dangerous of all, the epoch of representation in modern times. Since this is not an epoch among others, and since it *detaches itself*, in its privilege, in a very

particular way, might one not be tempted to say that it is itself detached, sent, delegated, taking the place of what in it dissembles itself, suspends itself, reserves itself, retreats and retires there, namely, *Anwesenheit* or even presence? One could type this detachment in several ways (as metaphor, metonymy, mode, determination, moment, etc.), but all of these will be unsatisfactory for essential reasons. It will all the same be difficult to avoid wondering if the relation of the epoch of representation to the great Greek epoch is not still interpreted by Heidegger in a representative mode, as if the couple *Anwesenheit/repraesentatio* still dictated the law of its own interpretation, an interpretation that does no more therefore than redouble and recognize itself in the historial text it claims to decipher. Behind or beneath the epoch of representation, in retreat [*en retrait*], there would be what it dissembles, covers over, forgets as the very envoi that it still represents, presence or *Anwesenheit* in its gathering in the Greek *legein* that will have saved it, above all, from dislocation. My question then is the following, and I formulate it too quickly: Wherever this being-together or with itself of the envoi of Being divides itself, defies the *legein*, frustrates the destination of the envoi, cannot the whole schema of Heidegger's reading be contested in principle, historially deconstructed? If there has been representation, it is perhaps, precisely (and Heidegger would acknowledge this), because the envoi of Being was originarily menaced in its being-together, in its *Geschick*, by divisibility or dissension (what I would call dissemination)? Can we not then conclude that if there has been representation, the epochal reading of it that Heidegger proposes becomes, *by virtue of this fact*, problematical from the beginning, at least as a normative reading (and it wishes to be this also), if not as an open questioning of what offers itself to thought beyond the problematic, and even *beyond the question of Being*, of the gathered destiny or of the envoi of Being?

What I have just suggested concerns not only the reading of Heidegger, either his reading of the destination of representation or the one we would propose of his own reading. It concerns not only the whole ordering of epochs or periods in the presumed unity of a history of metaphysics or of the West. It is a matter of the very credit we, as philosophers, would want to grant to an organization of all the fields or of all the sections of representation centered and centralized around a supporting sense and a fundamental interpretation. If there has been representation, it is because the division will have been stronger, strong enough that this supporting sense no longer keeps, saves, or guarantees anything in a sufficiently rigorous fashion.

So the so-called modern problematics or metamorphoses of representation would no longer be at all representations of the same, diffractions of a unique sense starting from a single crossroads, a single place of meeting or passing for convergent approaches, a single congression or a single congress.

If I had not been afraid of abusing your time and your patience, I would perhaps have tried to put to the test such a difference of representation, a difference no longer ordered according to the difference of *Anwesenheit* or presence, or according to difference *as* presence, a difference that would no longer represent the same or the self-relation of the destiny of being, a difference that could not be repatriated in the *sending of self*, a difference as a sending that *would not be* one, and *not a sending of self*. But sendings of/from the other, of/from others. Inventions of the other. I would not have attempted this test by proposing some scholarly, scientific demonstration cutting across the different sections proposed by our organizing committee, across different types of problematic of representation in the abstract singular [la *représentation*]. Rather, my preference would have carried me to the side of what is *not represented* on our program. Two examples of what is not represented and I will have finished.

First example. In the various sections proposed, is there at least a virtual *topos* for what, under the name of psychoanalysis and under the signature of Freud, has bequeathed to us such a strange corpus so strangely charged with "representation" in all languages? Does the vocabulary of *Vorstellung*, of the *Vorstellungsrepräsentant*, in its abundance, its complexity, the prolix difficulties of the discourse that carries it, manifest an episode of the epoch of representation, as if Freud were thrashing about confusedly under the implacable constraints of a program and a conceptual heritage? The very concept of drive and the "fate of the drive" (*Triebschicksal*), which Freud situates at the frontier between the somatic and the psychic, seems to require for its construction recourse to a representative scheme, in the sense first of all of delegation. Similarly, the concept of repression (primary or secondary, strictly speaking) is constructed on a concept of representation: repression bears essentially on representations or representatives, delegates. This meaning of delegation, if we follow Laplanche and Pontalis here in their concern for systematization, would give rise to two interpretations or two formulations on Freud's part. Sometimes the drive itself is considered a "psychic representative" (*psychische Repräsentanz* or *psychischer Repräsentant*) of somatic stimuli; sometimes the drive is considered the somatic process of stimulus itself, and it is the drive that

is said to be represented by what Freud calls "representatives of the drive" (*Triebrepräsentanz* or *Triebrepräsentant*), which in their turn are envisaged either—principally—as representatives in the form of representation in the sense of *Vorstellung* (*Vorstellungsrepräsentanz* or *-repräsentant*), with a greater insistence on the ideational aspect, or else in the aspect of the quantum of affect concerning which Freud said on occasion that it was more important in the representative of the drive than the representational aspect (intellectual or ideational). Laplanche and Pontalis propose to surmount Freud's apparent contradictions or oscillations in what they call his "formulations" by recalling that nevertheless, "they both contain the same idea: *the relation* between soma and psyche is conceived of as neither parallelistic nor causal; rather, it is to be understood by comparison with the relationship between a delegate and his mandatory"; they add in a note: "It is a commonplace that, though in principle he is nothing more than the proxy of his mandatory, the delegate in such cases enters in practice into a new system of relationships which is liable to change his perspective and cause him to depart from the directives he has been given."[12] What Laplanche and Pontalis call a "comparison" bears the whole weight of the problem. If this comparison with the structure of delegation is that on the basis of which one interprets matters as weighty as the relations between soul and body, the fate of drives, repression, and so on, the vehicle of the comparison must no longer be considered self-evident. What does it mean to charge or delegate someone, if this movement does not allow itself to be derived from, interpreted as, or compared with anything else? What is a mission or a sending? This type of question can be justified by other places in the Freudian discourse, and more narrowly by other appeals to the word or the concept of representation (for example, the representation of a goal [*Zielvorstellung*] or above all the distinction between representations of words and representations of things [*Wort-* and *Sach* or *Dingvorstellung*], to which as we know Freud assigned a role between the primary and secondary processes or in the structure of schizophrenia). One might wonder if, as Laplanche and Pontalis suggest in a slightly embarrassed way on several occasions, the translation of representation or representative by "signifier" allows a clarification of the Freudian difficulties. This obviously is what is fundamentally at stake today in the Lacanian heritage of Freud. Here I can only point to this stake, but I have tried to situate it in other writings. And the question I pose about Freud (in his relation to the epoch of representation) can in principle apply also to Lacan. At all events, when Laplanche and Pontalis

say about the word *Vorstellung* that "Freud does not set out immediately to change its meaning [*acception*], but he does use it in an original way" (200), this distinction between meaning and use is precisely where the problem lies. Can we distinguish between, on the one hand, the semantic content (ultimately stable, continuous, self-identical) and, on the other, the diversity of uses, functions, and contextual investitures by assuming that these latter cannot displace, or even totally deconstruct the identity of the former? In other words, are so-called "modern" developments—like Freudian psychoanalysis, but we could cite others—thinkable only with reference to a fundamental semantic tradition, or again to a unifying epochal determination of representation, which they would continue to represent? Or else should we find in them an incitement giving us to think altogether differently the diffraction of fields, and first of all of sendings or referrals [*des envois, ou des renvois*]? Is one authorized to say, for example, that the Lacanian theorization of *Vorstellungrepräsentanz* in terms of a binary signifier producing the disappearance, the *aphanisis* of the subject, is wholly contained within what Heidegger calls the epoch of representation? I can do no more here than point out the place of this problem. It cannot admit of a simple answer. I refer chiefly to two chapters of the Seminar on *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* ("Tuché and Automaton" on the one hand, "Aphanisis" on the other). It is highly significant that, in these chapters in particular, Lacan should define his relation to the Cartesian "I think" and to the Hegelian dialectic, that is to say, to the two most powerfully ordered and ordering moments that Heidegger assigns to the reign of representation. The central nerves of the problematic to which I refer here were recognized and fundamentally interpreted for the first time in the works of Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy, from *Le titre de la lettre*, their joint work, to their latest publications, respectively, *Le sujet de la philosophie* and *Ego sum*.[13]

The *second* and last *example* promised concerns the limit-question of the unrepresentable. To think the limit of representation is to think the unrepresented or the unrepresentable. There are very many ways of placing the emphasis here. The displacement of emphasis can effect powerful swerves. If to think the unrepresentable is to think beyond representation in order to think representation from its limit, then one can understand this as a tautology. And that is a first answer, which could be Hegel's no less than Heidegger's answer. Both of them think of thinking, the thinking of which representation is afraid (according to the remark of Heidegger who wonders if we are not simply afraid of thinking), as something that

crosses the boundary or takes a step beyond or to the hither side of representation. This is even the definition of both representation and thought for Hegel: *Vorstellung* is a mediation, a mean [*Mitte*] between the unfree intellect and the free intellect, in other words, thought. This is a double and differentiated way of thinking thought as the beyond of representation. But it is the form of this passage, the *Aufhebung* of representation, that Heidegger still interprets as belonging to the epoch of representation. And yet, although Heidegger and Hegel are not thinking thought as the beyond of representation in the same way here, a certain possibility of a relation to the unrepresentable seems to me to bring Hegel and Heidegger (at least what these proper names refer to, if not what they represent) closer together. This possibility would concern the unrepresentable, not only as that which is foreign to the very structure of representation, as what one *cannot* represent, but rather and also what one *must not* represent, whether or not it has the structure of the representable. I mention here the immense problem of the *prohibition* that bears on representation, on what it has been possible to translate more or less legitimately (another extraordinary problem) from a Jewish or Islamic world as "representation." Now I would not say that this immense problem, whether it concerns objectifying representation, mimetic representation, or even simple presentation, indeed, simple naming, is just overlooked by thinking of a Hegelian or Heideggerian type. But it seems to me in principle relegated to a secondary or derivative place in Heidegger (in any case it does not, at least to my knowledge, form the object of any specific attention). And as for Hegel, who speaks of it more than once, in particular in his *Lectures on Aesthetics*, it is perhaps not unwarranted to say that the interpretation of this prohibition gets derived and reinscribed in a procedure of much wider scope, dialectical in structure, and in the course of which the prohibition does not constitute an absolute event coming from a wholly other, which would absolutely sunder or asymmetrically reverse the progress of a dialectizable procedure. This does not necessarily mean that the essential traits of the prohibition are thereby misunderstood or dissembled. For example, the disproportion between the infinity of God and the limits of human representation are taken into account and the wholly other can thus be seen to declare itself in Hegel's treatment. Conversely, if one concluded that there was a dialectical effacement of the sharp edge of the prohibition, this would not imply that any taking into account of this edge (for example, in a psychoanalytic discourse) would not eventually lead to

an analogous result, that is, to a reinscribing of the origin and significance of the prohibition on representation in an intelligible and wider process in which the unrepresentable would disappear again like the wholly other. But is not disappearance, non-phenomenality, the destiny of the wholly other and of the unrepresentable, indeed, of the unpresentable? Here again I can only indicate (by referring to work that has been ongoing all this year with students and colleagues) the beginning and the necessity of an interrogation for which nothing is in the slightest degree certain, above all what is calmly translated as prohibition or as representation.

To what, to whom, to where have I been ceaselessly referring in the course of this introduction, at once insistently and elliptically? I will venture to say: to envois and to *renvois*, to sendings and sendings back, already, that would no longer be representative. Beyond a closure of representation whose form could no longer be linear, indivisible, circular, encyclopedic, or totalizing, I have tried to retrace a path opened onto a thinking of the envoi that, while having a structure still foreign to representation, like the *Geschick des Seins* of which Heidegger speaks, did not as yet gather itself to itself as a sending of Being through *Anwesenheit*, presence, and then representation. This, as it were, pre-ontological sending does not gather itself together. It gathers itself only by dividing itself, by differing/deferring itself. It is not originary or originarily a sending-of/from [*envoi-de*] (the sending of something-that-is or of a present that would precede it, still less of a subject, or of an object by and for a subject). It does not form a unity and does not begin with itself, although nothing present precedes it; it emits only by already sending back; it emits only on the basis of the other, *the other in itself without itself*. Everything begins by referring back [*par le renvoi*], that is to say, does not begin. Given that this effraction or this partition divides every *renvoi* from the start, there is not a single *renvoi* but from then on, always, a multiplicity of *renvois*, so many different traces referring back to other traces and to traces of others. This divisibility of the envoi has nothing negative about it, it is not a lack, it is altogether different from subject, signifier, or the letter that Lacan says does not tolerate partition and always arrives at destination. This divisibility or this differance is the condition for there being any envoi, possibly an envoi of Being, a dispensation or a gift of being and time, of the present and of representation. These *renvois* of traces or these traces of *renvois* do not have the structure of representatives or of representation, or of signifiers, or of symbols, or of metaphors, or of metonymies, and so on. But as these *renvois* from the

other and to the other, these traces of differance, are not original and transcendental conditions on the basis of which philosophy traditionally tries to derive effects, subdeterminations, or even epochs, it cannot be said, for example, that representative (or signifying or symbolic, and so on) structure *befalls* them; we will not be able to assign periods or make some epoch of representation follow upon these *renvois*. As soon as there are *renvois*, and they are always already there, something like representation no longer waits and one must perhaps make do with that so as to tell oneself this story otherwise, from *renvois* to *renvois* of *renvois*, in a destiny that is never guaranteed to gather itself up, identify itself, or determine itself. I do not know if this can be said with or without Heidegger, and it does not matter. This is the only chance—but it is only a chance—for there to be history, meaning, presence, truth, language, theme, thesis, and colloquium. And one still has to think here the chance granted, and the law of this chance. The question remains open as to whether, to put it in classical language, the irrepresentable of the *envois* is what produces the law (for example, the prohibition of representation) or whether it is the law that produces the irrepresentable by prohibiting representation. Whatever the necessity of this question of the relation between law and traces (the *renvois* of traces, the *renvois* as traces), it exhausts itself perhaps when we cease *representing* the law to ourselves, when we cease apprehending law itself under the species of the representable. Perhaps law itself exceeds every representation, perhaps it is never before us, as that which poses itself in a figure or composes a figure of itself. (The guardian of the law and the man from the country are "before the law," *Vor dem Gesetz*, says Kafka's title, only at the cost of never managing to see it, never being able to arrive at it. It is neither presentable nor representable, and the "entry" into it, according to an order that the man from the country interiorizes and gives himself, is put off until death.)[14] The law has often been considered as that which poses, posits itself, and gathers itself up in composition (thesis, *Gesetz*, in other words what governs the order of representation), and *autonomy* in this respect always presupposes representation, as well as thematization, the becoming-theme. But perhaps the law itself arrives, perhaps, *arrives to us* only by transgressing the figure of all possible representation. Which is difficult to conceive, just as it is difficult to conceive of anything at all that would be beyond representation, but that perhaps commits us to think everything altogether differently.

—Translated by Peter and Mary Ann Caws

§ 6 Me—Psychoanalysis

I am introducing here—me—(into) a translation.

That says clearly enough where I will be led by these double voicetracks [*voies*]: to efface myself on the threshold in order to facilitate your reading. I'm writing in "my" language but in your idiom I have to *introduce*. Or otherwise, and again in "my" language, to present someone. Someone who in numerous and altogether singular ways is not there and yet is close and present enough to require no introduction.

One presents someone to someone or to several, and as regards the *hôtes*—in French both the hosts who receive in their language and the guests introduced—elementary politeness demands that one not thrust oneself forward. And it is being forward to the point of making oneself indispensable as soon as you begin to compound the difficulties of translation (from my first word there has been at least one such difficulty here at every step) and start hampering the interpreter of the interpreter, the one who in his or her own language is supposed in turn to introduce the introducer. One has the air of someone indefinitely prolonging dilatory maneuvers, distracting attention, focusing it on oneself, commanding it by insisting: this is what is mine here, belongs to me, the introducer, to my style, to my way of doing, saying, writing, interpreting things, and believe me, it's worth the detour, if I may say so, that's a promise, and so on.

This essay was published for the first time in English as the introduction to "The Shell and the Kernel," an article by Nicolas Abraham, trans. Nicholas Rand, in *Diacritics* 9, 1 (Spring 1979). The French text was subsequently published in *Confrontation*, Cahiers 8 (1982).

Unless in assuming the indiscretion, by underscoring the maneuver, I no longer effectively withdraw behind the cover of the so-called and presumed mother tongue, since no matter what you say about it, everything seems to lead back to it [*y revenir*], in the end, and to be up to her [*lui revenir*].

But isn't that what concerns us here? Where, here? Between *The Shell and the Kernel.*

For inducing you to think about it in advance, I have already named what you are shortly going to hear Nicolas Abraham discuss: presence, being-there (*fort/da*) or not,[1] the presumed presence to self in self-presentation, all the modes of introduction or of hospitality given in me, by me, to what is foreign, introjection or incorporation, all the so-called "dilatory" procedures (the "so to speak conventional means that are implicitly offered by the whole cultural context to facilitate—except in the case of fixation—detachment from the mothering mother while still signifying a dilatory attachment");[2] and you will shortly hear Nicolas Abraham speak about all that, and at the same time about translation. For he is simultaneously speaking about translation (and not just when he actually uses the word), about translation from one language into another (with foreign words), and even from one language into itself (with the "same" words suddenly changing their sense, overflowing with sense or exceeding it altogether, and nevertheless impassive, imperturbable, identical to themselves, allowing you still to read in the new code of this anasemic translation what belonged to the other word, the same one, before psychoanalysis, which is another language that makes use of the same words but imposes a "radical semantic change" on them). Speaking simultaneously of translation in every sense as well as beyond or before sense, simultaneously translating the old concept of translation into the language of psychoanalysis, Nicolas Abraham will also tell you about the mother tongue, as well as about all that is said about the mother, the child, the phallus, about the whole "pseudology" that submits a certain discourse on Oedipus, on castration, and law and desire, and so on, to a "childhood theory."

But if Abraham seems to be *speaking* about these extremely old matters, it is not only in order to propose a new "exegesis," but also to decipher or deconstitute their meaning so as to lead, along new *anasemic* and *antisemantic* paths, to a process anterior to meaning and preceding presence. He does so as well in order to introduce you to the code allowing you to translate the language of psychoanalysis, its new language that radically alters words, the same, ordinary language words it goes on using and translates into itself and into a whole other language: between the translated text and the translating text nothing apparently will have changed and yet between them there will now be only relations of homonymy! But, as we will see, a homonymy incomparable to any other. At stake, then, are the concepts of sense and translation. And speaking to you about psychoanalytic language, about the necessity of translating it otherwise, Abraham provides the rule for reading "The Shell and the Kernel": you will not understand much if you do not read this text as it itself teaches how to read, by taking into account the "scandalous antisemantics" of "concepts de-signified by virtue of their psychoanalytic context." This text, then, must be deciphered with the help of the code it proposes and that belongs to its own writing.

So here I am supposed to introduce—me—(into) a translation, perhaps the first in English of a major essay by Nicolas Abraham. I should therefore efface myself on the threshold and, in order to facilitate your reading, limit the obstacles to translation resulting from my writing or from the idiom of my linguistic habitus. So I will. But what is to be done with what pertains to language itself?

Moi, for example.

As always with languages, it is the alliance between a limitation and an opportunity, a chance.

In French, *moi*—unlike the German *Ich* or the English *I*—fits the subject who says *je* like a glove ("moi, je dis, traduis, introduis, conduis, etc." ["as for me, I say, translate, introduce, lead, etc."]), just as it fits the one who takes itself, lets itself, or causes itself to be taken as an object ("prends-moi, par exemple, comme je suis" or "traduis-moi, conduis-moi, introduis-moi, etc." ["take me, for example, as I am" or "translate me, lead me, introduce me, etc."]). A glove through which I can even touch *me*, myself, or my fingers, *as if* I were present to *me*-myself in the contact. But *je-me* can be declined differently in French. For example, "je me souviens, je me moque, je me fais plaisir, and so on [pronominal constructions where *me* is an indirect rather than direct object].

The appearance of this "as if" is not simply one phenomenon among others. The chapter titled "Between the 'I' and the 'Me'" [*"Entre le 'je' et le 'me'"*] situates a "hiatus," the one that, separating "I" and "me," escapes phenomenological reflexivity, the authority of presence to self and

everything it governs. This hiatus of nonpresence to self conditions the sense that phenomenology takes as its theme but it is itself neither sense nor presence. "Psychoanalysis stakes out its domain precisely on this *unthought* ground of phenomenology." If I quote this sentence, it is not only to mark an essential stage in the text's trajectory, the moment when one has to ask: "how to include within any discourse that very thing that in essence, by dint of being the precondition of discourse, escapes it." And immediately following: "If nonpresence, the kernel and ultimate ground of all discourse, is made to speak, can it—or must it—make itself heard in and through presence to self? Such is the form in which the paradoxical situation inherent to the psychoanalytic problematic appears." Indeed, the question touches on translation, on the transposition into discourse of its own condition. This is already very difficult to think, since this discourse, which thus translates its own condition, will itself still be conditioned, and to that extent, in the end, as in the beginning, will miss its mark. But this translation will be even stranger: it will have to translate into discourse what "in essence escapes it," that is, nondiscourse or, in other words, the untranslatable. And the unpresentable. That unpresentable that must be translated into presence by a discourse without betraying this structure in any way is named by Abraham the "kernel." Why? Let's set that question aside for a while.

If I have quoted this sentence, it is to recall as well that the "hiatus" also necessarily reproduces an interval, the moment of a leap in the trajectory of Nicolas Abraham himself. Himself, that is, in his relation to self, to the *I-me* of his own research: first, as far as it was possible to go, an original approach allying typically psychoanalytic questions with phenomenological ones in a field where neither phenomenologists nor psychoanalysts were accustomed to venture. All the essays before 1968, the date of "The Shell and the Kernel," preserve the still very productive trace of that approach. I am thinking in particular of "Phenomenological Reflections on the Structural and Genetic Implications of Psychoanalysis" (1959), and of "The Symbol, or, What Lies Beyond the Phenomenon" (1961). All these texts are now collected in the volume that bears the title *The Shell and the Kernel* (*L'Écorce et le noyau* [1978]). They surround or envelop the essay of 1968 (you could call it a homonym) and would allow a teleologically oriented perspective to see already in these first essays the direction of all the transformations to come. This would not be unjustified. But around 1968, the necessity of a *break* [une brisure], the space both of the play and

the articulation of terms, marked a new relation between psychoanalysis and phenomenology, a new "logic" and a new "structure" of this relation. They will affect both the idea of a structural system and the canons of "logic" in general. One explicit indication of this comes at the end of the 1968 essay, when it has just been demonstrated that the "key concepts of psychoanalysis" "do not yield to the norms of formal logic: they relate to no object or collection of objects, nor in any strict sense do they have extension or inclusiveness."

In 1968, then, a new departure, a new program of research; but the earlier traversals were indispensable. From now on, no reading can dispense with these premises.

Despite the fecundity, despite the rigor of phenomenological questioning, a rupture occurs, and it is a sharp break, a strange reversal rather, the conversion of a "conversion" that upsets everything. A note from the chapter "Between the 'I' and the 'Me'" situates Husserl's "misconception" [*contresens*] "concerning the 'Unconscious.'" The type of misconception is essential and allows us to read the hiatus that interests us here. Husserl understood the Unconscious from the standpoint of *experience, sense, presence*, as "the forgetting of experiences that once were conscious." It will be necessary to think the Unconscious by removing it from all that it makes possible, from this whole phenomenological axiomatics of sense and presence.

The frontier, a very singular one indeed, in that it separates two absolutely heterogeneous territories, now passes between two types of "semantic conversion." The one that operates within sense, so as to make it appear and preserve it, is marked in discursive translation by the inverted commas of phenomenology: the same word, the ordinary language word, once surrounded by inverted commas, designates the intentional meaning made manifest by the phenomenological reduction and all the procedures that accompany it. The other conversion, the one performed by psychoanalysis, is absolutely heterogeneous to the preceding one. It presupposes it in a certain sense, since one cannot understand it in principle without having gone to the limit, and in the most consequential fashion, of the phenomenological project (from this point of view, as well, the path taken by Nicolas Abraham appears to me to obey an exemplary necessity). But inversely it gives access to what conditions the phenomenality of sense, proceeding from an a-semantic instance. The origin of sense is here not an originary sense but pre-originary, if one can say that. If one

can say that and in order to say it, psychoanalytic discourse, still using the same words (those belonging to ordinary language and those, bracketed by inverted commas, belonging to phenomenology), quotes them once more in order to say something else, something other than sense. It is this second conversion that is signaled by the capital letters with which the French translators have rightly endowed the metapsychological notions and it is once more a fact of translation that serves Abraham as a telltale sign. We can recognize the singularity of what is here being called translation: it can operate already within the *same* language, in the linguistic sense of identity. Within the same linguistic system, English, for example, the same word, "pleasure" for example, can be translated into itself and, without really "changing" its meaning, can pass into another language, the same one, where however the alteration will have been total, either because in phenomenological language and between inverted commas the "same" word functions differently than in the "natural" language but reveals its noetico-noematic sense, or because in psychoanalytic language, this suspension itself is suspended and the same word happens to be translated into a code where it no longer has any sense, where, by making possible, for example, what one feels or understands as pleasure, pleasure itself no longer signifies "what one feels" (Freud speaks, in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, of a pleasure experienced as pain, and one has to draw the rigorous consequences that follow from an affirmation so scandalously untenable in terms of classical logic, philosophy, and common sense, as well as phenomenology). To go from the word "pleasure" in ordinary language to "pleasure" in phenomenological discourse, then to the Pleasure of psychoanalytic theory, is to undertake the strangest sort of translations. It is indeed a matter of translations, since one is passing from one language to another and since it is a certain identity (or semantic nonalteration) that executes this traversal, letting itself be *transposed* or *transported*. But that is the only "analogy" with what is currently or phenomenologically called "translation." And the whole difficulty lies in this "analogy," a word that has itself to be subjected to an anasemic translation. Indeed, the "translation" in question does not really go from one natural language to another: it is after all the same word (pleasure) that one recognizes in all three cases. To say that we are dealing with a "homonym" would not be false, but the effect of this "homonym" is not that of designating different meanings with the same form. The meanings here are not different, neither are they identical, or even analogous meanings,

and if the three words written differently (pleasure, "pleasure," Pleasure) are not homonyms, even less are they synonyms. The last one exceeds the order of sense, of presence, and of signification and "this psychoanalytic de-signification *precedes* the very possibility of meanings in collision." A precedence that must also be understood, again, I would say, translated, according to the anasemic relation, which *goes back* to the source and goes past it, to the pre-originary and pre-semantic source. Anasemic translation does not concern exchanges between significations, signifiers, and signifieds, but between the realm of signification and that which, making it possible, must still be translated into the language *of* that which it makes possible, must still be repeated, reinvested, reinterpreted there. It is this necessity that is signaled by the capital letters in the French translation of the metapsychology.

What then is anasemia? And is the "figure" that will have seemed most "appropriate" to translate its necessity indeed a "figure," and what legitimates its "appropriateness"?

I ought to stop now, let the translator work and let you read.

Just one more word, however.

I am introducing here—me—(into) a translation and therefore, already with this sole difficulty—saying *me* in all languages—I am introducing, presenting psychoanalysis in person.

How do you present psychoanalysis in person? For that it would have to be capable of presenting itself. Has it ever done so? Has it ever said "me"? "Me, psychoanalysis?" Saying "me" [*moi*] and saying "the ego" [*le moi*] are not of course the same thing. And one can be "me" without saying so, without saying it in all languages and according to all codes. And isn't *me* always a sort of homonym? Doubtless something we identify as psychoanalysis [la *psychanalyse*] has said "le moi," that is, "the me," "the ego." It will have identified it, defined, situated, and decentered it. But the movement that assigns something a place under a certain topography [*topique*] does not itself necessarily, or in any case simply, escape the jurisdiction of that topography. At the moment it introduces or presents itself as the reflexive, critical, authoritative, designated subject of a "movement," a "cause," a "theoretical" discourse, a "practice," a multinational "institution" more or less happily doing business with itself, Psychoanalysis would not for all that be released a priori from the structural laws and notably from the topic whose hypothesis it has formulated. Why not speak, for example, of a "Me" or "Ego" of psychoanalysis? And why not

perceive in it the workings of metapsychological laws? The reapplication [*repli*] of that structure must be acknowledged, even if at first it seems formed according to a simple analogy: just as psychoanalysis aims to teach us that, besides the *Id* and the *Superego*, there is an *Ego* or a *Me*, in the same way psychoanalysis as the psychic structure of a collective identity is composed of instances that can be called *Id*, *Superego*, and *Ego*. Far from setting us adrift in a vague analogism, the figure of this relation will tell us more about the terms of their analogical relation than any simple internal inspection of their content. The *Me of* psychoanalysis is perhaps not a bad introduction to the Me or Ego of which psychoanalysis speaks: what must an Ego be if something like psychoanalysis can say "Me"?

To reapply to any corpus the law with which it constitutes its object, to analyze the consequences and the conditions of this singular operation, that I would say is the inaugural gesture of Nicolas Abraham in this domain. Inaugural because it *opens* the essay whose translation I am *supposed*, as they say in English, to introduce: it introduces it. Inaugural also by virtue of the problematic that is put in place.

Taking as its apparent pretext the original French version of *The Language of Psycho-Analysis* by Laplanche and Pontalis,[3] but in reality doing something other and more than that, Abraham in fact poses the question of the "right" and the "authority" of such a *corpus juris* to claim to have the "force of law" as regards the "status of the psychoanalytic 'thing.'" And Abraham adds this essential specification: "concerning the psychoanalytic 'thing,' both in its relations to the exterior world and in its relation to itself." This *double* relation is essential in that it authorizes the "comparison" and the "image" that are then going to play an organizing role. It is the *shell-kernel figure* that, being at the origin of every symbolic and figurative act, is not merely one tropic or topical mechanism among others. But at first it is advanced simply as an "image" or a "comparison":

> Here, then, is a construction that, for all of psychoanalysis, is called upon to fulfill the functions of that agency [*instance*] on which Freud conferred the prestigious designation, Ego. Now, in referring in this comparison to the Freudian theory itself, we want to evoke that image of the Ego fighting on two fronts: turned toward the outside, moderating appeals and assaults, turned toward the inside, channeling excessive and incongruous impulses. Freud conceived of this agency as a protective layer, an ectoderm, a cerebral cortex, a *shell*. This cortical role of twofold protection, directed inward and outward, can be readily recognized in the *Vocabulary*; it is a role that understandably does not go unaccompanied by a certain *camouflage* of the very thing to be secured. Yet the shell itself is marked by what it shelters; that which it encloses is disclosed within it. And even if the kernel of psychoanalysis is not to appear in the pages of the *Vocabulary*, its secret and elusive action is nonetheless attested to at every step by its unbending resistance to encyclopedic systematization. (Abraham, "The Shell and the Kernel," 17)

The kernel of psychoanalysis: what it has itself designated, in Freud's words, as the "kernel of being," the Unconscious, and as well its "*own*" kernel, its "*own*" Unconscious. I italicize "*own*" [propre] and leave it between inverted commas: nothing here belongs properly to anything, either in the sense of the property of ownership (at least a part of the kernel is irreducible to any Ego) or in the sense of a figure's propriety, in the sense of its literal or proper sense (the "figure" of "the shell and the kernel," as soon as it is taken anasemically, functions like no other figure; it figures among the list of those "new figures, absent from the treatises on rhetoric").

This strange figureless figure, the shell-and-the-kernel, has just taken place, taken its place, declared its title: it is double and doubly *analogical*. (1) The "comparison": between the *corpus juris*, the discourse, the theoretical apparatus, the law of the concept, and so on, in short between the rationalized *Dictionary* on the one hand and the Me or Ego of psychoanalysis on the other. (2) The "image": the Ego—of which psychoanalysis speaks—appears to fight on two fronts, to provide a double protection, internal and external; it resembles a *shell*. At least a third title must be added, one hidden like a kernel under the shell of the last image (and already this strange figure opens onto its "own" abyss, since it behaves in relation to itself like a shell sheltering, protecting, encrypting something like its own kernel, which is another figure of the shell and the kernel, which itself . . . , etc.): the "cerebral cortex" or ectoderm evoked by Freud was already an "image" borrowed from the register of the "natural," picked like a fruit.

But it is not only because of this abyssal character that "the-shell-and-the-kernel" is very quickly going to exceed every limitation and measure itself against every possible risk, to cover the *totality of the field*, one might say, if this last figure did not imply a theory of surface and totality that, as we will see, loses all pertinence here.

What, then, is the relation, one will ask, between this "shell-kernel" structure and the "conversion" for which Abraham calls? How does it in-

troduce that "radical semantic change," the "scandalous anti-semantics" that is supposed to have marked the coming of psychoanalytic language? Is not "the-shell-and-the-kernel" merely one tropic, topical figure among many, a very particular apparatus that it would be misleading to generalize with a view to lending it vast powers? Could we not perform the same operation starting with another tropic, topical structure? These questions and other similar ones are legitimate up to a point. To what point?

There is a point and a moment when the image, the comparison, the analogy cease. "The shell-and-the-kernel" resembles and no longer resembles its "natural" provenance; the resemblance that refers to fruit and to the laws of natural or "objective" space comes to be interrupted. A fruit's kernel can in turn become an accessible surface. In the "figure," this turn never arises.

At a certain point, at a certain moment, a dissymmetry intervenes between the two spaces of this structure, between the surface of the shell and the depth of the kernel, which, at bottom, no longer belong to the same element, to the same space, and become incommensurable within the very relation they never cease to maintain. The kernel, by virtue of its structure, can never become a surface. "This other kernel" is not the one that can appear to me, to me who am holding it in my hand, exhibiting it after having shelled it, and so on. I, to whom a kernel can appear, and so that a kernel may appear to me, remain the shell of an inaccessible kernel. This dissymmetry prescribes a change not only of a semantic order, or rather a textual order, I would say, on the grounds that it prescribes as well and at the same time in turn another law for the interpretation of the "figure" (the shell and the kernel) that will have called it forth.

Let us specify the sense (without added sense) of this dissymmetry. The kernel is not a surface hidden from view that, after having passed through the shell, could appear. It is inaccessible, and it follows that what *marks* it with absolute nonpresence passes beyond the limitation of sense, beyond the limit of what has always tied the possibility of sense to presentability. The inaccessibility of an unpresentable kernel (escaping the laws of presence itself), untouchable and unsignifiable, not susceptible to being signified except symbolically and anasemically, this is the premise, which is itself unpresentable, of this peculiar theory of translation. It will be, it will have been necessary to translate the unpresentable into the discourse of presence, the unsignifiable into the order of signification. A mutation occurs in this change of order and the absolute heterogeneity of these two

spaces (the translated and the translating), leaves the mark of a transmutation on the body of the translation. In general, it is acknowledged that translation proceeds from meaning to meaning through the medium of another language or another code. Occupied here at the a-semantic origin of meaning, as at the unpresentable source of presence, the anasemic translation must twist its tongue to speak the nonlinguistic conditions of language. And it can do it, sometimes in the strangest ways, within the "same" language, the same lexical corpus (e.g., pleasure, "pleasure," Pleasure). The pleasure Nicolas Abraham took throughout his life in translating (especially poets: Mihály Babits, Gerard Manley Hopkins, Shakespeare, etc.)[4] and in meditating on translation, can be better understood and shared if we transport ourselves, translate ourselves toward what he tells us about anasemia and symbol, and if we read him by turning back on his text his own protocols for reading. By the same token, and by way of an exemplary example, the *shell-kernel* "figure" ought to be read according to the new *anasemic and symbolic* rule to which however it has introduced us. The law that it has given us to read must be *converted* and turned back on it. And doing this we will not accede to anything that is present, beyond the shell and its figure. Beyond the shell, (there is) "nonpresence, the kernel and ultimate reason of all discourse," "the untouched nucleus [*l'intouché nucléique*] of nonpresence." The very "messages" that the text conveys must be reinterpreted with new (anasemic and symbolic) "concepts" of sending, emitting, mission, or missive. The Freudian symbol of the "messenger" or "representative" must in turn be submitted to the same reinterpretation: "we have seen how . . . Freud's anasemic procedure, thanks to the Somato-Psychic, *creates* the symbol of the messenger and further on we will understand how it serves to reveal the symbolic character of the message itself. By way of its semantic structure, the concept of the messenger is a symbol insofar as it makes allusion to the unknowable by means of an unknown, while only the relation of terms is given. In the last analysis, all authentic psychoanalytic concepts may be reduced to these two structures (which happen to be complementary): symbol and anasemia." The very value of authenticity ("authentic concepts") will not, it seems to me, emerge from this transmutation with its ordinary meaning intact.

To translate otherwise the concept of translation, to translate it into itself outside itself. Absolute heterogeneity, signaled by the "outside itself" that extends beyond or on this side of sense, must still be translated,

anasemically, into the "in itself." "Translation" preserves a symbolic and anasemic relation to translation, to what one calls "translation." And if I insist on this, it is not only to invite you to notice what is being said and done here, namely, that one is reading the translation of a text that is itself engaged in translating another text. But also this last text, the first one, the one signed by Nicolas Abraham, is already caught up in the same thematic. A themeless thematic since the nuclear theme is never a theme, in other words, an object present to attentive consciousness, posited there before a gaze. The "theme" of translation, however, gives every sign of being present, and in its own name, in any case, in its homonym, in "The Shell and the Kernel." Regularly, whether it is a question of the "vocation of metapsychology" ("it has to *translate* [my emphasis—JD] the phenomena of consciousness—auto- or hetero-perception, representation or affect, act, reasoning or value judgement—reveal, in the language of a rigorous symbolics, the concrete, underlying relations that in each particular case conjugate the two anasemic poles: Kernel and Envelope. Among these relations there exist typical or universal formations. We will focus here on one of them, inasmuch as it constitutes the axis both of the analytic cure and of the theoretical and technical elaborations that derive from it. . . . "), or whether it is a question of the *mythic* or *poetic* function, in every case, one must learn to distrust a certain naïveté of translation and translate otherwise: "The philistine claims to *translate* [my emphasis—JD] and to paraphrase the literary symbol and thereby he abolishes it irremediably." And further on: "This way of seeing imposes itself even more strongly when the myth is taken as exemplary of a metapsychological situation. It would be naïve of anyone to take it literally and to *transpose* [my emphasis—JD] it purely and simply into the domain of the Unconscious. And doubtless myths do correspond to numerous and various 'stories' that are 'recounted' at the confines of the Kernel."

A certain "trans-" assures the passage to or from the Kernel, through *trans*lation, tropic *trans*formations according to "new figures, absent from the treatises on rhetoric," all anasemic *transfers*. In its relation to the unpresentable and nonappearing Kernel, it belongs to that *transphenomenality* whose concept had been put in place in "The Symbol, or, What Lies Beyond the Phenomenon" (a previously unpublished essay from 1961, now collected in *Anasémies II*, the volume entitled *L'Écorce et le noyau*. One ought then to look back at the opening of the work).

In 1968, the anasemic interpretation certainly bore primarily on Freudian and post-Freudian problematics: metapsychology, Freud's "pansexualism," which, according to Abraham, is "the anasemic pansexualism of the Kernel," that "nucleic Sex" that has "no relation to the difference between sexes" and about which Freud is supposed to have said, "again anasemically, that it is in essence viril" (this, it seems to me, is one of the most enigmatic and provocative passages in the essay), certain elaborations coming after Freud whose "implications," and "dependent relations" are situated by Abraham ("pseudology of the child," "childhood theory," "immobilism" and "moralism," etc.). These are some of the many paths cleared for a historical and institutional decipherment of the psychoanalytic field. And also, consequently, forms of reception or rejection, assimilation, avoidance, rejection or incorporation that may be awaiting such investigations.

For this anasemic interpretation bears also, one might say, on itself. It translates itself and asks to be read according to the protocols that it constitutes or itself performs. What is said here, in 1968, about anasemia, the symbol, the "duplicity of the trace," prescribes retrospectively and by anticipation a certain type of reading of the shell and the kernel of "The Shell and the Kernel," and so on. All the texts prior to and after 1968 are in a way enveloped there, between the shell and the kernel. It is in this long-term reading project that I wanted to engage here. Naturally, it is not only a question of reading, but in the most active, working sense of the term, of translating.

How would I have introduced—me—(into) a translation? Perhaps I was expected to fulfill at least two expectations. First, that I "situate" the 1968 essay within the work of Nicolas Abraham. It happens that chronologically it occupies an intermediate place between the first investigations of 1961 and the more famous theorizations (incorporation and introjection, cryptophoria, the "phantom" effect, etc.) that are now accessible in *Anasémies I: Le Verbier de l'homme aux loups* (1976) and chapters 2–6 of *Anasémies II: L'Écorce et le noyau* (1978). But a chronological introduction is always insufficient, and the work begun with Maria Torok goes on. Maria Torok's forthcoming publications will give us still other reasons to believe this work open to the most astonishing fecundity. So I have not been able to "situate" it: how do you situate what is too near and continues to take place, here, elsewhere, there, yesterday, today, tomorrow? Perhaps I was also expected to say how this new translation ought to be translated. To do that I could only add another one, and in order to tell you in sum:

it's your turn to translate and you have to read everything, translate everything; it's only just begun.

One last word before I withdraw from the threshold itself. Quoting Freud, Abraham speaks here of a "foreign, internal territory." And one knows that the "crypt," whose new concept he proposed with Maria Torok, has its focus in the *Me*, in the *Ego*. It is lodged, like a "false unconscious," like the prothesis of an "artificial unconscious," in the interior of the divided ego. Like every shell, it forms two fronts. And since we have spoken here, as if it were finally a difficulty of translation, about the homonymy between "Egos" [*des "Moi"*] and the singular expression "the Ego [*le Moi*] of psychoanalysis," the question will have already posed itself: and what if there were a crypt or phantom within the Ego of psychoanalysis? And if I say that question has already posed itself, by itself, like a *pierre d'attente* [toothing-stone],[5] it is not in order to presume the knowledge of what "pierre" means.

Nor in order to decide with what intonation you would say, in the false intimacy so variously declined of *I-me*: Me—psychoanalysis—you know . . .

—Translated by Richard Klein

§ 7 At This Very Moment in This Work Here I Am

—He will have obligated [*Il aura obligé*].

At this very instant, you hear me, I have just said it. He will have obligated. If you hear me, already you are sensitive to the strange event. You have not been visited, but just as after the passage of some singular visitor, you are no longer familiar with the places, those very places where nonetheless the little sentence—where does it come from? who pronounced it?—lets its resonance still wander.

As if from now on we didn't dwell there any longer, and to tell the truth, as if we had never been at home. But you aren't uneasy, what you feel is something unheard-of, yet so very ancient—it's not a malaise, and even if something is affecting you without having touched you, still you have been deprived of nothing. No negation ought to be able to measure up to what is happening so as to describe it.

Notice, you can still hear yourself, understand yourself, all alone repeating the four words ("he will have obligated"), you have failed neither to hear their rumor nor understand their sense. You are no longer without them, without these words that are discreet, and thereby unlimited, overflowing with discretion. I myself no longer know where to stop them. What surrounds them? He will have obligated. The edges of the sentence remain drowned in the fog. Nevertheless it seems to be quite sharply and clearly set apart in its authoritarian brevity, complete without appeal, without requiring any adjective or complement, not even any noun:

First version published in *Textes pour Emmanuel Levinas* (Paris: J.-M. Place, 1980).

he will have obligated. But precisely, nothing surrounds it sufficiently to assure us of its limits. The sentence is not evasive, but its border lies concealed. About the sentence [*d'elle*; also, about her, from her], whose movement can't be resumed by any of the one, two, three words ["il aura obligé"] of one, two, three syllables, about it [*d'elle*; from her] you can no longer say that nothing is happening [*rien n'arrive*; nothing is coming, nothing comes about] at this very moment. But what then? The shore is lacking, the edges of a sentence belong to the night.

He will have obligated—at a distance from every context.

You hear me: at a distance, which does not forbid, on the contrary, proximity. What they call a context, and which comes to narrow the sense of a discourse, always more or less, is never simply absent, only more or less strict. But no cut *is* there, no utterance is ever cut from all context, the context is never annulled without remainder. One must therefore negotiate, deal, transact with effects of the border. One must even negotiate the nonnegotiable that overflows all context.

Here, at this very moment, when I am here, trying to give you to understand, the border of a context is less narrow, less strictly determining than one is accustomed to believe. "He will have obligated": there you have a sentence that may appear to some indeterminate, even terribly so. But the distance that is granted to us here would not be due so much to a certain quite apparent absence of a border ("he will have obligated" without a nameable subject, complement, attribute, or identifiable past or future on this page, in this work at the moment when you hear yourself presently reading it), but rather because of a certain *inside* of what is said and of the saying of what is said *in* the sentence, and that, from within, if this may still be said, infinitely *overflows* at a stroke all possible context. And that at the very moment, in a work [*ouvrage*], for example—but you don't yet know what I mean by that word, work—when the wholly other who will have visited this sentence negotiates the nonnegotiable with a context, negotiates his economy *as* (well as) that of the other.

He will have obligated.

You must find me enigmatic, a bit glib or perverse in cultivating the enigma every time I repeat this little sentence, each time the same and, for lack of context, becoming more and more obscure. No, and I say this without studying the effect, the possibility of this repetition is the very thing that interests me, interests you as well, even before we have cause to find it interesting, and I should like slowly to move closer (to you, maybe, but by a proximity that binds one, he would say, at first glance to

the unmatched other, before all contract, without any present being able to gather together a contact), slowly to bring myself closer to this, which I can no longer formalize, since the event ("he will have obligated") will have precisely defied, within language, this power of formalization. He will have obligated to comprehend, let us say, rather, to receive, because affection, an affection more passive than passivity, is party to all this, he will have obligated to receive totally otherwise the little sentence. To my knowledge he has never pronounced it as such, it matters little. He will have obligated to "read" it totally otherwise. Now to make us (without doing anything) receive otherwise, and receive otherwise the otherwise, he has been unable to do otherwise than negotiate with the risk: in the same language, the language of the same, one may always receive badly, wrongly this otherwise-said. Even before that fault, the risk contaminates its every proposition. What becomes of this fault then? And if it is inevitable, what sort of event is at issue? Where would it take place?

He will have obligated. However distanced it may remain, there is certainly some context for this sentence.

You hear it resonate, at this very moment, in this work.

What I call thus—this work—is above all not dominated by the name of Emmanuel Levinas.

It is rather, by intention, given to him. It is given according to his name, in his name as much as to his name. Thus there are multiple chances, probabilities, you cannot avoid giving in to them, that Emmanuel Levinas is the subject of the sentence "He will have obligated."

Yet this is not certain. And even if one could be sure of it, would one thereby have answered the question: Who is the "He" [*Il*] in that sentence?

Following a strange title that resembles a cryptic quotation in its invisible quotation marks, the site of this "princeps" sentence doesn't allow you yet to know by what right *He* takes a capital. Perhaps not only as an incipit, and, on this hypothesis of another capital letter or of the capital letter of the Other, be attentive to the chain of consequences. It [*Elle*; She] draws one into the play of the irreplaceable *He* submitting to substitution, like an object, in the irreplaceable itself. He, without italics.

I wonder whence it comes that I have to address myself to you [*à toi*] to say that. And why after so many attempts, so many failures, here I am obligated to renounce the anonymous neutrality of a discourse proposed, in its form at least, to no matter whom, claiming self-mastery and mas-

tery of its object in a formalization without remainder? I won't pronounce your name nor inscribe it, but you are not anonymous at the moment when here I am telling you this, *sending it* to you like a letter, giving it to you to hear or to read, *giving* it to you being infinitely more important to me than what it might transmit at the moment I receive the desire from you, at the moment when I let you dictate to me what I would like to give you of myself. Why? Why at this very moment?

Suppose that in giving to you—it little matters what—I wanted to give to him, to him, Emmanuel Levinas. Not render him anything, homage, for example, not even render myself up to him, but to give him something that escapes from the circle of restitution or of the "rendez-vous." ("Proximity," he writes, "doesn't enter into that common time of clocks that makes the rendez-vous possible. It is derangement.") I would like to do it faultlessly [*sans faute*], with a "faultlessness" that no longer belongs to the time or logic of the rendezvous. It would then be necessary that beyond any possible restitution my gesture operate without debt, in absolute ingratitude. The trap is that I then pay homage, the only possible homage, to his work, to what his work says of the Work [*Œuvre*]: "The Work thought to the end requires a radical generosity of the movement in which the Same goes toward the Other. Consequently, it requires an ***ingratitude*** from the other." He will have written this twice, in appearance literally identically, in "The Trace of the Other" and in "Meaning and Sense." But one cannot economize on this *seriality*. I will return to this.

Suppose, then, that I wished *to give*, to EL, and beyond all restitution. On my part or his. I will have to do it all the same *in conformity* with what he will have said of the Work [*l'Œuvre*]. I will still be caught in the circle of debt and restitution with which the nonnegotiable will have to be negotiated. I will be struggling, interminably, forever, and even before having known it, up to the point, perhaps, when I would affirm the absolutely anachronic dissymmetry of a debt without loan, acknowledgment, or possible restitution.

According to which he will have immemorially obligated, even before calling himself by any name whatsoever or belonging to any genre whatsoever. The conformity of *in conformity* is no longer thinkable within the logic of truth that dominates—without being able to command it—our language and the language of philosophy. If in order to give without restituting, I must still conform to what he says of the Work in his work, and

to what he gives there as well as to be re-traced in the nature of giving; more precisely, if I must conform my gesture to what makes the Work in his Work, which is older than his work, and whose Saying according to his own terms is not reducible to the Said, then there we are engaged, before any engagement, in an incredible logic, formal and nonformal. If I restitute, if I restitute without fault, I am at fault. And if I do not restitute, by *giving* beyond acknowledgment, I risk the fault. For the moment, I leave to this word—fault—free rein in all its registers, from crime to a spelling mistake. As to the proper name of what finds itself at issue here, as to the proper name of the other, perhaps that would come back to and come down to the same. Must the name of the other be invented? But what does to invent mean? To find, to discover, to unveil, to cause to come there where it was, to come about there where it was not? Always without forewarning [*prévenir*]?

So you are forewarned: it is the risk or chance of this fault that fascinates or obsesses me at this very moment, and what can happen to a faulty writing, to a faulty letter (the one I write you), what can remain of it, what the ineluctable possibility of such a fault gives one to think about a text or a remainder. Ineluctable since the structure of "faultiness" is, a priori, older even than any a priori. If someone [He] tells you *from the start*: "Do not return to me what I give you," you are at fault even before he finishes talking. It suffices that you hear him, that you begin to understand and acknowledge. You have begun to receive his injunction, to submit to what he says, and the more you obey him in restituting nothing, the better you will disobey him and become deaf to what he addresses to you. This might resemble a logical paradox or trap. But it is "anterior" to all logic. I was *wrong* to speak of a trap just now. It feels like a trap only from the moment, through a will to mastery or coherence, one pretends to escape from absolute dissymmetry. This would be a way of acknowledging the gift in order to refuse it. Nothing is more difficult than to accept a gift. Now what I "want" to "do" here is to accept the gift, to affirm and reaffirm it as what I have received. Not from someone who himself took the initiative for it, but from someone who would have had the force to receive it and *reaffirm* it. And if it is thus that (in my turn) I give to you, it will no longer form a chain of restitutions, but another gift, the gift of the other. The invention of the other. Is that possible? Will it have been possible? Must it not have already taken place, before

everything, so that its very question may arise, which renders the question obsolete in advance?

The gift *is not*. One cannot ask "what is the gift?" Yet it is only on that *condition* that there will have been, by this name or another, a gift.

Suppose then: beyond all restitution, in radical ingratitude (but careful, not just any ingratitude, not the ingratitude that still belongs to the circle of acknowledgment and reciprocity), I desire (it desires in me, but the it [*le ça*] is not a neutral non-me) to try to give to EL. This or that? Such and such a thing? A discourse, a thought, a writing? No, that would once more give rise to exchange, commerce, economic reappropriation. No, to give him the very giving of giving, a giving that would no longer even be an object or a present said, since every present remains within the economic sphere of the same, or an impersonal infinitive (the "giving" here must therefore puncture the grammatical phenomenon dominated by the ordinary interpretation of language), or any operation or action sufficiently self-identical to return to the same. This "giving" must neither be a thing nor an act, it must somehow be someone (masculine or feminine) not me: and not him ("he"). Strange, isn't it, this excess that overflows language at every instant and yet requires it, sets it incessantly into motion at the very moment of traversing it? This traversal is not a transgression, the passage of a sharply dividing limit; the very metaphor of overflowing [*débordement*] no longer fits insofar as it still implies some linearity.

Even before I attempt or desire to attempt it, suppose that the desire for that gift is called up in me by the other, without however obligating me or at least before any obligation of constraint, contract, gratitude, or acknowledgment of the debt: a duty without debt, a debt without contract. This should do without him or happen with no matter who. But it demands, *at the same time*, this anonymity, this possibility of indefinitely equivalent substitution *and* the singularity, rather the absolute uniqueness of the proper name. Beyond any thing, beyond whatever might lead it astray or seduce it toward something else, beyond everything that could somehow or other return to me, such a gift should go right to the unique, to what his name will have *uniquely* named, to that uniqueness that his name will have given. This *right* does not derive from any right, from any jurisdiction transcendent to the gift itself; it is the right of what he calls, in a sense that perhaps you do not understand yet because he disturbs language every time he visits it, *rectitude* or *sincerity*.

Which his name will have *uniquely* named or given. But (but one ought to say *but* for every word) uniquely in another sense than that of the singularity that jealously guards its propriety or property as irreplaceable subject within the proper name of an author or proprietor, in the sufficiency of a self assured of its signature. Finally, suppose that in tracing the gift I commit a fault, that I let a fault, as they say, slip in, that I don't write straight, that I fail to write as one must (but *one must* [il faut], *one must* understand otherwise the *one must*), or that I fail to give him, *to him*, a gift that is not *his, from him*. I am not thinking at this very moment of a fault on his name, his forename, or patronym, but of some writing flaw that in the end would constitute a fault of spelling [*faute d'orthographe*], a bad treatment inflicted on his proper name, whether or not I do it, in conscience, on purpose.

Since your body is at stake in this fault, and since, as I said a moment ago, the gift I would make him comes from you who dictate it to me, you are more and more worried. In what could such a fault consist? Will one ever be able to avoid it? If it were *inevitable*—and therefore irreparable in the final accounting—why should one have to ask for its reparation? And especially, above all, on this hypothesis, what would take place? I mean: What would happen (and from what? or whom?)? What would be the proper place of this text, of this faulty body? Would it have properly taken place? Where should we, you and I, let it be?

— No, not let it be. Soon, we will have to give it to eat, and to drink, and you will listen to me,

—Does the body of a faulty text take place? As for him, he has an answer to this question. So it seems. There should be no protocols for gifts, or any preliminaries lingering around the conditions of possibility. Or else the protocols must already constitute a gift. It is under the heading of protocol, and without knowing, therefore, how far a gift is probable there, that I would first like to interrogate his response to the question of the faulty text. His answer is first of all practical. He treats the fault, deals with the fault by writing: in a certain way and not in another. The interest I take in the manner in which he writes his works [*ouvrages*] may appear out of place: to write, in the common sense of the word, to make up sentences and compose, to exploit a rhetoric or a poetics, and so on, is not ultimately what matters to him; this is a set of subordinated gestures.

And yet I believe that the obligation at issue in the earlier little sentence is *knotted up in* a certain way of tying or linking not only the Saying to the Said, as he says, but the Writing [*l'écrire*] to the Said and the Saying to the written [*l'écrit*], and of tying, binding, linking, interlacing according to a serial structure of a singular type. Later I will insist on what I myself am lacing up into this word *series*.

How, then, does he write? How does what he writes make a work [*ouvrage*], and make the Work [*Œuvre*] in the work [*ouvrage*]? What does he do, for example and par excellence, when he writes in the present, in the grammatical form of the present, to say what does not present itself and will never have been present, the *present said* only presenting itself in the name of a Saying that overflows it infinitely within and without, like a sort of absolute anachrony of the wholly other that, although incommensurably heterogeneous to the language of the present and the discourse of the same, nonetheless leaves a trace there, a trace that is always improbable but each time determinate, this one, and not another? How does he manage to inscribe or let the wholly other be inscribed within the language of being, of the present, of essence, of the same, of economy, and so forth, within its syntax and lexicon, under its law? How does he manage to give rise there, while inventing it, to what remains absolutely foreign to this medium, absolutely untied from this tongue, beyond being, the present, essence, the same, economy, and so on? Isn't it necessary to reverse the question, at least apparently, and ask oneself if it is not this language, this tongue that is *untied by and from itself*, therefore opened to the wholly other, to its own beyond, in such a way that it is less a matter of exceeding this language than of dealing otherwise with its own possibilities. To deal with it otherwise, that is, to calculate the transaction, negotiate the compromise that will leave the nonnegotiable intact, and manage it so that the fault, the one that consists in inscribing the wholly other in the empire of the same, alters the same enough to absolve it from and of itself. That is his response as I see it, and this de facto response, if one may say so, this response in deed, or rather at work [*à l'œuvre*] in the series of strategic negotiations, this response does not respond to a problem or a question; it responds to the Other—for the Other—and approaches writing by ordering itself according to this for-the-Other. It is by starting from the Other that writing thus gives place, gives rise [*donne lieu*] and makes for an event, for example, this one: "He will have obligated."

It is this response, the responsibility of this response, that I would like to interrogate in its turn. Interrogate, to be sure, is not the word, and I don't yet know how to qualify what is happening here between him, you, and me, which does not belong to the order of questions and responses. It would be rather his responsibility—and what he says of responsibility—that interrogates us beyond all the coded discourses on the subject.

So then: What is he doing? how does he work [*comment œuvre-t-il*] when, under the false appearance of a present, in a more-than-present [*plus-que-présent*], he will have written this, for example, where I slowly read to you, at this very moment, listen, what he says about Psyche, about "the psyche . . . [as] a seed of folly."

> Responsibility for the Other, going against intentionality and the will, which intentionality does not succeed in dissimulating, signifies not the disclosure of a given and its reception, but the exposure of me to the other, prior to every decision. There is a claim laid on the Same by the Other in the core of myself, the extreme tension of the command exercised by the other in me over me, a traumatic hold of the other on the Same, which does not give the same time to await the Other. . . . The subject in responsibility is alienated in the depths of its identity with an alienation that does not empty the same of its identity, but constrains it to it, with an unimpeachable assignation, constrains it to it as no one else, where no one could replace it. The psyche, a uniqueness outside of concepts, is a seed of folly, already a psychosis. It is not an ego [*Moi*], but me [*moi*] under assignation. An assignation to identity for the response of responsibility where there is no possibility of having oneself replaced without fault. To this command continually put forth only a "here I am" [*me voici*] can answer, where the pronoun "I" is in the accusative, declined before any declension, possessed by the other, sick,[1] identical. Here I am—an inspired saying, which is not a gift for fine words or songs. There is constraint *to give*, with full hands, and thus a constraint to corporeality. . . . It is the subjectivity of a man of flesh and blood, more passive in its extradition to the other than the passivity of effects in a causal chain, for it is beyond the unity of apperception of the *I think*, which is actuality itself. It is a being-torn-up-from-oneself-for-another in the giving-to-the-other-of-the-bread-out-of-one's-own-mouth. This is not an anodyne formal relation, but all the gravity of the body extirpated from its *conatus essendi* in the possibility of the *giving*. The identity of the subject is here brought out, not by resting upon itself, but by a restlessness that drives me outside of the nucleus of my substantiality.[2]

(I should have liked slowly to consider the title of the work [*ouvrage*] that I have just cited, *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*: in a singu-

lar comparative locution that does not constitute a sentence, an adverb [*otherwise*] immeasurably wins out over a verb (and what a verb: *to be*) to say an "other" that cannot make or even modify a noun or a verb, or this noun-verb that always comes back and comes down to *being*, to say an "other" that is neither verb nor noun, and especially not the simple alter-*ity* that would put the *otherwise*, this modality without substance, still under the authority of a category, an essence or again a being. The beyond of verbalization (constitution as verb) or nominalization, the beyond of the *symplokē* linking nouns and verbs so as to play into the hands of essence, this beyond leaves a chain of traces, another *symplokē* already "within" the title, *beyond essence*, yet without letting itself be included there, deforming rather the curvature of its natural edges.)

You have just heard the "present" of the "Here I am" delivered over to the other and declined before any declension. This "present" was already very complicated in its structure, one could say almost contaminated by that very thing from which it should have been torn away. It is not the presumed signatory of the work, EL, who says: "Here I am," me, presently. He *cites* a "Here I am," he thematizes what is nonthematizable (to use this vocabulary, to which he has assigned a regular—and somewhat peculiar—conceptual function in his writings). But beyond the Song of Songs, or Poem of Poems, the quotation of whoever would say "Here I am" has to mark out *this* extradition in which the responsibility for the other delivers me over to the other. No grammatical marking as such, no language or context will suffice to determine it. This present-citation, which, as a quotation, seems to erase the present event of any irreplaceable "here I am," also comes *to say* that in "here I am" the I [*le Moi*] is no longer presented as a subject, present to itself, making itself a present of itself (I-me): it [*il*] is declined before all declension, "in the accusative," and it, *il*

—*Il ou elle*, he or she, if the interruption of the discourse is required? Isn't it "she" in the *Song of Songs*? And who would "she" [*elle*] be? Does it matter? Is it EL? Emmanuel Levinas? God?

Nearly always with him, this is how he fabricates the fabric of his work, interrupting the weave of our language and then weaving together the interruptions themselves, another language comes to disturb the first one. It doesn't inhabit it, but haunts it. Another text, the text of the other, without ever appearing in its original language, arrives in silence with a more or less regular cadence to dislocate the language of translation, to convert the version, turn it inside out, bend it to the very thing it pretends to import. It [*Elle*] disassimilates it. But then, this sentence translated and quoted from the Song of Songs—and it should be recalled, that it [*elle*] is already a response, and a response that is more or less fictitious in its rhetoric, and what is more, a response made in order in turn to be *cited*, transmitted, and communicated in indirect discourse, which gives the accusative case [of the *Me voici*] greater grammatical plausibility (various translations render it more or less exactly: "I opened to my beloved; / but my beloved had gone away, he had disappeared. / I was outside myself when he spoke to me. . . . I called him and he did not reply. . . . They have taken away my veil, the guards of the walls. / I implore you, daughters of Jerusalem / If you find my beloved, / What will you say to him? . . . / That I am sick with love." Or again "I open myself to my darling / but my darling has slipped away, he has passed. / My being goes out at his speaking: / I seek him and do not find him. / I call him: he does not reply. . . . On me they take away my shawl, / the guardians of the ramparts. / I appeal to you, daughters of Yeroushalaim: if you find my darling, what will you declare to him? / —That sick with love, I . . . ")—this sentence translated and quoted (in a footnote, so as to open up and deport the principal text), is torn from the mouth of a woman, so as to be given to the other. Why doesn't he specify that in this work?

—Doubtless because that remains, in this context and with regard to his most urgent purpose, secondary. So, to that question, here at least, he doesn't seem to respond. In the passage that quotes the "here I am," which I have in turn read to you, the structure of the utterances is complicated by the "astriction to giving." What is quoted here is what no quotation should be able to muffle any longer; what is each time said only once, and therefore exceeds not the saying but the said in language. The sentence describes or says what, within the said, interrupts it, makes it at one stroke anachronistic with respect to the saying, negotiates between the said and the saying and interrupts the negotiation, negotiating forthwith the interruption itself. Such negotiation deals with a language, with a grammatical and lexical order, with a system of normative constraints that tend to interdict what *must be said* [il faut dire] here, namely, the astriction to giving and the extradition of subjectivity to the other. The negotiation thematizes what does not allow itself to be thematized; and in

the very trajectory of that transaction, it forces language into a contract with the stranger, with what it can only incorporate without assimilating. With a nearly illegible stroke, the other stands up [*fait faux-bond*] the contaminating negotiation and furtively marks the effraction with a saying that, even as it is no longer *said in language*, is nevertheless not reduced to silence. The grammatical utterance is there, but it has been put out of joint [*disloqué*] so as to make room, although not a home, for a sort of agrammaticality of the gift assigned from the other: *I* in the accusative, and so on. The interdictory language is interdicted but continues speaking; it can't help it, it can only continue strangely interrupting itself, dumbstruck [*interloqué*] by what traverses it at a single step, drawing it along behind while leaving it in place. Whence the essential function of a quotation, its unique setting to work that, by quoting the uncitable, consists in accusing language, in quoting it in its entirety to appear *at the same time* as witness and as accused within its limits, (sur)rendered to a gift, *as* a gift to which language cannot open up on its own. It is not, then, simply a matter of transgression, a simple passage beyond language and its norms. It is not a thinking of the limit, at least not of that limit all too easily figured by the word "beyond" that is so necessary for the transaction. The passage beyond language requires language or rather the text as a place for the trace of a step that is not (present) elsewhere. That is why the movement of this trace, passing beyond language, is not classical, and it does not render the logos either secondary or instrumental. Logos remains indispensable as the fold that bends to the gift, and as the tongue of my mouth when I tear bread from it to give it to the other. It is also my body.

The description of this discursive structure could be further refined, but that matters little. Whatever its complications, the example we have just encountered is still contained within quite strict limits. What are these limits? By reason of the first-degree citationality, so to speak, of the "here I am," which is not the complacent exhibition of the self but the unreserved exposition of its still secret secret, the presumed signatory, EL, does not directly say I in the text. He speaks of the "I think," doubtless he does so otherwise, and sometimes the indecision remains undecidable as to whether or not he is saying "I" or the "I," "me" or the "me" (for example: "The identity of the subject is here brought out, not by resting on itself, but by a restlessness that drives me out of the nucleus of my substantiality" [142; 111]. Earlier in the same book, he writes: "I have not done

anything and I have always been under accusation: persecuted. Ipseity, in its passivity without *archē* of identity, is hostage. The word *I* means *here I am*, answering for everything and everyone" [145; 114]), according to a rhetoric that may appear traditional within philosophical discourse. But nothing in the passage you have heard *remarks* a certain present of the scription, at this very moment, the phenomenal maintenance of writing, the "I say now [*maintenant*] that I say (the Saying)" or "I write now that I write (the Saying)," what you are at this very moment reading. At least, it is not thematized. When the time comes, and it is coming, it will be necessary to complicate further the protocols of the negotiation with the contagious or contaminating powers of a reappropriating language, of the language of the Same that is foreign or allergic to the Other. And to produce or recognize therein the symptoms of that allergy, especially when something like a "this is what is going on at this moment" or "here is what I mean and how I say it in this work" or "here's how I write certain of my books" comes to describe the law of this negotiation and by the same token to interrupt it but *not without* recounting the interruption. For this negotiation is not like any other. It negotiates the nonnegotiable and not with some partner or adversary or other, but with the negotiation itself, with the negotiating power that believes it has the power to negotiate everything. *This* negotiation (which passively and one could almost say idly interrupts the negotiating activity, which negates it through a double negation) has to negotiate the treatment of the nonnegotiable so as to preserve its chances, that is to say, so that it gives and does not keep itself intact, like the same.

Here is an example (I will limit myself to a few examples, taking into account the economy regulated at this very moment by the time of writing, the mode of composition, and the publisher's production of this work here). Listen:

> But does the reason characteristic of justice, the State, thematization, synchronization, of the re-presentation of logos and of being succeed *in absorbing into its coherence the intelligibility of the proximity in which it unfolds?* Must not the latter be subordinated to the former, since the *very discourse we are holding at this moment* [my emphasis—JD] counts by its *Said*, since, in thematizing, we are synchronizing the terms, forming a system among them, using the verb "to be," placing in *being* all signification that allegedly signifies beyond being? Or must we reinvoke alternation and diachrony as the time of philosophy? (213; 167)

And a little further on, another example, where you will notice, around the "at this very moment," the metaphor of the *retied thread* [fil renoué]. It belongs to a very singular fabric, that of a relation (this time in the sense of a *récit*, a narrative, a relation of the same that resumes [*reprend*] the interruptions of the Relation to the Other within its knots) by which the philosophical logos reappropriates itself, resumes into its web the history of all its ruptures:

> Every contestation and interruption of this power of discourse is at once related and invested by the discourse. It thus recommences as soon as one interrupts it. . . . This discourse will prove itself to be coherent and one. In relating the interruption of the discourse or my being swept away by it, I retie its thread. . . . And are we not *at this very moment* [my emphasis—JD] in the process of barring the exit that our whole essay is attempting, and of encircling our position from all sides? The exceptional words by which the trace of the past and the extravagance of the approach are said—One, God—become terms, reenter the vocabulary, and are put at the disposal of philosophers instead of unseating philosophical language. Their very explosions are recounted. . . . Thus signifies the inextricable equivocity woven by language. (215; 169)

Within the question just posed ("And are we not at this very moment . . . ?"), the "at this very moment" would be the enveloping form, the web of a text resuming without end all its tears within itself. But two pages later, the same "at this very moment," otherwise said within the text, caught up in another enchaining-unchaining, comes to say something wholly other, namely, that "at this very moment" the interruptive breakthrough takes place, ineluctable *at the very moment* when the discursive relation, the philosophical *récit*, claims to reappropriate for itself the tear within the continuum of its texture:

> [T]he intervals are not recuperated. Does not the discourse that suppresses the interruptions of discourse by relating them maintain the discontinuity beneath the knots where the thread is retied? (217; 170)
>
> The interruptions of discourse, found and related within the immanence of the said, are preserved like the knots of a retied thread, trace of a diachrony that does not enter into the present, refusing itself to simultaneity.
>
> And I still interrupt the ultimate discourse in which all the discourses are stated, in saying it to one that listens to it, and who is situated outside the Said that the discourse says, outside all it includes. Which is true of the discourse I am elaborating *at this very moment* [my emphasis—JD]. This reference to an interlocutor permanently pierces the text that the discourse claims to weave in thematizing and enveloping all things. In totalizing being, discourse qua Discourse thus belies the very claim to totalize. (216; 170)

At an interval of two pages, an interval that neither can nor should be reduced and that here constitutes an absolutely singular seriality, the same "at this very moment" seems to repeat itself only so as to dis-locate itself [*se dis-loquer*] without return. The "same" of the "very" in "at this very moment" [*le "même" du "même" de "en ce moment même"*] has remarked its own alteration, one will have opened it up to the other since forever. The "first" one, which formed the element of reappropriation in the continuum, will have been *obligated* by the "second," the other one, the one of interruption, even before being produced, and in order to be produced. The one will have constituted a text and context with the other, but this is a series where the text composes and compromises with its own (if this may still be said) tear. The "at this very moment" only composes with itself by means of an immeasurable anachrony incommensurable with itself. The singular textuality of this "series" does not enclose the Other; on the contrary, it [*elle*] opens itself up from out of irreducible difference, the passed [*la passée*] before any present, before any present moment, before anything we think we understand when we say "at this very moment."

This time, the "at this very moment," even though it cited itself (recited from one page to the next in order to mark the interruption of the *récit*) will not have been, like the earlier "here I am," a quotation. Its iteration—for it is iterable and repeated in the series—is not of the same type. If language there is *at once used* and *mentioned* (as the theoreticians of speech acts would say), the mention is not of the same kind as the "here I am" cited earlier, in the traditional sense of the term. It is thus a strange event. The words describe (constate) and produce (perform) there undecidably. A written [text] and a writing immediately imply the "I-nowhere" of the scriptor. The strange event involves a serial repetition, but it is repeated again elsewhere, as a series, regularly. For example, at the end of "Le nom de Dieu d'après quelques textes Talmudiques" ("The Name of God According to a Few Talmudic Texts").[3] The expression "at this very moment" or "at this moment" appears there twice within a three-line interval, the second one presented as the deliberate if not strictly citational

resumption of the first. The calculated allusion remarks there, in any case, the *same moment* (each time it is now) and the same expression, although from one moment to the next, the same moment is no longer the same. But if it is no longer the same, this is not, as with "sense certainty" in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, due to the passing of time (since writing down *das Jetzt ist die Nacht*), so that the now is now no longer the same. It is due, rather, to another thing, to the thing as Other. Listen, it is once more the soul, or *psyche*:

> Responsibility which, before the discourse bearing on the *said*, is probably the essence of language.

[I cut into my reading here so as to admire this "probably": there is nothing empirical or approximate about it, it does not reduce the rigor of the utterance it determines. As responsibility (ethics before ontology), the essence of language does not belong to discourse about the *said*, which can only determine certainties. Here essence does not define the being of what is but what should be or will have been, which cannot be proved within the language of being-present, in the language of essence insofar as it tolerates no improbability. Even though language is also that which, leading back to presence, to the same, to the economy of being, and so on, does not *surely* have its essence in that responsibility responding (to and for) the other as a past that will never have been present, nevertheless it "is" such responsibility that sets language in motion. Without this (ethical) responsibility, there would be no language, but *it is never sure* that language surrenders to the responsibility that renders it possible (surrenders to its simply probable essence): it may always (and this is even probably, to a certain extent, ineluctable) betray that responsibility and tend toward enclosing it within the same. Language must be allowed this freedom to betray so that it can surrender to its essence, which is the ethical. The essence for once, and this is unique, is delivered over to probability, risk, and uncertainty. On this basis, the essence of essence remains to be rethought beginning with responsibility for the other, and so forth.]

> It will, of course, be objected that if any other relation than thematization may exist between the Soul and the Absolute, then would not the act of talking and thinking about it *at this very moment* [my emphasis—JD], the fact of enveloping it in our dialectic, mean that language and dialectic are superior with respect to that Relation?

> But the language of thematization, which *at this moment* [my emphasis—JD] we are using, has perhaps only been made possible [*a peut-être été rendu seulement possible*] by means of that Relation, and is only ancillary.
>
> There will certainly be an objection to this: if, between the soul and the Absolute, there can exist a relation other than thematization, does not the fact of speaking and thinking about it *at this very moment* [my emphasis—JD], the fact of wrapping it up in our dialectic, mean that thought, language, and dialectic have sovereign power over this Relation?
>
> But the language of thematization that we are using *at the moment* has perhaps been made possible only by this Relation, and is subservient to it. (128)

A "perhaps" ("has perhaps only been made possible") still affects this assertion: yet it nonetheless concerns a condition of possibility, *the very thing* [cela même] that philosophy removes from every "perhaps." This is consonant with the earlier "probably," and the "only" making possible can also be read, perhaps, in two ways: (1) It has not been made *possible except* by that Relation (classical form of a statement on the condition of possibility); (2) It has been made only *possible* (probable), a reading that corresponds better to ordinary syntactic order, and to the insecurity of the *perhaps*.

You will have noticed that the two occurrences of "at this moment" are inscribed and interpreted, drawn along according to two different gestures. In the first case, the present moment is determined in relation to the movement of a present thematization, a presentation that claims to encompass within itself the Relation that nevertheless exceeds it, claims to exceed it, precede it, overflow it. This first "moment" makes the other return to the same. But the other, the second "moment," if it is rendered possible by the excessive relation, is no longer and will never have been a present "same." Its "same" is (will have been) dislocated by the very thing that will have (probably, perhaps) been its "essence," namely, the Relation. It is anachronic; in itself disparate, it no longer closes in on itself. It is not what it is, in this strange and only probable essence, except by letting itself be opened up in advance and deported by the Relation that makes it possible. The Relation [*Elle*] *will have* made it possible—and by the same token impossible as presence, sameness, and assured essence.

One must be still more precise. Between the two occurrences of "at this moment," the connection is not one of distinction. It is the "same" moment that is each time repeated and divided each time in its connection to its own essence, to the responsibility that makes it possible. In the

first case, EL thematizes the thematization that envelops, covers up, and dissimulates the Relation. In the second case, EL thematizes the nonthematizable of a Relation that no longer lets itself be enveloped within the tissue of the same. But although, between the two "moments," there is an interval that is chronological, logical, rhetorical, and even ontological—to the extent that the first belongs to ontology while the second escapes it in making it possible—it is the *same moment*, written and read in its difference, in its double difference, one belonging to dialectic and the other differing from and deferring [*différant*] the first, infinitely and in advance overflowing it. The second moment has an infinite advance on the first. And yet it is the same.

But there must be a *series*, a beginning of a series of this "same" (at least two occurrences) if the writing of dislocation of the Same toward the Relation is to have a chance and a hold. EL would not have been able to give one to understand the *probable* essence of language without this singular repetition, this quotation or recitation that causes the Same to come [*venir*] rather than come down [*revenir*] to the Other. I said a "chance" because even if one is obligated, one is never constrained to read what is thus given to be read. Certainly, it appears clear and clearly said, that, in the second occurrence, the "at this moment" that determines the language of thematization finds itself, one can no longer say determined, but disturbed in its normal signification of presence, by this Relation, which makes it possible by opening (by having opened) it to the Other, outside of theme, outside presence, beyond the circle of the Same, beyond Being. Such an opening doesn't open something (that would have an identity) to something else. Perhaps it isn't even an opening, but rather what orders the Other, from out of the order of the other, a "this very moment" that can no longer return to itself. But nothing forces us to read it like that. It can always be interpreted without passing beyond, the beyond here not opening out to anything that is. The second "at this very moment" can always be made to return to the first, enveloping it anew, ignoring the series effect or reducing it to a homogeneous concept of seriality, ignoring what this seriality bears of the singularly other and of the out-of-series [*hors-série*]. Everything would then come back and come down to the same.

But what does that mean? That the dialectic of the first moment would triumph? Not even that. The Relation will have taken place anyway, will have already made possible the relation (as a *récit* of the interruptions) that pretends to sew everything up again within the discursive text. Everything would return to the same but the same could just as well, already, be the other, that of the second "at this very moment," which is—probably—the one of responsibility. It follows that the responsibility in question is not merely said, named, thematized, in one or the other occurrence of "this moment"; it [*elle*] is first of all yours, the one of reading to which "this moment" is given, confided, or delivered over. Your reading is thus no longer a simple reading that deciphers the sense of what is already found in the text; it has a limitless (ethical) initiative. It [*Elle*] obligates itself freely starting from the text of the Other, which today one might say, wrongly, it *produces* or *invents*. But that it obligates itself freely in no way signifies an auto-nomy. To be sure, you are the author of the text you read here, that can be said, but you are still in an absolute heteronomy. You are responsible for the other, who makes you responsible. *Who will have obligated you.* And even if you don't read *as one must* [comme il faut], as EL says one must read, still, beyond the dominant interpretation (that of domination) that is one with the philosophy of grammar and the grammar of philosophy, the Relation of dislocation *will have taken place*, there is nothing you can do about it any longer, and without knowing it, you will have read what will have made only possible, starting from the Other, what is happening: "at this very moment."

This is the strange force of a text that delivers itself over to you without apparent defense; the force is not that of the written [*l'écrit*], to be sure, in the common sense of the term. It [*Elle*] obligates the written by making it only possible. The disturbance it *refers* to (the Relation it relates to the Other by linking to it the *récit*) *is* never assured, perceptible, *demonstrable*: neither a demonstrative conclusion nor a phenomenal monstration. By definition it is not a controllable disturbance, it is not readable within the *inside* of logic, semiotics, language, grammaticality, lexicon, or rhetoric with their supposedly internal criteria, because nothing is less certain than the rigorous limits of such an inside.

This internal element has to have been punctured, pierced (right through to the light of day), torn, and again *more than once*, in a more or less regular fashion, for this regularity of the tear (I would say the *strategy* of the tear if this word, strategy, did not signal too much—for him, not for me—in the direction of economic calculation, the ruse of the stratagem and warring violence at the very point where on the contrary everything has to be calculated so that calculation does not win out over everything) to have obligated you to receive the order that is gently given

to you, confided to you, to read thus and not otherwise, to read *otherwise* and not thus. What I would like to give you here (to read, think, love, eat, drink, as you wish) is what he himself will have given, and how he gives "at this very moment." The gesture is very subtle, nearly unapparent. Because of what is at stake, it must remain nearly unapparent, merely probable, not so as to be decisive (it must not be decisive) but in order to answer for chance before the Other. Hence the second "at this moment," the one that gives its time to this language that "has perhaps only been made possible by that Relation" to the other of all presence, is nothing other than the first, it is the same in the language, he repeats it a few lines further on and its reference is the same. And yet everything will have changed; sovereignty will have become ancillary. The first "moment" gave its form or its temporal place, its "presence" to a thinking, a language, a dialectic that are "sovereign in regard to that Relation." So what will have happened—probably, perhaps—is this: the second "moment" will have forced the first toward its own condition of possibility, toward its "essence," beyond the Said and the Theme. It will have in advance—but after the fact within the serial rhetoric—torn the envelope. But this very tear will not have been possible without a certain notching [*échancrure*] of the second moment and a sort of analogical contamination between the two, a relation between two incommensurables, a relation between the relation as ontological *récit* and the Relation as responsibility for the Other.

Apparently, he likes the tear [*déchirure*], but he detests contamination. Yet what holds his writing in suspense is that one must welcome contamination, the *risk* of contamination, in enchaining the tears and regularly *mending and resuming them* within the philosophical text or tissue of a *récit*. This *mending resumption* [reprise] is even the condition on which what is beyond essence may keep its chance against the enveloping seam of the thematic or dialectical. The tear must be saved, and to do so one must play off seam against seam. The risk of contamination must be regularly accepted (in a series) in order for the noncontamination of the other by the rule of the same to still have a chance. His "text" (and I would even say *the* text without effacing an irreplaceable idiom) is always this heterogeneous tissue that interlaces both texture and atexture, without gathering them together. And that (as was written elsewhere of another, very close and very distant) "ventures to plot the absolute tear, absolutely tears its own tissue, once more become solid and servile in once more giving itself

to be read." I propose this rapprochement without complacency, in order to try to think a necessity: one that, although unformalizable, regularly reproduces the relation of the formalizable to the nonformalizable.

The "metaphors" of seam and tear obsess his text. Is it merely a matter of "metaphors," given that they envelop or tear the very element (the text) of the metaphorical? It matters little for the moment. In any case they seem to be organized as follows. Let us call *interruption* (a word he uses often) what regularly puts an end to the authority of the Said, the thematical, the dialectical, the same, the economical, and so on, what demarcates itself from this series so as to go *right straight* beyond essence: to the Other, toward the Other other. The interruption will have come to tear the continuum of a tissue that naturally tends to envelop, shut in upon itself, sew itself back up again, mend, resume its own tears, and to make it appear as if they were still proper to it and could come back and come down to it. For example, in "Le Nom de Dieu," the first "moment" gathers together the continuum of a tissue that "envelops" the beyond in the same and forbids the interruption. Then, in the next sentence, but within the language of thematization, the other moment, the moment of the Other, marks the insistence of the tear by a Relation that *will have made* "only possible" the continuum itself, that will therefore not have been (it will not have had to be) the continuum it seemed to be. The absolutely anterior future of that tear—as an absolutely past anterior—will have made possible the effect of the seam. And not vice versa. But only on condition that it let itself be contaminated, resumed, mended, sewn up within what it has made possible. It follows that the resumption is not any more logical than the interruption. *Otherwise than Being*:

> Are the tears in the logical text mended by logic alone? It is in the association of philosophy with the State and with medicine that the rupture of discourse is surmounted. The interlocutor who does not yield to logic is threatened with imprisonment or the asylum or else undergoes the prestige of the master and the medication of the doctor. . . . It is through the State that Reason and knowledge are force and efficacity. But the State does not expect either irrevocable madness or even intervals of madness. It doesn't untie the knots, it cuts them. The Said thematizes the interrupted dialogue or the dialogue delayed by silences, failures, or delirium, but the intervals are not recuperated. Does not the discourse that suppresses the interruptions of discourse by relating them maintain the discontinuity beneath the knots where the thread is retied? The interruptions of discourse, found and related within

> the immanence of the said, are preserved like the knots of a retied thread, trace of a diachrony that does not enter into the present, refusing itself to simultaneity. (216; 170)

Whether it severs or reties, the discourse of philosophy, medicine, or the state retains the trace of the interruption despite itself. Despite itself. Yet in order to re-mark the interruption, which is what EL's writing does, one must *also* retie the thread, despite oneself, within the book not left intact of philosophy, medicine, and the logic of the state. The analogy between the book, philosophy, medicine, logic, and the state is very strong. "Interrupted discourse catching up with its own ruptures—this is the book. But books have their destiny; they belong to a world they do not encompass but that they acknowledge by writing and printing themselves within it, and by getting themselves pre-faced and preceded by with forewords. They interrupt themselves and call on other books and finally interpret themselves in a saying distinct from the said" (217; 171).

So he writes books that should not be books of state (of philosophy, medicine, or logic). How does he do it? In his books, as in these others, the interruption leaves its marks, but otherwise. Knotted threads are formed, picking up the tears, but otherwise. They allow the discontinuous to appear in its trace, but since the trace must not be reassembled into its appearance, it can always resemble the trace that discontinuity leaves within the logical discourse of the state, of philosophy, or of medicine. The trace must therefore "present" itself there, without presenting itself, *otherwise*. But how? *This* book here, the one composed of *his* books beyond all totality, how is it delivered over otherwise to the other? From one moment to another—the difference must have been infinitely subtle—the one that picks up the other in its stitches must leave another trace of the interruption in its stitches, and by thematizing the trace make another knot (left to the discretion of the other in the reading). But another knot remains insufficient; what is needed is another chain of multiple knots having the peculiarity that they do not tie together continuous threads (as a state book pretends to do) but retie cut threads while keeping the barely apparent trace (perhaps, probably) of absolute interruptions, of the absolute as interruption. The trace of this interruption in the knot is never simply visible, sensible, or assured. It [*Elle*] does not belong to discourse and only comes to it from the Other. This is also true of state discourse, to be sure, but here nonphenomenality must obligate, without constraint,

to read the trace as trace, the interruption as interruption according to an *as such* no longer reappropriable as a phenomenon of essence. The structure of the knot must be other, although it looks a lot alike. You are never forced to read or recognize this trace, it [*elle*] comes about only through you to whom it is delivered over, and yet he will have, wholly otherwise, obligated you to read what one is not obligated to read. He does not simply make knots and interruptions in his text, as everyone does, as the state, philosophy, medicine do. I say as everyone does, since if there is interruption everywhere, there are knots everywhere. But in his text there is, perhaps, a supplementary nodal complication, another way of retying without retying.

How is this supplement of the knot to be figured? It has to enchain the knots together in such a way that the text holds up, but also so that the interruptions "remain" *numerous* (one alone is never enough): not merely as a present, apparent, or substantial remaining [*restance*], which would be another way for it [*elle*] to disappear, but with enough of a trace left by their passing [*leur passée*] to leave a better chance for the trace of the other. Now for this, a single knot, keeping the trace of a single interruption, is not enough, and neither is a chain exhibiting the trace of a single hiatus. A single interruption in a discourse does not do its work and lets itself be immediately reappropriated. The hiatus must insist, whence the necessity of the *series*, of the series of knots. The absolute paradox (of the ab-solute) is that *this series*, incommensurable with any other, an incomparable series out-of-series [*hors-série*], does not tie together threads but the interruptions between threads, traces of intervals that the knot must only remark, give to be remarked. I have chosen to name this structure with the word "series" so as to knot up there, in my turn, *series* (file, sequence, line of consequences, ordered enchainment of a regular multiplicity, interlacing, lineage, descendance) and *seira* (cord, chain, lasso, lace, etc.). We will take the chance of finding in the net of the same lineage at least one of four meanings of the Latin *sero* (to interlace, braid, enchain, reattach) and the Greek *eirō*, which says (or ties) together the interlacing of the lace and the saying, the *symplokē* of discourse and the link. This ab-solute series is *without a single knot*, but knots a multiplicity of retied knots, and does not re-tie threads but the interruptions without-thread, leaving open the interruptions between interruptions. This interruption is not a cut and does not fall under a logic of the cut, but rather of ab-solute de-stricturation. That is why the opening of interruption is never pure. And in order

to distinguish itself from, for instance, the discontinuous as symptom in the discourse of the state or in the book, it [*elle*] can interrupt the resemblance only by being *not just any* interruption, and thus also by determining itself within the element of the same. *Not just any*: here is situated the enormous responsibility of a work—within the state, philosophy, medicine, economy, and so on. And the risk is ineluctable, it is inscribed in the *necessity* (another word with which to say the link one cannot cut) of the stricture, the necessity of enchaining the moments, even if they are moments of rupture, and of negotiating the chain, albeit in nondialectical fashion. This risk is itself regularly thematized in his text. For example, concerning precisely the opening: "How is one to think the opening onto the *other than being* without that opening as such signifying at once a gathering in conjunction, a unity of essence into which would at once sink the very subject to which this gathering would be unveiled, the bond *with* essence drawing up right away *within* the intimacy of essence?" (225; 178), and so on.

There are thus several ways of enchaining the interruptions and the passages beyond essence, enchaining them not simply *within* the logic of the same, but in the contact (in the contact without contact, in proximity) of the same and the Other; there are many ways of knitting this rather than that inextricable mesh, since the risk has to do with their not all having the same value. A philosophy, an aesthetics, a rhetoric, a poetics, a psychagogy, an economy, a politics all are still negotiated there: between, if one could still put it this way, the before and the beyond. With a vigilance one could probably say operates at every instant, in order to save the interruption without, by keeping it safe, losing and ruining it all the more, without the fatality of retying coming to interrupt the interruption structurally, EL takes calculated risks in this regard, risks as calculated as possible. But how does he calculate? How does the Other calculate in him so as to leave room for the incalculable? What will have been the style of this calculation, if one must call style this idiom that marks the negotiation with a singular and irreplaceable seal? And what if the pledges he gives to the other of the Other, whereby he himself is constituted himself as a hostage, to use his word, are no longer absolutely replaceable?

What I call here the risk of the obligated negotiation (for if the interruption is not negotiated, it is even more surely interrupted, abandoning the nonnegotiable to the marketplace), that toward which his attention is perhaps incessantly drawn, in the extreme, is what he himself also calls

the inevitable "concession" ("'Goes beyond'—that is already to make a concession to ontological and theoretical language, as if the *beyond* were still a term, an entity, a mode of being, or the negative counterweight of all that" ([123; 97]), the always threatening risk of "betrayal" (214; 168) or of "contamination" ("there you have the propositions of this book that names the *beyond essence*. The notion, to be sure, cannot claim originality, but the access to it is as steep as in ancient times. The difficulties of the climb, as well as its failures and renewed attempts, are inscribed in a writing that doubtless also attests to the breathlessness of the seeker. But to *hear a God uncontaminated by Being* is a human possibility no less important or precarious than to *draw Being out of the oblivion* into which it is said to have fallen in metaphysics and ontotheology" (x; xlviii).[4] Yielding, on the one hand, to the arbitrary, that of an example in a series, and, on the other, to the economy of the discourse I am enchaining here, let us thematize "contamination." Usually, it implies a stain or poisoning by the contagion of some improper body. Here simple contact suffices, since it will have interrupted the interruption. Contact would be a priori contaminating. Graver yet, the risk of contamination would surface *before* there is contact, in the simple *necessity of tying* together interruptions as such, in the very seriality of traces and the insistence of the ruptures. And even if this unheard-of chain does not retie threads but hiatuses. Contamination then is no longer a risk but a fate that must be assumed. The knots in the series contaminate without contact, as if the two edges re-established continuity at a distance by the simple vis-à-vis of their lines. Still, it is no longer a matter of edges, since there is no longer any line, only tapering points absolutely disjointed from one shore to the other of the interruption.

Once tied, the tip of each thread remains without contact with the other, but the contamination will have taken place between the (internal and external) borders, between the two nearby tips of the same and the other, the one maintaining [*maintenant*] the other within the diachrony of the "moment."

The lace [*lacet*] of obligation is in place. It is not a trap; I said why a moment ago. Its incomparable stricture contaminates one obligation by another, the one that unbinds by the one that binds, yet without reciprocity. Playfully—but just barely, perhaps—one could say that the obligation binds and unbinds. He will have obligated, that is, bound and unbound, bound while unbinding "together," in the "same" seriasure [*sériature*] in

the same dia-synchrony, in a serial *one time*, the "several times" that will have taken place only once. Bound/unbound an obligation that obligates, a *religion*, and an ob-ligation that un-binds but that, without merely raising an ob-stacle or ob-jection to the ligature, opens up religion within the very unbinding.

This lace of obligation holds language. It maintains it, prevents it from falling apart in passing through the eyelets of a texture: alternatively inside and outside, below and above, before and beyond. It does it in measure, regularly tightening the body into its form. It is in letting this lace do its thing that he will have obligated.

But who "he"? Who says the "*one must*" [il faut] of this obligation that defaults on itself so as to be delivered over to your discretion?

Here now is another example. He speaks of "this book," right here, of the fabrication of "this work," of the "present work," these expressions repeating themselves as with the above "at this moment," but this time interlaced with a series of "one musts." A "me" and "here I am" slide incessantly from quotation toward an interminable oscillation between "use" and "mention." This happens in the last two pages of *Otherwise than Being* (chapter 6: "Outside"). I select the following, not without the device of some abstraction: "Signification, the-one-for-the-other, the relation with alterity, has been analyzed *in the present work* [my emphasis—JD] as proximity, proximity as responsibility for the Other, and responsibility for the Other as substitution: in its subjectivity, in its very bearing as a separate substance, the subject has been shown to be expiation-for-the-other, condition or uncondition of being hostage" (232; 184). I interrupt for a moment; "*in the present work*" the impresentable has therefore presented itself, a relation with the Other that defeats any gathering into presence, to the point where no "work" can be bound or shut in upon its presence, it cannot be plotted or enchained in order to form a book. The present work makes a present of what can be given only outside the book [*hors livre*]. And even outside the frame. "The problem exceeds the frame of this book."[5] These are the last words of the last chapter of *Totality and Infinity* (immediately before the conclusion). But what exceeds has also just been announced—it is announcement itself, messianic consciousness—on the internal border of that utterance, *on the frame* of the book if not *in* it. And yet what is wrought of the present work only makes a work outside the book. The expression "in the present work" mimics the thesis and the code of the university lecture; it is ironic. It has to be so as discreetly as possible, for there would still be too much assurance and too much glibness in making a fracas while breaking with this code. Effraction does not ridicule; indeed, it makes a present of the "present work."

Let's continue:

> This book interprets the *subject* as *hostage*, and the subjectivity of the subject as substitution breaking with the *essence* of being. The thesis exposes itself imprudently to the reproach of utopianism in an opinion where modern man takes himself as a being among beings while his modernity explodes as an impossibility of staying at home. This book escapes the reproach of utopianism—if utopianism is a reproach, if any thinking can escape utopianism—by recalling that *what humanly took place has never been able to remain enclosed in its place.* (184)

"*The thesis*" is therefore not posed, it is exposed, imprudently and without defenses, and yet that very vulnerability is ("this weakness is necessary," we read a little later on) the provocation to responsibility for the other, it [*elle*] gives rise [*donne lieu*] to that responsibility, in a taking-place of *this* book where the *this one* no longer shuts in upon itself, upon its own subject. The same dehiscence that opened up the series of "at this moment" is here at work in "the present work," "this book," "the thesis," and so on. But the series is always complicated by the fact that the inextricable equivocation, contamination (in a moment it will be called "hypocrisy"), is at once described and denounced in its necessity *by* "this book," by "the present work," by "the thesis," and *in* them, outside them, in them, but destined in them to an outside that no dialectic will be able to reappropriate into its book. Thus (I emphasize *it is necessary* [il faut], *it was necessary* [il fallait]):

> Each individual is virtually a chosen one, called forth to leave in his turn, or without awaiting his turn, the concept of the ego, extension into the people, to respond to responsibility: *me* that is, *here I am for the others*, to lose his place radically, or his shelter in being, to enter into ubiquity that is also a utopia. Here I am for the others: an enormous response whose inordinateness is attenuated by hypocrisy from the moment it enters my own ears forewarned of the *essence* of being, that is to say, of the way being carries on. The hypocrisy is immediately denounced. But the norms to which the denunciation refers have been understood in the enormity of their sense, and in the full resonance of their utterance, true like an unbridled testimony. In any case, *nothing less is necessary* for the little humanity that adorns the earth. . . . *There has to be* a

de-rangement of essence so that it won't find only violence repugnant. This repugnance attests only to the stage of nascent or savage humanity, ready to forget its disgusts, to be invested as "essence of de-rangement," to surround itself like every essence, inevitably jealous about its own perseverance, with military honors and virtues. For the little humanity that adorns the earth, *there has to be* a relaxation of essence to the second degree: *in the just war waged against war, to tremble—even shudder—at every instant, because of this very justice. There has to be* this weakness. *There had to be* this relaxation of virility, without cowardice, for the little cruelty our hands repudiate. This is the sense, notably, that should have been suggested by the formulas repeated in *this book* [my emphasis—JD] concerning the passivity more passive than any passivity, the fission of the Me into me, its consummation for the other without the act being able to be reborn from out of the ashes of that consummation. (185)

I again interrupt: no Hegelian Phoenix after this consummation. *This book* is not only singular in gathering itself together like others. Its singularity has to do with *this* seriality here, ab-solute enchainment, rigorous yet with a rigor that knows how to relax itself *as necessary* so as not to become totalitarian again, even *virile*, and thus deliver itself over to the discretion of the other in the hiatus. It is in this seriality here and not another (the array in its homogeneous arrangement), in this seriality of derangement that one must hear each philosopheme as deranged, dislocated, disarticulated, inadequate, and anterior to itself, absolutely anachronic to whatever is said about it, for example, "the passivity more passive than any passivity" and the whole "series" of analogous syntaxes, all the "formulas repeated in this book." Now you understand the necessity of this repetition. You thus approach the "*il*" (he/it) that comes (to pass) in this work and starting from which the "it is necessary" [*il faut*] is said. Here are the last lines:

In this work [my emphasis—JD], which does not seek to restore any ruined concept, the destitution and de-situation of the subject do not remain without meaning: after the death of a certain god inhabiting the hinter-worlds, the substitution of the hostage discovers the trace—unpronounceable writing—of what, always already past, always "he/it" [*il*] does not enter into any present and to which are no longer suited names designating beings, or verbs in which their *essence* resounds, but which, Pro-noun [*Pro-nom*], marks with its seal anything that can carry a name. (185)

—Will it be said of "this work" [*ouvrage*] that it makes a work [*œuvre*]? From which moment? Of what? Of whom? Whatever the relays may be, the responsibility comes back to him, "he," who *undersigns* every signature. Pro-noun without pronounceable name that "marks with its seal whatever can carry a name." This last phrase comes at the end of the book as if in place of a signature. Emmanuel Levinas calls back to the preceding Pro-noun that replaces and makes possible every nominal signature, at the very moment He lets it sign in his place. By the same double stroke, he gives to it and withdraws from it his signature. Is it he, "he," who makes the work? *For him* that the work answers? Of him that one will have said, "he will have obligated"? I do not think that between some pro-noun or other and a name or the bearer of a name there is what is called a difference or a distinction. This link between "he" and the bearer of a name is other. Each time different, never anonymous, "he" is (without supporting it by any substantial presence) the bearer of the name. If I now transform the utterance that came from I know not where and from which we took our point of departure ("He will have obligated") by this one, "the work of Emmanuel Levinas will have obligated," would he subscribe to that? Would he accept my replacing "he" by Emmanuel Levinas in order to say what or who will have made the work in his work? Would it be a fault as regards "he" [*il*] or as regards him, EL?

—Now, I write at your dictation, "the work of EL will have obligated."

You have dictated it to me and yet what I write at this very moment, "the work of EL will have obligated," articulating common noun and proper name, you don't yet know what it means. You don't yet know how *one must* read. You don't even know how, at this moment, *one must* hear this "one must" [*il faut*].

The work of EL *comprehends* an *other* manner of thinking the obligation of the "one must," an *other* manner of thinking the work, and even of thinking thinking. One must therefore read it otherwise, read there otherwise the "one must," and otherwise the otherwise.

The dislocation to which this work will have obligated is a dislocation without name. Toward another thinking of the name, a thinking that is wholly other because it is open *to the name of the other.* Inaugural *and* immemorial dislocation, it will have taken place—another place, in the place of the other—only on the condition of another topic. An ex-

travagant topic (u-topic, will say those who believe they know what takes place and what takes the place of) and absolutely other. But to hear the absolute of this "absolutely," it will have been necessary to read the serial work that displaces, replaces, and substitutes this word "absolute." And to start with, the word "work." We are endlessly caught up in the network of quotation marks. We no longer know how to erase them, or how to accumulate them, one on top of the other. We no longer even know how to cite his "work," since it already cites, between quotation marks, the whole language—French, Western, and even beyond—even if it is only from the moment and because of the fact that "he" must put in quotation marks the pronominal signatory, the nameless signatory without authorial signature, "he" who undersigns every work, sets every work [*ouvrage*] to work [*met en œuvre*], and "marks by his seal whatever can carry a name." If "he" is between quotation marks, nothing more can be said—about him, for him, from him, in his place or in front of him—that wouldn't require a tightly knit, tied up, and highly wrought [*ouvragée*] series, a fabrication of quotation marks crocheting a text without edge. A text exceeding language and yet rigorously untranslatable from one tongue to another. Seriality irreducibly knots it to *a* language.

If you wish to talk of EL's operation, when he sets to work on "this work," when he writes "at this moment," and if you ask "What is he doing?" and "How does he do it?" then not only must you dis-locate the "he" who is no longer the subject of an operation, agent, producer, or laborer, but you must right away specify that the Work [*l'Œuvre*], such as his work gives it and gives it again to be thought, is no longer of the technical or productive order of the operation (*poiein, facere, agere, tun, wirken, erzeugen*, or however it may be translated). You thus cannot speak—pertinently—of the Work before what "his" work says of the Work, in its Saying and beyond its Said, because this gap remains irreducible. And there is no circle here, especially not a hermeneutic circle, because the Work—according to his work—"is" precisely what breaks all circularity. There, near but infinitely far, the dis-location is found in the interior without inside of language but opened to the outside of the wholly other. The infinite law of quotation marks seems to suspend all reference and to enclose the work on the borderless context that it gives to itself: yet here is this law making absolute reference to the commandment of the wholly other, obligating beyond any delimitable context.

If, therefore, I now write "the work of EL will have obligated to an absolute dislocation," the obligation, as the work teaches and teaches what is necessary about teaching, will have been without constraint, without contract, anterior to any engagement, to any nominal signature, but which answers to the other for the other before any question or request, ab-solute thereby and ab-solving. "He" will have withdrawn dissymmetrical responsibility from the circle, the circulation of the pact, debt, acknowledgment, from synchronic reciprocity, I dare to say from the annular alliance, from the *rounds* [tour], from whatever makes the rounds of a finger and I dare to say of a sex or sexual organ.

Can one say it? How difficult, probably impossible, to write here, to describe what I seem to be on the verge of describing. Perhaps it is impossible to hold a discourse that holds together at this moment, saying, explaining, stating (a constative discourse) EL's work. For that, one would need a writing that performs, but with a performative without present (who has ever defined such a performative?), one that answers for his, a performative without present event, a performative whose essence cannot be resumed in presence ("at this very moment," at this *present* moment I write this, I say *I*, presently; and it has been said that the simple utterance of an I is already performative and also that the true performative is always uttered in the first person), a performative heretofore never described, but whose performance must also not be experienced as a self-congratulatory success, as an act of prowess. For at the same time, it is the most everyday exercise of speech to the other, the condition of the least virtuoso writing. Such a performance does not correspond to the canonical description of a performative, perhaps. Well, then, let the description be changed, or renounce here the word "performative"! What is nearly certain is that *this* performance does not belong either to the mode of the "constative" proposition, or of any proposition at all; and that inversely, dissymmetrically, every so-called constative proposition, every proposition in general *presupposes* this structure before anything else, this responsibility of the trace (*per*forming or *per*formed).

For example. I wrote earlier: "'he' will have withdrawn it from the circle . . . " But now it would already be necessary—infinitely—that I take back and displace each written word in series. Displacement being insufficient, I have to tear each word away from itself, tear it away *absolutely* from it-self, as, for example, in his manner of writing "passivity more passive then passivity," an expression that undetermines itself and can just as well pass into its opposite, unless the tearing away somewhere limits itself,

as with a piece of skin symbolically torn away from the body and keeping its adherence beneath the cut; I have to detach it and absolve it from itself while nevertheless leaving a mark of attachment on it (the expression "passivity more passive than passivity" does not become just anything, it does not mean "activity more active than activity"). For two annulments or two excesses not to be equivalent, within indetermination, it is necessary that the ab-solving erasure not be absolutely absolute. It is necessary therefore that I make each atom of an utterance appear at fault and absolved. At fault with regard to what or whom? And why? When I write, for example, "'he' will have withdrawn it, and so on," the very syntax of my sentence, according to the dominant norms that interpret the French language, the "he" seems to constitute the active subject, author and initiator of an operation. If "he" were the simple pronoun of the signatory (and not "the Pro-noun marking with its seal whatever may carry a name . . . "), one might then think that the signatory has the authority of an author and that "he" is the agent of the action that "will have withdrawn," and so on. Now *it would have been necessary*, it is therefore necessary to say that "he" has withdrawn nothing whatever; "he" has *made appear* the possibility of that withdrawal, he has not *made* it appear, he has *let* it appear, he has not let it *appear* since what he has let (not let be but let make a sign, and not a sign but an enigma), what he has let produce itself as enigma, and to produce itself is still too much, is not of the phenomenal order; he has "let" "appear" the nonappearing as such (but the nonappearing never dis-appears into its "as such," etc.), on the limit of the beyond, a limit that is not a determinable, visible, or thinkable line, and that has no definable edges, on the "limit," therefore, of the "beyond" of phenomena and of essence: that is to say (!) the "he" himself. That's it, the "he" himself, that is to say (!), the Other. "He" has said "He." Even before "I" may say "I" and in order that, if that is possible, "I" may say "I."

That other "he," the "he" as wholly other, was only able to arrive at the end of my sentence (unless my sentence never arrived, indefinitely arrested on its own linguistic shore [*rive*]) after a series of words that are all faulty, and that I have, as it were, erased in passing, as I went along, regularly, the one after the other, even as I let them retain the force of their tracing, the wake of their tracing, the force (without force) of a trace that will have allowed passage for the other. I have written by marking them, by letting them be marked, by the other. That is why it is not correct to say that I have erased these words. In any case, I should not have erased

them, I should have let them be drawn into a *series* (a stringed sequence of enlaced *erasures*), an interrupted series, a *series* of interlaced interruptions, a series of *hiatuses* (mouth agape, mouth opened to the broken-off word, or to the gift of the other and to the-bread-in-his-mouth) that I shall henceforth call, in order to formalize in an economical fashion and so as not to dissociate what is not dissociable within this fabric, the *seriasure* [sériature]. This other "he," then, could have arrived at the end of my sentence only within the interminable mobility of this seriasure. He is not the subject-author-signer-proprietor of the work [*ouvrage*]; it is a "he" without authority. One can just as well say that he/it is the Pro-noun leaving its presignature sealed under the name of the author, for example, EL, or conversely that EL is but a pronoun replacing the singular forename, the seal that comes before whatever can carry a name. From this point of view, EL would be the *personal* pronoun of "he." Without authority, he does not *make* a work, he is not the agent or creator of his work, yet if I say that he *lets* the work work (a word that remains to be drawn along), it must immediately be specified that this letting is not a simple passivity, not a letting to be thought within the horizon of letting-be. This letting beyond essence, "more passive than passivity," hear it as the most provocative thought, today. It is not provocative in the sense of the transgressive, and complacently shocking, exhibition. It is a thought also provoked, *first of all* provoked. Outside the law as law of the other. It itself provokes only by setting out from its absolute exposure to the provocation of the other, an exposure tensed with all possible force so as not to reduce the *anterior* passing [*la passée*] of the other and so as not to turn inside out the surface of the self which, *in advance*, finds itself delivered over to it body and soul.

"Anterior passing" (anterior to the past, to the present past), "first of all," "in advance": among the words or syntax whose seriasure I have not yet sketched, there is the future anterior, which I will nonetheless have used frequently, having no alternative recourse. For example, in the little sentence "He will have obligated," or "the work of EL will have obligated" (Obligated to what? and who, first of all? I have not yet said thou [*tu*], me, you [*vous*], us, them, they [*ils, elles*], it). The future anterior could be—and this resemblance is irreducible—the time of Hegelian teleology. Indeed, that is how the properly philosophical understanding of it is usually administered, according to what I called above the dominant interpretation of language—in which precisely philosophy consists. Yet *right*

here, in *this* seriasure drawing along the "He will have obligated," in this one and not in another quite similar seriasure, but determining otherwise the same utterance, the future anterior, "right here," will have designated "in" language that which remains most irreducible to the economy of Hegelian teleology and to the dominant interpretation of language. From the moment it is in accord with the "he" as Pro-noun of the wholly other "always already past," it will have drawn toward an eschatology without philosophical teleology, beyond it in any case, otherwise than it. It will have thrust the future anterior toward the bottomless depths of a past anterior to any past, to any present past, toward that passing or passed [*passée*] of the trace that has never been present. Its future anteriority will have been *irreducible* to ontology. To an ontology, moreover, designed to attempt this impossible reduction. This reduction is the finality of ontological movement, its power but also its fated defeat: what it attempts to reduce is its own condition.

That future anteriority *there* would no longer conjugate a verb describing the action of a subject in an operation that would have been *present*. To say "he will have obligated"—in *this* work, taking into account what makes the work within *this* seriasure—is not to designate, describe, define, show, and so on, but, let us say, to *entrace*, in other words to perform within the intr(el)acement of a seriasure this obligation of which "he" will not have been the present subject but for which "I" hereby answer: Here I am, (I) come. *He* will not have been (a) present, but he will have made a gift of not disappearing without leaving a trace. But leaving the trace is also to *leave* it, abandon it, not insist upon it in a sign. It is to erase it. In the concept of trace is inscribed in advance the re-treat / the re-trait [*re-trait*] of effacement. The trace is inscribed in being erased and leaving the traced wake of its effacement in the *re*treat/*re*trait, or in what EL calls the "superimposition." ("The authentic trace, on the other hand, disturbs the order of the world. It comes as a 'superimposition.' . . . Whoever has left traces by erasing his traces did not mean to say or do anything by the traces he left.")[6]

The structure of superimposition thus described menaces by its very rigor, which is that of contamination, any certain *authenticity* of the trace ("the authentic trace") and any rigorous dissociation between sign and trace ("The trace is not a sign like any other. But it also plays the role of a sign. . . . Yet every sign, in this sense, is a trace" [ibid.]). The word "laisser" [to leave, to let] in the locution "laisser une trace," "leave a trace" seems

then to take on the burden of the whole enigma. It would no longer announce itself starting from anything other than the trace, and especially not from a letting-be. Unless letting-be is understood *otherwise*, beginning with the sign the trace makes to it or that it lets be effaced there.

What am I saying to you when I pronounce "leave me"? Or when you say "he has left me," or as in the Song of Songs, "he has slipped away, he has passed by"?

Otherwise said (the serial enchainment must no longer slip through a "that is to say" but instead be interrupted and retied at the border of the interruption by an "otherwise said"), for this not-without-trace [*pas-sans-trace*], the contamination between the "he" beyond language and the "he" within the economic immanence of language and its dominant interpretation, is not merely an ill, a "negative" contamination; it describes the very process of the trace insofar as it makes a work, in a making-work [*faire-œuvre*] that it will have been necessary to understand neither on the basis of work nor of making, but of what is said of the Work in his Work, by the saying of this said, by its intr(el)aced performance. There is no more a "negative" contamination than there is a simple beyond or a simple inside of language, on the one side and the other of some border.

Once again you find the logical paradoxy of *this* seriasure (but this one, in its irreplaceable singularity, is equivalent to every other): one must, even though nobody constrains anybody, read his work, otherwise said, respond to it and even answer for it, not on the basis of what one understands by *work* according to the dominant interpretation of language, but according to what *his* work says, *in its manner*, of the Work, about what it is, otherwise said, about what it will have had (to be) as work in the work. It is as difficult to calculate the capitals as it is the quotation marks.

That is its dislocation: it [*elle*] does not deport some utterance, or series of utterances; it re-marks in each atom of the Said a marking effraction of the saying, a saying that is no longer a present participle, but already a passed passing [*une passée*] of the trace, a performance (of the) wholly other. And if you wish to have access to "his" work, you will have to have passed through what it will have said of the Work, namely, that it [*elle*] does not return to him. That is why you have to respond for it, you. It [*Elle*] is in your hands, that can give it to him, dedicate it to him. At this moment, right here:

The Other can dispossess me of my work, take it or buy it, and thus direct my

very behavior. I am exposed to instigation. The work is destined to this alien *Sinngebung* from the moment of its origin in me. . . . Willing escapes willing. The work is always, in a certain sense, an unsuccessful act [*acte manqué*]. I am not entirely what I want to do. Whence an unlimited field of investigation for psychoanalysis or sociology seizing the will on the basis of its apparition in the work, in its behavior, or in its products.[7]

The Work, such as it is at work, *wrought*, in the work of EL, and such as it is necessary to read it if indeed one must read "his" work, does not return—at the origin—to the Same. It does not follow thereby that it *signifies* expenditure or pure loss in a *game*. Such a game would still be determined, in its expenditure, by economy. The gratuity of this work, what he still calls *liturgy*, "a losing investment," or "working without remuneration" (*Humanisme de l'autre homme*), resembles playing a game but is not a game; "it is ethics itself," beyond even thinking and the thinkable. For the liturgy of work should not even be *subordinated* to thinking. A work that was "subordinated to thinking,"[8] still understood as economic calculation, would not make a Work.

What the work of EL will therefore have succeeded in doing—in the unsuccessful act it claims to be, like any work—is to have obligated us, before all contract of acknowledgment, to this dissymmetry that it has been so violently and gently provoked by itself: impossible to approach it [*elle*], his work, without first of all passing, already, through the re-treat/re-trait of its inside, namely, the remarkable saying of the work. Not only what is found to be said on this subject, but the intr(el)aced saying that comes to it from the other and never returns there to itself, that comes (for example, exemplarily) from you (come), obligated feminine reader [*lectrice obligée*]. You can still not give him this sense, or only lend yourself to this *Sinngebung*, you can still not approach this singular ellipsis/ellipse in which nevertheless you are already caught, perhaps.

—I knew. As I listened I was nonetheless wondering whether I, me, was comprehended, and how to stop that word: comprehended. And how the work knew me, what it knew of me. Very well: to begin by reading his work, to give it to him, in order to approach the Work. Which, as for it [*elle*], does not begin with "his" work or with whoever would claim to say "my" work. Going toward the Other, coming from the Same but not coming back to and coming down to it, the work then does not come from there, but from the Other who invents it. It [*Elle*] makes a work

in the re-treat/re-trait that re-marks this heteronomous movement. The re-treat/re-trait is not unique, although it remarks the unique, but its seriasure is unique. Not his signature—the "he" undersigning and under seal—but his seriasure. Well and good. Now if, in reading what he will have had to give, I take account of the unique seriasure, I must, for example, observe that, like any other word, the word "work" has no fixed sense outside the mobile syntax of marks, outside contextual transformation. The variation is not free-form, the transformation is regulated in its irregularity and in its very disturbance. But how? By what? By whom? I will give or take an example of it. More than or perhaps something other than an example, that of the "son" in *Totality and Infinity*, of the "unique" son or sons: "The son is not merely my work like a poem or an object." That is on page 254 of *Totalité et Infini* (277), and I am assuming that you've reread the context. Although defined as beyond "my work," "the son" *here* seems rather to have the traits of what in other contexts, doubtless later on, is called the Work, with a capital letter. Otherwise said, the word "work" has neither the same *sense* nor the same *reference* in the two contexts, without however there being any incoherence or contradiction. *They even have a wholly other relation to sense and reference.*

So "the son"—movement without return toward the other beyond the work—resembles what is called elsewhere, later on, the Work. Elsewhere, later on, I have also read: "The relation with the Other by means of the son."[9]

Now, in the same paragraph of *Totality and Infinity* (and elsewhere), where it is nearly always "son" (and "paternity") that is said, a sentence speaks of the "child." ("I don't have my child, I am my child. Paternity is a relation with the stranger who while being Other [*autrui*] . . . *is* me; a relationship of the ego with a self which is nevertheless not me"). Is "son" another word for "child," a child who could be of one sex or the other? If so, whence comes that equivalence, and what does it mean? And why couldn't "daughter" play an analogous role? Why would the son be the Work beyond "my work," more or better than the daughter, than me? If there was as yet no difference from this point of view, why should "son" better represent, in advance, this indifference? This unmarked indifference?

With this question, which I here abandon to its elliptical course, I am interrogating the link, in the Work of EL, between sexual difference—the Other as other sex, otherwise said as otherwise sexed—and the Other as

wholly other, beyond or before sexual difference. As for his text, it marks its signature with a masculine "I-he," a rare thing, as was elsewhere noted, "in passing," a long time ago by another. ("On this subject, let us note in passing that *Totality and Infinity* pushes the respect for dissymmetry to the point where it seems to us impossible, essentially impossible, that it could have been written by a woman. Its philosophical subject is man [*vir*].")[10] And on the very page that says "the son" beyond "my work," I have also been able to read: "Neither knowledge nor power. In voluptuousity, the Other—the feminine—withdraws into its mystery. The relation with it [the Other] is a relation with its absence."[11] His signature thus assumes the sexual mark, a remarkable phenomenon in the history of philosophical writing, if the latter has always had an interest in occupying that position without re-marking it or without taking on, without signing that mark. But likewise the work of EL seems to me to have always made alterity as sexual difference secondary or derivative, to have subordinated the trait of sexual difference to the alterity of a wholly other that is sexually unmarked. It is not woman or the feminine that he has made secondary, derivative, or subordinate, but sexual difference. Now, once sexual difference is subordinated, it always so happens that the wholly other who is *not yet marked* happens to be *already* marked by masculinity (he-before he/she, son-before son/daughter, father-before father/mother, etc.). An operation whose logic has seemed to me as constant as it is illogical (latest example to date, Freudian psychoanalysis and everything that makes a return to it), but with an illogicality that will have made possible and thus marked all logic—ever since it has existed as such—with this prolegomenal "he." How can one mark as masculine *the very thing* said to be anterior or still foreign to sexual difference? My question will be clearer if I content myself with quoting. Not all of those passages where he affirms femininity as an "ontological category," ("The feminine figures among the categories of Being"), a gesture that always leaves me wondering whether it comprises [*comprend*] me *against* a tradition that would have refused me this ontological dignity, or whether, better than ever, it comprises me, includes me *within* this tradition that is so profoundly repeated. But these passages:

> In one sense, woman in Judaism will have merely the destiny of a human being, in which her femininity will figure only as an attribute. . . . The femininity of woman can neither deform nor absorb her human essence. "Woman is called *ishah* in Hebrew, for she comes from man—*ish*," the Bible tells us. The Doctors seize on this etymology to affirm the unique dignity of Hebrew, which expresses the very mystery of creation—namely, that woman is derived quasi-grammatically from man. . . . "Flesh of my flesh and bone of my bone" therefore means an identity of nature between woman and man, an identity of destiny and dignity, and also a subordination of sexual life to the personal relation that is equality in itself.
>
> These ideas are older than the principles in whose name modern woman struggles for her emancipation, but the *truth* of all these principles lies on a plane that also contains the thesis opposed to the image of initial androgyny and attached to the popular idea of the rib. That truth upholds a certain priority of the masculine. The latter remains the prototype of the human and determines eschatology. . . . The differences between masculine and feminine are blurred in this messianic age.[12]

More recently:

> The meaning of the feminine will thus become clear against the background of human essence, the *Isha* from the *Ish*: not the feminine beginning with the masculine; rather, the division into feminine and masculine—the dichotomy—beginning with the human . . . beyond the personal relationship that is established between these two beings issued from two creative acts, the particularity of the feminine is secondary. It is not woman who is secondary; it is the relationship with woman as woman that does not belong to the primordial level of the human. . . . The problem, in each of the paragraphs we are commenting on at this moment, is in reconciling the humanity of men and women with the hypothesis of a masculine spirituality, the feminine being not his correlative but his corollary, feminine specificity or the difference between the sexes that it announces, from the outset, not being situated at the height of the oppositions constituting Spirit. Daring question: how can the equality of sexes stem from the priority of the masculine? . . . There had to be a difference that did not compromise equity: a sexual difference and, hence, a certain preeminence of man, a woman coming later, and as woman, an appendix of the human. We now understand the lesson in this. Humanity is not thinkable on the basis of two entirely different principles. There had to have been a *sameness* that these *others* had in common. Woman was taken from man but she came after him: *the very femininity of woman is in this initial "after the fact"* [*après coup*].[13]

Strange logic, that of this "daring" question. It would require a commentary on every step so as to verify each time that the secondary status

of sexual difference signifies the secondary status of the feminine (but why is this so?) and that the initial status of the predifferential is each time marked by this masculine, which should, however, like every sexual mark, come only afterward. It would require commentary, but I prefer, under the heading of a protocol, to underline the following: he himself is commenting himself, and says that he is commenting; it must be taken into account that this discourse is not literally that of EL. He says, holding forth a discourse, that he is commenting on the scholars *at this very moment* ("the paragraphs we are commenting on at this moment," and further on: "I am not taking sides; today, I am commenting"). But the distance of the commentary is not neutral. What he comments on is consonant with a whole network of affirmations that are his, or those of him, "he." And the position of the commentator corresponds to a choice, at least the choice to accompany and not displace, transform, indeed, reverse what is written in the text being commented on. I do not wish to hold forth on this subject. Speaking of unpublished writing [*écriture inédite*], here is some, by another:

> If then woman is derived quasi-grammatically from man, this indeed implies, as Levinas affirms, a same identity of destiny and dignity, an identity that it is suitable to think of as "the recurrence of self in responsibility-for-others," but this also gives notice of a double regime for the separated existence of man and woman. And if Levinas refuses to see in this separation a fall from some primary unity, if he is repulsed by indifferentiation because separation is better than primary unity, he nevertheless establishes an order of precedence. If the derivation is thought while listening to a grammar, this is doubtless not due to chance. For grammar here testifies to the privilege of a name that always associates eschatological disinterestedness with the Work of paternity. That name can still be taught as what, in fact, determines eschatology within the derivation of a genealogy.
>
> To write grammar otherwise or to invent some surprising [*inédites*] faults is not to wish a reversal of that determination. It is not a defiance that amounts to pride. It is to become aware that language is not a simple modality of thinking. That the logos is not neutral, as Levinas also recognizes. That the difficulty he himself confronts in his choice—which seems to him cannot be gotten around—of the Greek site in order to cause to be heard thinking that comes from elsewhere is not perhaps without connection to a certain mutism of the feminine. As if the surprise [*l'inedit*] of another syntax got lost in this necessity of following the path of a unique logos.[14]

I come then to my question. Since it [*elle*] is under-signed by the Pronoun He [*Il*] (before he/she, certainly, but He is not She), does not the making-secondary of sexual alterity, far from letting itself be approached starting out from the Work (his, or the one that says itself there), become mastery, the mastery of sexual difference posed as the origin of femininity? Hence mastery *of* femininity? The very thing that *it would have been necessary* not to master, and that one therefore has been unable to avoid mastering, or at least attempting to do so? The very thing that it would have been necessary not to derive from an *archē* (neutral, and therefore, he says, masculine) in order to subject it to that from which it derives? The aneconomical that it would have been necessary not to *economize*, situate in the house, *within* or *as* the law of the *oikos*? The secondary status of the sexual, and therefore, He says, of feminine difference, does it not then come to figure the wholly other of this Saying of the wholly other in the seriasure here determined, in the idiom of this negotiation? Does it not sketch, on the inside of the work, a surfeit of un-said alterity? Or said, precisely, as a secret or as a symptomatic mutism? Things would then become more complicated. The other as feminine (me), far from being derived or secondary, would become the other of the Saying of the wholly other, of this one in any case; and this last one, *inasmuch* as it will have tried to dominate alterity, would risk (at least to this extent) enclosing *itself* within the economy of the same.

Wholly otherwise said: made secondary by responsibility for the wholly other, sexual difference (and hence, He says, femininity) holds itself back [*se retient*], as other, within the economic zone of the same. Included in the same, it is by the same stroke excluded: enclosed within, foreclosed within the immanence of a crypt, incorporated in the Saying that says itself, calls itself that of the wholly other. To desexualize the relation to the wholly other (or just as well the unconscious as a certain philosophical interpretation of psychoanalysis tends to do today), to make sexuality secondary with respect to a wholly other that in itself would not be sexually marked ("beneath the erotic alterity there is the alterity of the-one-for-the-other; responsibility before eros"),[15] is always to make sexual difference secondary *as* femininity. Here I would situate his profound complicity with a certain interpretation of psychoanalysis. This complicity, more profound than the abyss he wishes to put between his thinking and psychoanalysis, always gathers around one fundamental design: their

relation to me, to the other as woman. That is what I would like to give them (first of all to read).

Shall I push this hypothesis too far? The effect of secondarization, allegedly demanded by the wholly other (as He), would become the cause, otherwise said the other of the wholly other, the other of a wholly other who is no longer sexually neutral but *posited* or *posed* (outside the series within the seriasure), suddenly determined as He. So the Work that is apparently signed by the Pro-noun He would be dictated, inspired, aspired by the desire to make She secondary, therefore *by* Her [*Elle*]. From her place of derivable dependence, from her condition as last or first "hostage," she would under-sign the undersigned of the work. Not in the sense that undersigning would amount to confirming the signature, but countersigning, and not in the sense that countersigning would amount to redoubling the signature, according to the same or the contrary—but *otherwise than signing.*

The whole system of *this* seriasure would be silently commenting on the absolute heteronomy in relation to She who would be the wholly other. *This* heteronomy was writing the text from its other side, like a weaver his fabric [*ouvrage*]. But it is necessary here to get rid of a metaphor of weaving that has not imposed itself by chance: we know to what kind of interpretative investments it has given rise, as regards a feminine specificity that Freudian psychoanalysis *also regularly* derives. As for me, it is what I call the invention of the other.

I knew it. What I am suggesting here is not without violence, and even not without the redoubled violence of what he calls "traumatism," the nonsymbolizable wound that comes, before any other effraction, from the anterior passing [*passée antérieure*] of the other. A terrifying wound, a wound *of life*, the only one that life opens up [*fraye*] today. A violence that is at fault with regard to his name, to his work, inasmuch as it inscribes his proper name in a way that is no longer that of property. For, in the end, the derivation of femininity is not a simple movement in the seriasure of his text. The feminine is also described there as a figure of the wholly other. Moreover, we have recognized that this work is one of the first and rare ones, in this history of philosophy to which it does not simply belong, not to feign erasing the sexual mark of his signature: hence, he would be the last one to be surprised by the fact that the other (of the whole system of his saying of the other) is a woman, and commands him from that place. Thus, it is not a matter of reversing places and, contrary

to him, putting woman in the place of the wholly other as *archē*. If what I say remains false, falsifying, faulty, it is also to the extent that dissymmetry (I am speaking from my place as a woman, assuming that it [*elle*] is definable) can also reverse the perspective, while leaving the schema intact.

It has been shown above that ingratitude and contamination did not come about as an accidental evil. It is a sort of fate of the Saying. It [*Elle*] is to be negotiated. It would be worse without negotiation. Let's accept it: what I am writing at this very moment is faulty. Faulty up to a certain point, by touching on or so as not to touch on his name, on what he sets to work in his rigorously proper name in this unsuccessful act (as he says) within a work. If his proper name, EL, is in the place of the Pronoun (He/*Il*) that preseals everything that can carry a name, it is not him, but Him, that my fault comes to wound in his body. Where, then, will my fault have taken bodily form? Where in his body will it have left a mark, in the body of Him, I mean? What is the body of a fault in this writing where the traces of the wholly other are exchanged, without circulating, without ever presenting themselves? If I wished to destroy or annul my fault, I would have to know what becomes of the text being written at this very moment, where it can take place or what can remain of its remains.

In order to make my question better understood, I will take a detour through what he recalls concerning the name of God, in the commentary on it without neutrality that he proposes in "The Name of God According to Some Talmudic Texts." According to the Treatise *Chevouoth* (35a), it is forbidden to erase the names of God, even in the case where a copyist has altered its form. One must in that case bury the whole manuscript. The manuscript, EL says, "has to be put in the earth like a dead body." But what does it mean to put in the earth [*mettre en terre*]? And what does a "dead body" mean, since it is not erased or destroyed but "put in the earth"? If one wanted simply to annihilate it—to keep it no longer—one would burn the whole thing, one would erase everything without remains. One would replace, without remainder, the dysgraphy with orthography. By inhuming it, on the contrary, the fault against the proper name is not destroyed; at bottom one keeps it, as a fault, one keeps it at the bottom. It will slowly decompose, taking its time, in the course of a work of mourning that, either successful as a spiritual interiorization, an idealization that certain psychoanalysts call introjection, or else paralyzed in a melancholic pathology (incorporation), will keep the other as other,

wounded, wounding, impossible utterance. The topic of such a faulty text remains highly improbable, like the taking-place of its remains in this theonymic cemetery.

If I now ask at this very moment where to remit [*remettre*] my fault, it is because of a certain *analogy*. What he recalls about the names of God is something one would be tempted to say *analogically* of every proper name. He would be the Pro-noun or the Fore-name of every name. Just as there is a "resemblance" between the face of God and the face of man (even if this resemblance is neither an "ontological mark" of the worker on his work nor "sign" or "effect" of God), in the same way there would be an analogy between all proper names and the names of God, which are, in their turn, analogous among themselves. Consequently, I transport by analogy onto the proper name of man or woman what is said of the names of God. And of the "fault" against the body of these names.

But things are more complicated. If, in *Totality and Infinity*, the analogy is retained, though not in a very classical sense, between the face of God and the face of man, here, on the contrary, in the commentary on the Talmudic texts, a whole movement is sketched in order to signal that it is necessary to interrupt that analogy, to "refuse God all analogy with beings that are, to be sure, unique, but that make up with other beings a world or a structure. Approaching through a proper name is to affirm a relation that is irreducible to the knowledge that thematizes, defines, or synthesizes and that thereby understands the correlate of this knowledge as a being, as finite, and as immanent."[16] And yet, once interrupted, the analogy is resumed as an analogy between absolute heterogeneities by means of the enigma or the ambiguity of uncertain and precarious epiphany. Monotheistic humanity has a *relation* [rapport] to this trace of a passing [*passée*] that is absolutely anterior to any memory, to the ab-solute re-treat/re-trait of the revealed name, to its very inaccessibility. "Square letters are a precarious dwelling from which the revealed Name already withdraws [*se retire*]; erasable letters at the mercy of the man who traces or recopies . . . " Man, therefore, can be connected with this retreat or withdrawal, despite the infinite distance of the nonthematizable, and with the precariousness and uncertainty of this revelation.

> But this uncertain epiphany, on the boundary of evanescence, is precisely the one that *man alone can retain*. This is why he is the essential moment both of this transcendence and of its manifestation. And why, through this ineffaceable revelation, he is called upon with unparalleled rectitude.
>
> But is this revelation precarious enough? Is the Name free enough with respect to the context in which it is lodged? Is it protected in its written form from all contamination by being or culture? Is it protected from man whose vocation is certainly to retain it, but who is capable of every abuse?[17]

Paradox: the precariousness of the revelation is never precarious enough. But must it be? And if it were, wouldn't that be worse?

Once the analogy is resumed—the way one resumes interruptions and not threads, it has to be remembered—I ought to be able to transpose the discourse on the names of God to the discourse on human names, for example, where there is no longer an example, that of EL.

And thus to the fault to which the one and the other expose themselves in their bodies. The fault will have always, already, taken place: as soon as I thematize what, in his work, carries beyond the thematizable and is put in a singular seriasure within that which he cannot not sign himself. To be sure, there is already contamination in his work, in that which he thematizes "at this very moment" of the nonthematizable. I am contaminating this irrepressible thematization in my turn; and not merely according to a law of their common structure, but just as much with a fault of my own that I will not seek to resolve or absolve within the general necessity. As a woman, for example, and by reversing the dissymmetry, I have added to it, rape. I will have been even a little more unfaithful to him, more ungrateful, but was it not so as to give myself up to what his work says of the Work: that it provokes one to ingratitude? Here to absolute ingratitude, the least foreseeable in his work itself?

I give and play ingratitude against jealousy. In everything I am talking about, jealousy is at stake. The thinking of the trace as put in seriasure by EL, thinks a singular relation of God (not contaminated by being) to jealousy. He, the one who has passed beyond all being, must be exempt from all jealousy, from all desire for possession, keeping, property, exclusivity, nonsubstitution. And the relation to Him must be pure of all jealous economy. But this without-jealousy [*sans-jalousie*] cannot not jealously keep itself; insofar as it is an absolutely reserved passed [*passée*], it is the very possibility of all jealousy. Ellipsis/ellipse of jealousy: seriasure is always a jalousie through which, seeing without seeing everything, and especially without being seen, before and beyond the phenomenon, the

without-jealousy jealously guards and keeps itself, otherwise said, loses itself, keeps-itself-loses-itself. By means of a series of regular traits and re-treats/re-traits: the figure of jealousy, beyond the face. Never more / No more jealousy, ever/never more zeal, is it possible? [59]

If feminine difference presealed his work, perhaps and nearly illegibly; if it [*elle*] became, in the depths of the same, the other of his other, will I then have deformed his name by writing, at this moment, in this work, right here, "it [*elle*] will have obligated"?

—I no longer know if you are saying what his work says. Perhaps it comes back and comes down to the same. I no longer know if you are saying the contrary, or if you have already written something wholly other. I no longer hear your voice, I have difficulty distinguishing it from mine, from any other, your fault suddenly becomes illegible to me. Interrupt me.

~ HERE AT THIS VERY MOMENT I ROLL UP THE BODY OF OUR INTERLACED VOICES FAULTY CONSONANTS VOWELS ACCENTS IN THIS MANUSCRIPT ~ I MUST PUT IT IN THE EARTH FOR YOU ~ COME BEND DOWN OUR GESTURES WILL HAVE HAD THE INCONSOLABLE SLOWNESS SUITABLE TO THE GIFT AS IF IT WERE NECESSARY TO DELAY THE ENDLESS FALLING DUE OF A REPETITION ~ IT IS OUR MUTE INFANT A GIRL PERHAPS OF AN INCEST STILLBORN TO AN INCEST PROMISED ONE MAY NEVER KNOW ~ BY FAULT OF HER BODY SHE WILL HAVE LET HERSELF BE DESTROYED ONE DAY AND WITHOUT REMAINDER ONE MUST HOPE ONE MUST KEEP HOPE FOR/FROM ONESELF EVEN THAT THUS SHE WILL GUARD HERSELF BETTER FROM ALWAYS MORE AND NO MORE JEALOUSY ~ NO LONGER ENOUGH DIFFERENCE THERE BETWEEN THEM BETWEEN THE FEMININE INHUMED OR THE ASHES OF A BURN-EVERYTHING ~ NOW HERE EVEN THE THING OF THIS LITURGY KEEPS ITSELF LIKE A TRACE OTHERWISE SAID LOSES ITSELF BEYOND PLAY AND EXPENDITURE ALL IN ALL AND ALL ACCOUNTING FOR OTHERS DONE ALREADY SHE LETS HERSELF BE EATEN ~ BY THE OTHER BY YOU WHO

WILL HAVE GIVEN HER TO ME ~ YOU ALWAYS KNEW THAT SHE IS THE PROPER BODY OF THE FAULT SHE WILL ONLY HAVE BEEN CALLED BY HER LEGIBLE NAME BY YOU AND IN THAT IN ADVANCE DISAPPEARED ~ BUT IN THE BOTTOMLESS CRYPT THE INDECIPHERABLE STILL GIVES ONE TO READ FOR A LAPSE ABOVE HER BODY THAT SLOWLY DECOMPOSES ON ANALYSIS ~ WE NEED A NEW BODY ANOTHER WITHOUT ANY MORE JEALOUSY THE MOST ANCIENT STILL TO COME ~ SHE DOES NOT SPEAK THE UNNAMED ONE YET YOU HEAR HER BETTER THAN ME AHEAD OF ME AT THIS VERY MOMENT WHERE NONETHELESS ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THIS MONUMENTAL WORK I WEAVE WITH MY VOICE SO AS TO BE ERASED THERE THIS TAKE IT HERE I AM EAT ~ COME CLOSER ~ IN ORDER TO GIVE HIM/HER ~ DRINK

~ VOICI EN CE MOMENT MÊME J'ENROULE LE CORPS DE NOS VOIX ENTRELACÉES CONSONNES VOYELLES ACCENTS FAUTIFS DANS CE MANUSCRIT ~ IL ME FAUT POUR TOI LE METTRE EN TERRE ~ VIENS PENCHE-TOI NOS GESTES AURONT EU LA LENTEUR INCONSOLABLE QUI CONVIENT AU DON COMME S'IL FALLAIT RETARDER L'ÉCHÉANCE SANS FIN DUNE RÉPÉTITION ~ C'EST NOTRE ENFANT MUET UNE FILLE PEUT-ÊTRE D'UN INCESTE MORT-NÉE À L'INCESTE SAURA-T-ON JAMAIS PROMISE ~ EN FAUTE DE SON CORPS ELLE SE SERA LAISSÉ DÉTRUIRE UN JOUR ET SANS RESTE IL FAUT L'ESPÉRER IL FAUT SE GARDER DE L'ESPOIR MÊME QU'AINSI TOUJOURS PLUS DE JALOUSIE ELLE SE GARDERA MIEUX ~ PLUS ASSEZ DE DIFFÉRENCE LÀ ENTRE ELLES ENTRE L'INHUMÉE OU LES CENDRES D'UN BRÛLE-TOUT ~ MAINTENANT ICI MÊME LA CHOSE DE CETTE LITURGIE SE GARDE COMME UNE TRACE AUTREMENT DIT SE PERD AU-DELÀ DU JEU ET DE LA DÉPENSE TOUT COMPTE POUR D'AUTRES FAIT ELLE SE LAISSE DÉJÀ MANGER ~ PAR L'AUTRE PAR TOI

QUI ME L'AURAS DONNÉE ~ TU SAVAIS DEPUIS TOUJOURS QU'ELLE EST LE CORPS PROPRE DE LA FAUTE ELLE N'AURA ÉTÉ APPELÉE DE SON NOM LISIBLE QUE PAR TOI EN CELA D'AVANCE DISPARUE ~ MAIS DANS LA CRYPTE SANS FOND L'INDÉCHIFFRABLE DONNE ENCORE À LIRE POUR UN LAPS AU-DESSUS DE SON CORPS QUI LENTEMENT SE DÉCOMPOSE À L'ANALYSE ~ IL NOUS FAUT UN NOUVEAU CORPS UN AUTRE SANS PLUS DE JALOUSIE LE PLUS ANCIEN ENCORE À VENIR ~ ELLE NE PARLE PAS L'INNOMMÉE OR TU L'ENTENDS MIEUX QUE MOI AVANT MOI EN CE MOMENT MÊME OU POURTANT SUR L'AUTRE CÔTÉ DE CET OUVRAGE MONUMENTAL JE TISSE DE MA VOIX POUR M'Y EFFACER CECI TIENS ME VOICI MANGE ~ APPROCHE-TOI ~ POUR LUI DONNER ~ BOIS

—Translated by Ruben Berezdivin and Peggy Kamuf

§ 8 Des tours de Babel

"Babel": first a proper name, granted. But when we say "Babel" today, do we know what we are naming? Do we know whom? Consider the survival of a text that is a legacy, the narrative or the myth of the tower of Babel: it does not form just one figure among others. Telling at least of the inadequation of one tongue to another, of one place in the encyclopedia to another, of language to itself and to meaning, and so forth, it also tells of the need for figuration, for myth, for tropes, for twists and turns, for translation inadequate to supply that which multiplicity denies us. In this sense, it would be the myth of the origin of myth, the metaphor of metaphor, the narrative of narrative, the translation of translation. It would not be the only structure hollowing itself out like that, but it would do so in its own way (itself *almost* untranslatable, like a proper name), and its idiom would have to be saved.

The "tower of Babel" does not merely figure the irreducible multiplicity of tongues; it exhibits an incompletion, the impossibility of finishing, of totalizing, of saturating, of completing something on the order of edification, architectural construction, system, and architectonics. What the multiplicity of idioms comes to limit is not only a "true" translation, a transparent and adequate interexpression, it is also a structural order, a coherence of construct. There is then (let us translate) something like an internal limit to formalization, an incompleteness of the constructure. It

First published version in *Difference in Translation*, ed. Joseph Graham (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1985), in a bilingual edition, and in *L'art des confins: Mélanges offerts à Maurice de Gandillac* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1985).

would be easy and up to a certain point justified to see there the translation of a system in deconstruction.

One should never pass over in silence the question of the tongue in which the question of the tongue is raised and into which a discourse on translation is translated.

First: in what tongue was the tower of Babel constructed and deconstructed? In a tongue within which the proper name of Babel could also, by confusion, be translated by "confusion." The proper name Babel, as a proper name, should remain untranslatable, but, by a kind of associative confusion that a unique tongue rendered possible, one could have thought to translate it, in that very tongue, by a common noun signifying what we translate as confusion. Voltaire showed his astonishment in his *Dictionnaire philosophique*, in the article "Babel":

> I do not know why it is said in *Genesis* that Babel signifies confusion, for *Ba* signifies father in Oriental tongues, and *Bel* signifies God; Babel signifies the city of God, the holy city. The Ancients gave this name to all their capitals. But it is incontestable that Babel means confusion, either because the architects were confounded after having raised their work up to eighty-one thousand Jewish feet, or because the tongues were then confounded; and it is obviously from that time on that the Germans no longer understand the Chinese; for it is clear, according to the scholar Bochart, that Chinese is originally the same tongue as High German.[1]

The calm irony of Voltaire means to say that "Babel" means to say: it is not only a proper name, the reference of a pure signifier to a single being—and for this reason untranslatable—but a common noun related to the generality of a meaning. This common noun *means-to-say*, and not only confusion, even though "confusion" has at least two meanings, as Voltaire is aware, the confusion of tongues, but also the state of confusion in which the architects find themselves with the structure interrupted, so that a certain confusion has already begun to affect the two meanings of the word "confusion." The meaning of "confusion" is confused, at least double. But Voltaire suggests something else again: Babel means not only confusion in the double sense of the word, but also the name of the father, more precisely and more commonly, the name of God as name of father. The city would bear the name of God the father and of the father of the city that is called confusion. God, the God, would have marked with his patronym a community space, that city where people no longer

understand one another. And people no longer understand one another when there is only some proper name, and people no longer understand one another when there are no longer proper names. In giving his name, in giving all names, the father would be at the origin of language, and that power would belong by right to God the father. And the name of God the father would be the name of that origin of tongues. But it is also that God who, in the action of his anger (like the God of Jakob Böhme or of Hegel, he who goes out of himself, determines himself in his finitude and thus produces history), annuls the gift of tongues, or at least embroils it, sows confusion among his sons, and poisons the present (*Gift-gift*). This is also the origin of tongues, of the multiplicity of idioms, of what in other words are usually called mother tongues. For this entire history deploys filiations, generations, and genealogies: Semitic ones. Before the deconstruction of Babel, the great Semitic family was establishing its empire, which it wanted to be universal, and its tongue, which it also attempts to impose on the universe. The moment of this project immediately precedes the deconstruction of the tower. I cite two French translations. The first translator stays away from what one would want to call "literality," in other words, from the Hebrew figure of speech for "tongue," where the second, more concerned about literality (metaphoric, or rather metonymic), says "lip," since in Hebrew "lip" designates what we call, in another metonymy, "tongue." One will have to say multiplicity of lips, and not of tongues, to name the Babelian confusion. The first translator, then, Louis Segond, author of the Segond Bible (1910 version), writes this:

> Ce sont là les fils de Sem, selon leurs familles, selon leurs langues, selon leurs pays, selon leurs nations. Telles sont les familles des fils de Noé, selon leurs générations, selon leurs nations. Et c'est d'eux que sont sorties les nations qui se sont répandues sur la terre après le déluge. Toute la terre avait une seule langue et les mêmes mots. Comme ils étaient partis de l'origine, ils trouvèrent une plaine du pays de Schinear, et ils y habitèrent. Ils se dirent l'un à l'autre: Allons! faisons des briques, et cuisons-les au feu. Et la brique leur servit de pierre, et le bitume leur servit de ciment. Ils dirent encore: Allons! bâtissons-nous une ville et une tour dont le sommet touche au ciel, et faisons-nous un nom, afin que nous ne soyons pas dispersés sur la face de toute la terre.
>
> [Those are the sons of Shem, according to their families, their tongues, their countries, their nations. Such are the families of the sons of Noah, according to their generations, their nations. And it is from them that emerged the na-

tions which spread over the earth after the flood. All the earth had a single tongue and the same words. As they had left the origin they found a plain in the country of Shinar, and they dwelt there. They said to one another: Come! Let us make bricks, and bake them in the fire. And brick served them as stone, and tar served as cement. Again they said: Come! Let us build ourselves a city and a tower whose summit touches the heavens, and let us make ourselves a name, so that we not be scattered over the face of all the earth.]

I do not know just how to interpret this allusion to the substitution or the transmutation of materials, brick becoming stone and tar serving as mortar. That already resembles a translation, a translation of translation. But let us leave it and substitute a second translation for the first. It is that of André Chouraqui. It is recent and wants to be more literal, almost *verbum pro verbo*, as Cicero said should not be done in one of those first recommendations to the translator which can be read in his *Libellus de optimo genera oratorum*. Here is Chouraqui's translation:

Voici les fils de Shem / pour leurs clans, pour leurs langues / dans leurs terres, pour leurs peuples. / Voici les clans des fils de Noah pour leur geste, dans leurs peuples: / et de ceux-là se scindent les peuples sur terre, après le déluge. / Et c'est toute la terre: une seule lèvre, d'uniques paroles. / Et c'est à leur départ d'Orient: ils trouvent un cañon / en terre de Shine'ar. / Il s'y établissent. / Ils disent, chacun à son semblable; / "Allons, briquetons des briques, / Flambons-les à la flambée." / La brique devient pour eux pierre, le bitume, mortier. / Ils disent: "Allons, bâtissons-nous une ville et une tour. / Sa tête: aux cieux. / Faisons-nous un nom, / que nous ne soyions dispersés sur la face de toute la terre.

[Here are the sons of Shem / for their clans, for their tongues, / in their lands, for their peoples. / Here are the clans of the sons of Noah for their exploits, / in their peoples: / from the latter divide the peoples on earth, after the flood. / And it is all the earth: a single lip, one speech. / And it is at their departure from the Orient: / they find a canyon, / in the land of Shine'ar. / They settle there. / They say, each to his like: / "Come, let us brick some bricks. / Let us fire them in the fire." / The brick becomes for them stone, the tar, mortar. / They say: / "Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower. / Its head: in the heavens. / Let us make ourselves a name, / that we not be scattered over the face of all the earth."]

What happens to them? In other words, for what does God punish them in giving his name, or rather, since he gives it to nothing and to

no one, in proclaiming his name, the proper name of "confusion" that will be his mark and his seal? Does he punish them for having wanted to build as high as the heavens? For having wanted to accede to the highest, up to the Most High? Perhaps for that too, no doubt, but incontestably for having wanted thus to *make a name for themselves*, to give themselves the name, to construct for and by themselves their own name, to gather themselves there ("that we no longer be scattered"), as in the unity of a place that is at once a tongue and a tower, the one as well as the other, the one as the other. He punishes them for having thus wanted to assure themselves, by themselves, a unique and universal genealogy. For the text of Genesis links without mediation, immediately, as if it were all a matter of the same design, raising a tower, constructing a city, making a name for oneself in a universal tongue that would also be an idiom, and gathering a filiation:

Ils disent: "Allons, bâtissons une ville et une tour. / Sa tête: aux cieux. / Faisons-nous un nom, / que nous ne soyions dispersés sur la face de toute la terre." YHWH descend pour voir la ville et la tour / qu'ont bâties les fils de l'homme. / YHWH dit: / "Oui! Un seul peuple, une seule lèvre pour tous: / voilà ce qu'ils commencent à faire! /. . . . Allons! Descendons! Confondons là leurs lèvres, / l'homme n'entendra plus la lèvre de son prochain." [. . .] / YHWH les disperse de là sur la face de toute la terre. / Ils cessent de bâtir la ville. / Sur quoi il clame son nom: Bavel, Confusion, / car là, YHWH confond la lèvre de toute la terre, / et de là YHWH les disperse sur la face de toute la terre.

They say: "Come, let us build a city and a tower. / Its head: in the heavens. / Let us make ourselves a name, that we not be scattered over the face of all the earth." YHWH descends to see the city and the tower / that the sons of man have built. / YHWH says: "Yes! A single people, a single lip for all: / that is what they begin to do! /. . . . Come! Let us descend! Let us confound their lips, / man will no longer understand the lip of his neighbor." [Then he disseminates the children of Shem, and here dissemination is deconstruction.] YHWH disperses them from there over the face of all the earth. / They cease to build the city. / Over which he proclaims his name: Bavel, Confusion, / for there, YHWH confounds the lip of all the earth, / and from there YHWH disperses them over the face of all the earth.

Can we not, then, speak of God's jealousy? Out of resentment against that unique name and lip of men, he imposes his name, his name of fa-

ther; and with this violent imposition, he initiates the deconstruction of the tower, as of the universal language; he scatters the genealogical filiation. He interrupts the lineage. He *at the same time* imposes and forbids translation. He imposes it and forbids it, constrains, but as if to failure, the children who henceforth *will bear* his name, the name that *he* gives to the city. It is from a proper name of God, come from God, descended from God or from the father (and it is indeed said that YHWH, an unpronounceable name, *descends* toward the tower) and by him that tongues are scattered, confounded, or multiplied, according to a descendance that in its very dispersion remains sealed by the only name that will have been the strongest, by the only idiom that will have triumphed. Now, this idiom bears within itself the mark of confusion, it improperly means the improper, to wit: Bavel, confusion. Translation then becomes necessary and impossible, like the effect of a struggle for the appropriation of the name, necessary and forbidden in the interval between two absolutely proper names. And the proper name of God is divided enough in the tongue, already, to signify also, confusedly, "confusion." And the war that he declares has first raged within his name: divided, bifid, ambivalent, polysemic: *God deconstructing*. "And he war," one reads in *Finnegans Wake*, and we could follow this whole story from the side of Shem and Shaun. The "he war" does not only, in this place, tie together an incalculable number of phonic and semantic threads, in the immediate context and throughout this Babelian book; it utters the declaration of war (in English) of he who says, "I am that I am," and that thus was (*war*), *will have been* untranslatable in its very performance, *at least in the fact* that it is enunciated in more than one language at a time, at least English and German. Even if an infinite translation exhausted its semantic stock, it would still translate into *one* language and would lose the multiplicity of "he war." Let us leave for another time a less hastily interrupted reading of this "he war,"[2] and let us note one of the limits of theories of translation: all too often they treat the passing from one language to another and do not sufficiently consider the possibility for languages to be implicated *more than two* in a text. How to translate a text written in several languages at once? How is the effect of plurality to be "rendered"? And if one translates with several languages at a time, will that be called translating?

Babel: today we take it as a proper name. Indeed; but the proper name of what and of whom? At times as the name of a narrative text recounting a story (mythical, symbolic, allegorical; it matters little for the moment),

a story in which the proper name, which is then no longer the title of the narrative, names a tower or a city but a tower or a city that receives its name from an event during which YHWH "proclaims his name." Now, this proper name, which already names at least three times and three different things, also has as proper name, this is the whole drama, the function of a common noun. This story recounts, among other things, the origin of the confusion of tongues, the irreducible multiplicity of idioms, the necessary and impossible task of translation, its necessity *as* impossibility. Now, in general one pays little attention to this fact: it is in translation that we most often read this narrative. And in this translation, the proper name retains a singular destiny, since it is not translated in its appearance as proper name. Now, a proper name as such remains forever untranslatable, a fact that may lead one to conclude that it does not strictly belong, by the same right as the other words, to the language, to the system of the language, be it translated or translating. And yet "Babel," an event in a single tongue, the one in which it appears so as to form a "text," also has a common meaning, a conceptual generality. That it be by way of a pun or a confused association matters little: "Babel" could be understood in one language as meaning "confusion." And from then on, just as Babel is at once proper name and common noun, Confusion also becomes proper name and common noun, the one as the homonym of the other, the synonym as well, but not the equivalent, because there could be no question of confusing them in their value. There is for the translator no satisfactory solution. Recourse to apposition and capitalization ("Over which he proclaims his name: Bavel, Confusion") is not translating from one tongue into another. It comments, explains, paraphrases, but does not translate. At best it sketches an analysis by dividing the equivocation into two words at the point where confusion was gathered in potential, in all its potential, in the internal translation, if one can say that, that is at work on the word in the so-called original tongue. For in the very tongue of the original narrative there is a translation, a sort of transfer that gives immediately (by some confusion) the semantic equivalent of the proper name which, by itself, as a pure proper name, it would not have. Truth to tell, this intralinguistic translation operates immediately; it is not even an operation in the strict sense. Nevertheless, someone who speaks the language of Genesis could notice the effect the proper name has in effacing the conceptual equivalent (like *pierre* [rock] in "Pierre" [Peter], and these are two absolutely heterogeneous values or functions); one would then

be tempted to say *first* that a proper name, in the proper sense, does not properly belong to the language; it does not belong there, *although and because* its call makes the language possible (what would a language be without the possibility of calling by a proper name?); consequently it can properly inscribe itself in a language only by allowing itself to be translated therein, in other words, *interpreted* by its semantic equivalent: from this moment, it can no longer be taken as proper name. The noun *pierre* belongs to the French language, and its translation into a foreign language should in principle transport its meaning. This is no longer the case with "Pierre," whose belonging to the French language is not assured and is in any case not of the same type. "Peter" in this sense is not a *translation* of Pierre, any more than "Londres" is a translation of London, and so forth. And *second*, anyone whose so-called mother tongue was the tongue of Genesis could indeed understand Babel as "confusion"; that person then effects a *confused* translation of the proper name by its common equivalent without having need for another word.

It is as if there were two words there, two homonyms; one of which has the value of proper name and the other that of common noun: between the two, a translation, which one can evaluate quite diversely. Does it belong to the kind that Roman Jakobson calls intralingual translation or rewording? I do not think so: "rewording" concerns relations of transformation between common nouns and ordinary phrases. The essay "On Linguistic Aspects of Translation" (1959) distinguishes three forms of translation. *Intralingual* translation interprets linguistic signs by means of other signs of the *same* language. This obviously presupposes that one can know in the final analysis how to determine rigorously the unity and identity of a language, the decidable form of its limits. Then there would be what Jakobson neatly calls translation "proper," *interlingual* translation, which interprets linguistic signs by means of some other language—this appeals to the same presupposition as intralingual translation. Finally, there would be intersemiotic translation or *transmutation*, which interprets linguistic signs by means of systems of nonlinguistic signs. For the two forms of translation that would not be translations "proper," Jakobson proposes a definitional equivalent and another word. The first he translates, so to speak, by another word: intralingual translation, or *rewording*. The third likewise: *intersemiotic* translation, or *transmutation*. In these two cases, the translation of "translation" is a definitional interpretation. But in the case of translation "proper," translation in the ordinary

sense, interlinguistic and post-Babelian, Jakobson does not translate; he repeats the same word: "interlingual translation or translation proper." He supposes that it is not necessary to translate; everyone understands what that means, because everyone has experienced it, everyone is expected to know what a language is, the relation of one language to another, and especially identity or difference in fact of language. If there is a transparency that Babel has not impaired, this is surely it, the experience of the multiplicity of tongues and the "proper" sense of the word "translation." In relation to this word, when it is a question of translation "proper," the other uses of the word "translation" would be in a position of intralingual and inadequate translation, like metaphors, in short, like twists or turns of translation in the proper sense. There would thus be translation in the proper sense and translation in the figurative sense. And in order to translate the one into the other, within the same tongue or from one tongue to another, in the figurative or in the proper sense, one starts down a road that quickly reveals how this reassuring tripartition can be problematic.

Very quickly: at the very moment when pronouncing "Babel," we sense the impossibility of deciding whether this name belongs, properly and simply, to *one* tongue. And it matters that this undecidability is at work in a struggle for the proper name within a scene of genealogical indebtedness. In seeking to "make a name for themselves," to found at the same time a universal tongue and a unique genealogy, the Semites want to make the world see reason, and this reason can signify simultaneously colonial violence (since they would thus universalize their idiom) *and* peaceful transparency of the human community. Conversely, when God imposes and opposes his name, he ruptures the rational transparency but also interrupts the colonial violence or the linguistic imperialism. He destines them to translation, he subjects them to the law of a translation both necessary and impossible; with a blow of his translatable-untranslatable name, he delivers a universal reason (it will no longer be subject to the rule of a particular nation), but he simultaneously limits its very universality: forbidden transparency, impossible univocity. Translation becomes the law, duty, and debt, but the debt one can no longer discharge. Such insolvency is found marked in the very name of Babel, which at once translates and does not translate itself, belongs without belonging to a language and indebts itself to itself for an insolvent debt, to itself as other. Such would be the Babelian performance.

This singular example, at once archetypical and allegorical, could serve

as an introduction to all the so-called theoretical problems of translation. But no theorization, inasmuch as it is produced in a language, will be able to dominate the Babelian performance. This is one of the reasons why I prefer here, instead of treating it in the theoretical mode, to attempt to translate in my own way the translation of another text on translation. Without acquitting myself of it, I would also recognize in this way one of my numerous debts to Maurice de Gandillac. Among so many other irreplaceable teachings, we are indebted to him for his introduction to and translation of Walter Benjamin and singularly, "The Task of the Translator." The preceding ought to have led me instead to an early text by Benjamin, "On Language as Such and on the Language of Man" (1916), likewise translated by Maurice de Gandillac in the same volume.[3] Reference to Babel is explicit there and is accompanied by a discourse on the proper name and on translation. But given the, in my view, overly enigmatic character of that essay, its wealth and its overdeterminations, I have had to postpone that reading and limit myself to "The Task of the Translator." Its difficulty is doubtless no less, but its unity remains more apparent, better centered around its theme. And this text on translation is also the preface to a translation of Baudelaire's *Tableaux parisiens*, and I will refer to it first in the French translation that Maurice de Gandillac gives us. And yet, translation—is it only a theme for this text, and especially its primary theme?

The title also says, from its first word, the task (*Aufgabe*), the mission to which one is destined (always by the other): commitment, duty, debt, responsibility. Already at stake is a law, an injunction for which the translator is answerable. He *must also acquit himself*, and of something that implies perhaps a fault, a fall, an error, or even a crime. The essay has as horizon, as we will see, a "reconciliation." And all of this in a discourse multiplying genealogical motifs and allusions—more or less than metaphorical—to the transmission of a family seed. The translator is indebted, he appears to himself as translator in a situation of debt; and his task is to *render*, to render that which must have been given. Among the words that correspond to Benjamin's title (*Aufgabe*, duty, mission, task, problem, that which is assigned, given to be done, given to be rendered), there are, from the beginning, *Wiedergabe*, *Sinnwiedergabe*, restitution, restitution of meaning. How is such a restitution, or even such an acquitting, to be understood? And what about meaning? As for *aufgeben*, it is to give, to dispatch (emission, mission) *and* to abandon.

For the moment let us retain this vocabulary of gift and debt, and a debt that could well declare itself insolvent, whence a sort of "transference," love and hate, on the part of whoever is in a position to translate, is summoned to translate, with regard to the text to be translated (I do not say with regard to the signatory or the author of the original), to the language and the writing, to the bond and the love that seal the marriage between the author of the "original" and his or her own language. At the center of the essay, Benjamin says of the restitution that it could very well be impossible: insolvent debt within a genealogical scene. One of the essential themes of the text is the "kinship" of languages in a sense that is no longer tributary of nineteenth-century historical linguistics, without being totally foreign to it. Perhaps what is here being proposed to us is that we think the very possibility of a historical linguistics.

Benjamin has just quoted Mallarmé, in French, after having left in his own sentence a Latin word, which Maurice de Gandillac has reproduced at the bottom of the page to indicate that he did not translate "genius" from German but from Latin (*ingenium*). But of course he could not do the same with the third language of this essay, the French of Mallarmé, whose untranslatability Benjamin had measured. Once again: how is a text written in several languages at a time to be translated? Here is the passage on the insolvent (I include here or there the German word that supports my point):

> Philosophy and translation are not futile, however, as sentimental artists allege. For there exists a philosophical genius, whose most proper characteristic is the yearning for that language which manifests itself in translation.
>
> > "Les langues imparfaites en cela que plusieurs, manque la suprême: penser étant écrire sans accessoires ni chuchotement, mais tacite encore l'immortelle parole, la diversité, sur terre, des idiomes empêche personne de proférer les mots qui, sinon, se trouveraient, par une frappe unique, elle-même matériellement la vérité."
>
> If what Mallarmé evokes here is fully fathomable to a philosopher, translation, with the seeds [*Keimen*] it carries of such a language, is midway between poetry and theory. Its work is less sharply defined than either of these, but it leaves no less of a mark on history.
>
> If the task of the translator is viewed in this light, the roads toward a solution seem to be all the more obscure and impenetrable. Indeed, the problem of ripening the seed of pure language [*den Samen reiner Sprache zur Reife zu*

bringen] in a translation seems to be insoluble [*diese Aufgabe . . . scheint niemals lösbar*], determinable in no solution [*in keiner Lösung bestimmbar*]. For is not the ground cut from under such a solution if the reproduction of the sense ceases to be decisive?[4]

Benjamin has, first of all, forgone translating the Mallarmé, which he has left shining in his text like the medallion of a proper name; but this proper name is not totally insignificant; it is merely welded to that whose meaning does not allow transport without damage into another language or into another tongue (and *Sprache* is not translated without loss by either word). And in Mallarmé's text, the effect of being proper and thus untranslatable is tied less to any name or to any truth of adequation than to the unique occurrence of a performative force. So the question arises: does not the ground of translation finally recede as soon as the restitution of meaning (*Wiedergabe des Sinnes*) ceases to provide the measure? It is the ordinary concept of translation that becomes problematic: it implied this process of restitution, the task (*Aufgabe*) was finally to render, give back (*wiedergeben*) what was first *given*, and what was given was, one thought, the meaning. Now, things become obscure when one tries to accord this value of restitution with that of maturation. On what ground, in what ground, will the maturation take place if the restitution of the given meaning is no longer the rule for it?

The allusion to the maturation of a seed might resemble a vitalist or geneticist metaphor; it would come, then, in support of the genealogical and parental code that seems to dominate this text. In fact, one has, it seems, to invert this order here and recognize what I have elsewhere proposed calling the "metaphoric catastrophe": far from knowing first what "life" or "family" mean whenever we use these familiar values to talk about language and translation, it is rather starting from the notion of a language and its "sur-vival" in translation that we could have access to the notion of what "life" and "family" mean. This reversal operates expressly in Benjamin's text. His preface (for let us not forget that the essay is a preface) circulates without ceasing among the values of seed, life, and especially "survival." (*Überleben* has here an essential relation with *Übersetzen*.) Now, very near the beginning, Benjamin seems to propose a simile or a metaphor—it opens with a "just as . . . "—and right away everything is displaced between *Übersetzen*, *Übertragen*, *Überleben*:

> Just as the manifestations of life are intimately connected with the living, without signifying anything for it, a translation proceeds from the original. Indeed, not so much from its life as from its "survival" [*Überleben*]. For a translation comes after the original and, for the important works that never find their predestined translator at the time of their birth, it characterizes the stage of their living on [*Fortleben*, this time, living-on as continuation of life rather than as life postmortem]. Now, it is in this simple reality, without any metaphor [*in völlig unmetaphorischer Sachlichkeit*], that it is necessary to conceive the ideas of life and living on [*Fortleben*] for works of art. (254)

And according to a scheme that appears Hegelian, in a very circumscribed passage, Benjamin calls us to think life starting from spirit or history and not from "organic corporeality" alone: There is life at the moment when "sur-vival" (spirit, history, works) exceeds biological life and death: "It is rather in recognizing for everything of which there is history and which is not merely the setting for history that one does justice to this concept of life. For it is starting from history, not from nature . . . that the domain of life must finally be circumscribed. So is born for the philosopher the task [*Aufgabe*] of comprehending all natural life starting from this life, of much vaster extension, that is the life of history."

From the very title—and for the moment I go no further—Benjamin situates the *problem*, in the sense of that which is precisely *before oneself* as a task: it is that of the translator, and not that of translation (nor, be it said in passing, and the question is not negligible, that of the translatoress [*traductrice*]). Benjamin does not say the task or the problem of translation. He names the subject of translation as an indebted subject; obligated by a duty, already in the position of heir, entered as survivor in a genealogy, as survivor or agent of sur-vival. The sur-vival of works, not authors. Perhaps the sur-vival of authors' names and of signatures, but not of authors.

Such sur-vival gives a surplus of life, more than a surviving. The work does not simply live longer, it lives *more and better*, beyond its author's means.

Would the translator then be an indebted receiver, subject to the gift and to the given of an original? By no means. For several reasons, including the following: the bond or obligation of the debt does not pass between a donor and a donee but between two texts (two "productions" or two "creations"). This is understood from the opening of the preface, and if one wanted to isolate theses, here are a few, as brutally as in any sampling:

1. The task of the translator does not announce itself or follow from a *reception*. The theory of translation does not depend for the essential on any theory of reception, even though it can inversely contribute to the elaboration and explanation of such a theory.

2. The essential goal of translation is not *to communicate*. No more is it the goal of the original. Benjamin maintains, secure from all possibility or threat of dispute, the strict duality between the original and the version, the translated and the translating, even though he shifts their relation. And he is interested in the translation of poetic or sacred texts, which would here yield the essence of translation. The entire essay unfolds between the poetic and the sacred, so as to trace things back from the first to the second, the one that indicates the ideal of all translation, the purely translatable: the intralinear version of the sacred text would be the model or ideal (*Urbild*) of any possible translation in general. Now, this is the second thesis: for a poetic text or a sacred text, communication is not the essential. This putting into question does not directly concern the communicative structure of language but rather the hypothesis of a communicable content that could be strictly distinguished from the linguistic act of communication. In his 1916 essay, Benjamin's critique of semiotism and of the "bourgeois conception" of language was already directed against that distribution: means, object, addressee. "There is no content of language." What language first communicates is its "communicability."[5] Will it be said that an opening is thus made toward the performative dimension of utterances? In any case, this warns us not to isolate hastily the contents and theses in "The Task of the Translator" and to translate it otherwise than as the signature of a kind of proper name destined to ensure its survival as a work.

3. If, between the translated text and the translating text, there is indeed a relation of "original" to version, it could not be *representative* or *reproductive*. Translation is neither an image nor a copy.

With these three precautions taken (neither reception, nor communication, nor representation), how are the debt and the genealogy of the translator—or, in the first place, of that which is *to-be-translated*, of the *to-be-translated*—constituted?

Let us follow the thread of life or sur-vival wherever it communicates with the movement of kinship. When Benjamin challenges the viewpoint of reception, it is not to deny it all pertinence, and he will undoubtedly have done much to prepare for a theory of reception in literature. But he

wants first to return to the authority of what he still calls "the original," not insofar as it produces its receiver or its translators, but insofar as it requires, mandates, demands, or commands them in establishing the law. And it is the structure of this demand that here appears most unusual. Through what does it pass? In a literary—let us say more rigorously in this case "poetic"—text it does not pass through the said, the uttered, the communicated, the content, or the theme. And when, in this context, Benjamin still says "communication" or "enunciation" (*Mitteilung*, *Aussage*), it is not about the act but about the content that he is obviously speaking: "But what does a literary work [*Dichtung*] 'say'? What does it communicate? Very little to those who understand it. What it has that is essential is not communication, not enunciation."

The demand seems thus to pass, indeed, to be formulated, through the *form*. "Translation is a form," and the law of this form has its first place in the original. This law first establishes itself, let us repeat, as a demand in the strong sense, a requirement that delegates, mandates, prescribes, assigns. And as for this law as demand, two questions can arise, which are different in essence. First question: in the sum total of its readers, can the work always find the translator who is, as it were, capable? Second question and, says Benjamin, "more properly" (as if this question made the preceding more appropriate, whereas we shall see, it does something quite different): "by its essence does it [the work] bear translation and if so—in line with the signification of this form—does it require translation?"

The answers to these two questions could not be of the same nature or the same mode. *Problematic* in the first case, not necessary (the translator capable of the work may appear or not, but even if he does not appear, that changes nothing in the demand or in the structure of the injunction that comes from the work), the answer is properly *apodictic* in the second case: necessary, a priori, demonstrable, absolute because it comes from the internal law of the original. The original requires translation even if there is no translator fit to respond to this injunction, which is at the same time demand and desire in the very structure of the original. This structure is the relation of life to sur-vival. Benjamin compares this requirement of the other as translator to some unforgettable instant of life: it is lived *as* unforgettable, it *is* unforgettable even if in fact forgetting finally wins out. It will have been unforgettable—there is its essential significance, its apodictic essence; forgetting happens to this unforgettableness only by accident. The requirement of the unforgettable—which is here constitu-

tive—is not in the least impaired by the finitude of memory. Likewise the requirement of translation in no way suffers from not being satisfied, at least it does not suffer in the very structure of the work. In this sense, the *surviving* dimension is an a priori—and death would not change anything there at all. No more than it would change the requirement (*Forderung*) that runs through the original work and to which only "a thought of God" can respond or correspond (*entsprechen*). Translation, the desire for translation, is not thinkable without this *correspondence* with a thought of God. In "On Language as Such and on the Language of Man," which already accorded the task of the translator, his *Aufgabe*, with the response made to the gift of tongues and the gift of names ("Gabe der Sprache," "Gebung des Namens"), Benjamin names God at this point, that of a correspondence authorizing, making possible, or guaranteeing the correspondence between the languages engaged in translation. In this narrow context, it was also a matter of the relations between language of things and language of men, between the mute and the speaking, the anonymous and the nameable, but the axiom held, no doubt, for all translation: "the objectivity of this translation is guaranteed in God" (70). The debt, in the beginning, is fashioned in the hollow of this "thought of God."

Strange debt, which does not bind anyone to anyone. If the structure of the work is "sur-vival," it is not a hypothetical subject-author of the original text—dead or mortal, the dead man of the text—to which the debt is owed, but to something else that represents the *formal* law in the immanence of the original text. Next, the debt does not involve restitution of a copy or a good image, a faithful representation of the original: the latter, the survivor, is itself in the process of transformation. The original gives itself in modifying itself and its gift is not that of a given object; it lives and lives on in mutation: "For in its survival, which would not merit the name if it were not mutation and renewal of something living, the original is modified. Even for words that are solidified there is still a postmaturation."

Postmaturation (*Nachreife*) of a living organism or a seed: this is not simply a metaphor, either, for the reasons already glimpsed. In its very essence, the history of this language is determined as "growth," "holy growth of languages."

4. If the debt of the translator commits him neither with regard to the author (dead even if he is living insofar as his text has a structure of survival) nor with regard to a model that must be reproduced or represented,

to whom is he committed? How is this to be named, this *what* or this *who*? What is the proper name if not that of the finite author, the dead or mortal one [*le mort ou le mortel*] of the text? And who is the translator who thus commits himself, who perhaps finds himself *committed* by the other before having committed himself? Since the translator finds himself, as to the sur-vival of the text, in the same situation as its finite and mortal producer (its "author"), it is not he, not he himself as a finite and mortal being, who is committed. Then who? It is he, of course, but in the name of whom or what? The question of proper names is essential here. Where the act of the living mortal seems to count less than the sur-vival of the text in the *translation*—translated and translating—it is quite necessary that the signature of the proper name be distinct and not so easily effaced from the contract or from the debt. Let us not forget that Babel names a struggle for the sur-vival of the name, the tongue, or the lips.

From its height, Babel at every instant supervises and surprises my reading: I translate, I translate the translation by Maurice de Gandillac of a text by Benjamin who, prefacing a translation, takes it as a pretext to say to what and in what way every translator is committed—and notes in passing, as an essential part of his demonstration, that there could be no translation of translation. We will have to remember this.

Recalling this strange situation, I do not wish only or essentially to reduce my role to that of a passer or passerby. Nothing is more serious than a translation. I rather wished to mark the fact that every translator is in a position to speak *about* translation, in a place that is certainly not second or secondary. For if the structure of the original is marked by the requirement to be translated, it is because in laying down the law, the original begins by indebting itself *as well* with regard to the translator. The original is the first debtor, the first petitioner; it begins by lacking—and by pleading for translation. This demand is not only on the side of the constructors of the tower who want to make a name for themselves and to found a universal tongue that translates itself by itself; it also constrains the deconstructor of the tower: in giving his name, God also appeals to translation, not only between the tongues that had suddenly become multiple and confused, but first *of his name*, of the name he had proclaimed, given, and which should be translated as confusion to be understood, hence, to let it be understood that it is difficult to translate and so to understand it. At the moment when he imposes and opposes his law to that of the tribe, he is also a petitioner for translation. He is also indebted.

He has not finished pleading for the translation of his name even as he forbids it. For Babel is untranslatable. God weeps over his name. His text is the most sacred, the most poetic, the most originary, since it creates a name and gives it to itself, but it is left no less destitute in its force and even in its very richness; it pleads for a translator. As in *La folie du jour* by Maurice Blanchot, the law does not command without demanding to be read, deciphered, translated. It demands transfer or transference (*Übertragung* and *Übersetzung* and *Überleben*). The double bind is in the law. Even in God, and it is necessary to follow rigorously the consequence of this: *in his name.*

Insolvent on both sides, the double indebtedness passes between names. It surpasses a priori the bearers of the names, if by that is understood the mortal bodies that disappear behind the sur-vival of the name. Now, a proper noun does and does not belong, we said, to the language, not even, let us now specify this, to the corpus of the text to be translated, of the *to-be-translated* [l'à-traduire].

The debt does not commit living subjects but the names at the edge of the language or, more rigorously, the trait that contracts the relation of the aforementioned living subject to his name, insofar as the latter stays at the edge of the language. And this trait would be that of the *to-be-translated* from one language to the other, from this edge to the other of the proper name. This language contract among several languages is absolutely singular. First of all, it is not what is generally called a language contract: that which guarantees the institution of *a* language, the unity of its system, and the social contract that binds a community in this regard. Secondly, it is generally supposed that in order to be valid or to institute anything at all, every contract must take place in a single language or appeal (for example, in the case of diplomatic or commercial treaties), to a translatability that is already given and without remainder: in this case, the multiplicity of tongues must be absolutely mastered. Here, on the contrary, a contract between two foreign languages as such commits to rendering possible a translation that *subsequently* will authorize every sort of contract in the originary sense. The signature of this singular contract needs no documented or archived writing: it nevertheless takes place as trace or as trait, and this place takes place even if no empirical or mathematical objectivity pertains to its space.

The *topos* of this contract is exceptional, unique, and practically impossible to think under the ordinary category of contract: in a classical code, it would have been called transcendental, since in truth it renders possible every contract in general, starting with what is called the language contract within the limits of a single idiom. Another name, perhaps, for the origin of tongues. Not the origin of language but of languages—before language, languages *plural.*

The translation contract, in this quasi-transcendental sense, would be the contract itself, the absolute contract, the contract form of the contract, that which allows any contract to be what it is.

Should one say that the kinship among languages presupposes this contract or that it provides a first occasion for the contract? One recognizes here a classic circle. It has always begun to turn whenever one asks oneself about the origin of languages or society. Benjamin, who often talks about the kinship among languages, never does so as a comparatist or as a historian of languages. He is interested less in families of languages than in a more essential and more enigmatic family relation, an affinity that may not necessarily precede the trait or the contract of the *to-be-translated.* Perhaps even this kinship, this affinity (*Verwandschaft*), is like an alliance sealed by the contract of translation, to the extent that the sur-vivals that it associates are not natural lives, blood ties, or empirical symbioses.

> As the unfolding of an original and high form of life, this process is determined by an original high purposiveness. The correlation of life and purposiveness, seemingly obvious yet almost beyond the grasp of knowledge, reveals itself only if the purpose, toward which all the singular purposiveness of life tends, is not sought in the proper domain of that life but rather at a higher level. All purposeful phenomena of life, like their very purposiveness, in the final analysis have their end not in life but in the expression of its essence, in the representation [*Darstellung*] of its meaning. Thus translation has ultimately as goal to express the most intimate relation among languages. (255)

The translation would not seek to say this or that, to transport this or that content, to communicate some particular charge of meaning, but to *re-mark* the affinity among the languages, to exhibit its own possibility. And this, which holds for the literary text or the sacred text, perhaps defines the very essence of the literary and the sacred, at their common root. I said *re-mark* the affinity among the languages so as to name the strangeness of an "expression" ("to express the most intimate relation among the languages") that is neither a simple "presentation" nor simply anything else. In a mode that is solely anticipatory, annunciatory, almost prophetic,

translation renders *present* an affinity that is never present in this presentation. One thinks of the way in which Kant at times defines the relation to the sublime: a presentation inadequate to that which is nevertheless presented. Here Benjamin's discourse proceeds in twists and turns:

> It is impossible that it [the translation] be able to reveal this hidden relation itself, that it be able to restitute [*herstellen*] it; but translation can represent [*darstellen*] that relation by actualizing it in its seed or in its intensity. And this representation of a signified [*Darstellung eines Bedeuteten*] by the endeavor, by the seed of its restitution, is an entirely original mode of representation, which has hardly any equivalent in the domain of nonlinguistic life. For the latter has, in analogies and signs, types of reference [*Hindeutung*] other than the intensive, that is to say, anticipatory, annunciatory [*vorgreifende, andeutende*] actualization. As for the relation we are thinking of, this very intimate relation among languages, it is one of an original convergence. It consists in this: the languages are not foreign to one another, but, a priori and apart from all historical relations, are related to one another in what they mean. (255)

The whole enigma of this kinship is concentrated here. What is meant by "what they mean"? And what about this presentation in which nothing is presented in the ordinary mode of presence?

At stake here are the name, the symbol, the truth, the letter.

One of the deepest foundations of the essay, as well as of the 1916 text, is a theory of the name. Language is determined starting from the word and the privilege of naming. This assertion, made in passing, is very strong if not very conclusive: "the originary element of the translator" is the word and not the sentence, the syntactic articulation. To help one think about it, Benjamin offers a curious "image": the sentence (*Satz*) would be "the wall in front of the language of the original," whereas the word, the word for word, literality (*Wortlichkeit*), would be its "arcade." Whereas the wall braces while concealing (it is *in front of* the original), the arcade supports while letting light pass through and giving one to see the original (we are not far from the Paris arcades). This privilege of the word obviously supports that of the name and with it the properness of the proper name, the stakes and the very possibility of the translation contract. It opens onto the *economic* problem of translation, be it a matter of economy as the law of the proper or of economy as a quantitative relation (is it translating to transpose a proper name into several words, into a phrase, or into a description, and so forth?).

There is some *to-be-translated*. From both sides it assigns and contracts. It commits not so much authors as proper names at the edge of the language; it commits essentially neither to communicate nor to represent, nor to keep an already signed commitment, but rather to draw up the contract and to give birth to the pact, in other words, to the *symbolon*, in a sense that Benjamin does not designate by this term but suggests, no doubt with the metaphor of the amphora, or rather let us say (since we are suspicious of the ordinary sense of metaphor) with the *ammetaphora*.

If the translator neither restitutes nor copies an original, it is because the original lives on and transforms itself. In truth, the translation will be a moment in the growth of the original, which will complete itself *in* enlarging itself. Now, growth must not give rise to just any form in just any direction (and it is in this that the "seminal" logic must have imposed itself on Benjamin). Growth must accomplish, fill, complete (*Ergänzung* is the most frequent term here). And if the original calls for a complement, it is because at the origin, it was not there without fail, full, complete, total, identical to itself. From the origin of the original to be translated, there is fall and exile. The translator must redeem (*erlösen*), absolve, resolve, in trying to absolve himself of his own debt, which is at bottom the same—and bottomless. "To redeem in his own tongue that pure language exiled in the foreign tongue, to liberate by transposing this pure language captive in the work, such is the task of the translator." Translation is poetic transposition (*Umdichtung*): We will have to examine the essence of the "pure language" that it liberates. But let us note for the moment that this liberation itself presupposes a freedom of the translator, which is itself none other than relation to that "pure language"; and the liberation that it operates—possibly in transgressing the limits of the translating language, in transforming it in turn—must extend, enlarge, and make language grow. As this growth comes also to complete, as it is *symbolon*, it does not reproduce: it adjoins in adding. Hence this double simile (*Vergleich*), all these turns and metaphoric supplements: (1) "Just as the tangent touches the circle only in a fleeting manner and at a single point, and just as it is this contact, not the point, that assigns to the tangent the law according to which it pursues to infinity its course in a straight line, so the translation touches the original in a fleeting manner and only at an infinitely small point of meaning, to follow henceforth its proper course, according to the law of fidelity in the freedom of language movement" (261). Each time that he talks about the contact (*Berührung*)

between the bodies of the two texts in the process of translation, Benjamin calls it "fleeting [*flüchtig*]." On at least three occasions, this "fleeting" character is emphasized, and always in order to situate the contact with meaning, the infinitely small point of meaning that the languages barely brush ("The harmony between the languages is so profound here [in the translations of Sophocles by Hölderlin] that the meaning is only touched by the wind of language in the manner of an Aeolian lyre"). What can an infinitely small point of meaning be? By what measure is one to evaluate it? The metaphor itself is at once the question and the answer. And here is the other metaphor, the metaphor that no longer concerns extension in a straight and infinite line but enlargement by adjoining along the broken lines of a fragment (2). "For, just as the fragments of an amphora, if one is to be able to reconstitute the whole, must be contiguous in the smallest details, but not identical, to one another, so instead of rendering itself similar to the meaning of the original, the translation should rather, lovingly and in full detail, cause the mode of intention of the original to pass into its own language: thus, just as the debris becomes recognizable as fragments of the same amphora, original and translations become recognizable as fragments of a larger language" (260).

Let us accompany this movement of love, the gesture of this loving one (*liebend*) that is at work in the translation. It does not reproduce, does not restitute, does not represent; essentially, it does not *render* the meaning of the original except at that point of contact or caress, the infinitely small of meaning. It extends the body of languages, it puts languages into symbolic expansion, and symbolic here means that, however little restitution is be to accomplished, the larger, the new vaster aggregate [*ensemble*] has still to *reconstitute* something. It is perhaps not a whole, but it is an aggregate whose opening must not contradict its unity. Like the jug that lends its poetic topos to so many meditations on word and thing, from Hölderlin to Rilke and Heidegger, the amphora is one with itself even as it opens itself to the outside—and this opening opens the unity, renders it possible, and forbids it totality. The opening allows it to receive and give. If the growth of language must also reconstitute without representing, if that is the symbol, can translation lay claim to truth? Truth—will that still be the name of what lays down the law for a translation?

Here we touch—at a point no doubt infinitely small—the limit of translation. The pure untranslatable and the pure translatable here pass one into the other—and that is the truth, "itself materially."

The word "truth" appears more than once in "The Task of the Translator." We must not rush to seize upon it. It is not a matter of the truth of a translation insofar as it might conform or be faithful to its model, the original. Nor is it any more a matter, either for the original or even for the translation, of some adequation of the language to meaning or to reality, nor even of the representation to something. Then what is it that goes under the name of truth? And is it that new?

Let us start again from the "symbolic." Let us remember the metaphor, or the ammetaphora: a translation weds the original when the two adjoined fragments, as different as they can be, complete each other so as to form a larger tongue in the course of a sur-vival that changes them both. For, as we have noted, the native tongue of the translator is altered as well. Such at least is my interpretation—my translation, my "task of the translator." It is what I have called the translation contract: hymen or marriage contract with the promise to produce a child whose seed will give rise to history and growth. A marriage contract in the form of a seminar. Benjamin says as much: in the translation the original becomes larger, it grows rather than reproduces itself—and I will add: like a child, its own, no doubt, but with the power to speak on its own, which makes of a child something other than a product subject to the law of reproduction. This promise points toward a kingdom that is at once "promised and forbidden, where the languages will be reconciled and fulfilled." This is the most Babelian note in an analysis of sacred writing as the model and the limit of all writing, in any case, of all *Dichtung* in its being-to-be-translated. The sacred and the being-to-be-translated do not let themselves be thought one without the other: They produce each other at the edge of the same limit.

This kingdom is never reached, touched, trodden by the translation. There is something untouchable, and in this sense the reconciliation is only promised. But a promise is not nothing, it is not simply marked by what it lacks to be fulfilled. As promise, the translation is already an event, and the decisive signature of a contract. Whether or not it is honored does not prevent the commitment from taking place and from bequeathing its archive. A translation that succeeds, that succeeds in promising reconciliation, in talking about it, desiring it, or making one desire it, such a translation is a rare and notable event.

Here, two questions before going closer to the truth. Of what does the untouchable consist, if there is such a thing? And why does such a meta-

phor or ammetaphora of Benjamin make me think of the hymen, more visibly of the wedding gown?

1. The always intact, the intangible, the untouchable (*unberührbar*) is what fascinates and orients the work of the translator. He wants to touch the untouchable, that which remains of the text when one has extracted from it the communicable meaning (a point of contact that is, remember, infinitely small), when one has transmitted that which can be transmitted, or even taught: what I am doing here, after and thanks to Maurice de Gandillac, knowing that an untouchable remnant of the Benjaminian text will also remain intact at the end of the operation. Intact and virgin in spite of the labor of translation, however efficient or pertinent that may be. Here pertinence does not touch. If one can risk a proposition apparently so absurd, the text will be even more virgin after the passage of the translator, and the hymen, sign of virginity, more jealous of itself after the other hymen, the contract signed and the marriage consummated. Symbolic completion will not have taken place to its very end and yet the promise of marriage will have come about—and this is the task of the translator, in what makes it very acute as well as irreplaceable.

But again? Of what does the untouchable consist? Let us study again the metaphors or the ammetaphoras, the *Übertragungen* that are translations and metaphors of translation, translations of translation or metaphors of metaphor. Let us study all of these Benjaminian passages. The first figure that comes in here is that of the fruit and the skin, the core and the shell (*Kern*, *Frucht/Schale*). It describes in the final analysis the distinction that Benjamin would never want to renounce or even to question. One recognizes a core, the original as such, by the fact that it can bear further translating and retranslating. As for a translation, *as such*, it cannot. Only a core, because it resists the translation it attracts, can offer itself to further translating operations without being exhausted. For the relation of the content to the language, one would also say of the substance to the form, of the signified to the signifier—it hardly matters here (in this context Benjamin opposes tenor, *Gehalt*, and tongue or language, *Sprache*)—differs from the original text to the translation. In the first, the unity is just as dense, tight, adherent as between the fruit and its skin, its shell or its peel. Not that they are inseparable, by law one must be able to distinguish them, but they belong to an organic whole, and it is not insignificant that the metaphor here is vegetal and natural, naturalistic.

> It [the original in translation] can never fully attain this kingdom, but it is there that is found what makes translating more than communicating subject matter. More precisely one can define this essential core as that which, in the translation, is not translatable again. For, as much as one may extract of the communicable in order to translate it, there always remains this untouchable toward which the work of the true translator is oriented. It is not transmissible, as is the creative word of the original [*übertragbar wie das Dichterwort des Originals*], for the relation of this tenor to the language is entirely different in the original and in the translation. In the original, tenor and language form a determinate unity, like that of the fruit and the skin. (257–58)

Let us peel away a bit more the rhetoric of this sequence. It is not certain that the essential "core" and the "fruit" designate the same thing. The essential core, that which in the translation is not translatable again, is not the tenor, but this adherence between the tenor and the language, between the fruit and the skin. This may seem strange or incoherent (how can a core be situated between the fruit and the skin?). It is necessary no doubt to think that the core is first the hard and central unity that holds the fruit to the skin, and the fruit to itself as well; and above all that, at the heart of the fruit, the core is "untouchable," beyond reach, and invisible. The core would be the first metaphor of what makes for the unity of the two terms in the second metaphor. But there is a third, and this time one without a natural provenance. It concerns the relation of the tenor to the language in the translation and no longer in the original. This relation is different, and I do not think I give in to artifice by insisting on this difference in order to say that it is precisely that of artifice to nature. What is it in fact that Benjamin notes, as if in passing, for rhetorical or pedagogical convenience? That "the language of the translation envelops its tenor like a royal cape with large folds. For it is the signifier of a language superior to itself and so remains, in relation to its own tenor, inadequate, forced, foreign" (258). That is quite beautiful, a beautiful translation: white ermine, crowning, scepter, and majestic bearing. The king has indeed a body (and it is not here the original text but that which constitutes the tenor of the translated text), but this body is only promised, announced, and dissimulated by the translation. The clothes fit but do not cling strictly enough to the royal person. This is not a weakness; the best translation resembles this royal cape. It remains separate from the body to which it is nevertheless conjoined, wedding it, not wedded to it. One can, of course, embroider on this cape, on the necessity of this

Übertragung, of this metaphoric translation of translation. For example, one can oppose this metaphor to that of the shell and the core, just as one would oppose technology to nature. An article of clothing is not natural; it is a fabric and even—another metaphor of metaphor—a text, and this text of artifice appears precisely on the side of the symbolic contract. Now, if the original text is demand for translation, then the fruit, unless it be the core, insists upon becoming the king or the emperor who will wear new clothes: under its large folds, *in weiten Falten*, one imagines him naked. No doubt the cape and the folds protect the king against the cold or natural aggressions; but first, above all, it is, like his scepter, the eminent visibility of the law. It is the index of power and of the power to lay down the law. But one infers that what counts is what comes to pass under the cape, to wit, the body of the king, do not immediately say the phallus, around which a translation busies its tongue, makes pleats, molds forms, sews hems, quilts, and embroiders. But always amply floating at some distance from the tenor.

2. More or less strictly, the cape weds the body of the king, but as for what comes to pass under the cape, how is one to separate the king from the royal couple? It is this wedded couple (the body of the king and his gown, the tenor and the tongue, the king and the queen) that lays down the law and guarantees every contract from this first contract. Let us not forget that the scene of translation implies genealogy or inheritance. I therefore thought of a wedding gown. Benjamin does not push matters in the direction that I am giving to my translation, reading him always already in translation. I have taken some liberty with the tenor of the original, as much as with its tongue, and again with the original that is also for me, now, the French translation. I have added another cape, it is still floating, but is that not the final destination of all translation? At least if a translation has destined itself to arrive.

Despite the distinction between the two metaphors, the shell and the cape (the royal cape, for he said "royal" where others might have thought a cape sufficed), despite the opposition of nature and art, there is in both cases a *unity* of tenor and tongue; natural unity in the one case, symbolic unity in the other. It is simply that in the translation, the unity signals a (metaphorically) more "natural" unity; it promises a tongue or language more originary and almost sublime, sublime to the immeasurable extent that the promise itself—namely, the translation—there remains inadequate (*unangemessen*), violent, and forced (*gewaltig*), and foreign (*fremd*).

This "fracture" renders useless, even "forbids" every *Übertragung*, every "transmission," as the French translation says correctly: the word also plays, like a transmission, with transferential or metaphorical displacement. And the word *Übertragung* imposes itself again a few lines down: if the translation "transplants" the original onto another terrain of language "ironically" more definitive, it is to the extent that it could no longer be displaced by any other "transfer" (*Übertragung*), but only "raised" (*erheben*) anew on the spot "in other parts." There is no translation of translation; that is the axiom without which there would not be "The Task of the Translator." If one were to violate it, and one must not, one would touch the untouchable of the untouchable, namely, that which guarantees to the original that it remains indeed the original.

This is not unrelated to truth. Truth is apparently beyond every possible *Übertragung* and *Übersetzung*. It is not the representational correspondence between the original and the translation, nor even the primary adequation between the original and some object or signification exterior to it. Truth would be rather the *pure language* in which the meaning and the letter are no longer dissociated. If such a place, the taking place of such an event, remained undiscoverable, one could no longer, even by right, distinguish between an original and a translation. In maintaining this distinction at all costs as the original given of every translation contract (in the quasi-transcendental sense discussed above), Benjamin repeats the foundation of the law. In so doing he exhibits the possibility of copyright for works and author, the very possibility by which positive law claims to be supported. This law collapses at the slightest challenge to a strict boundary between the original and the version, or even to the self-identity or to the integrity of the original. What Benjamin says about this relation between original and translation is also found, translated into rather wooden language but faithfully reproduced as to its meaning, at the opening of all legal treatises concerning the positive law of translations. And this whether it be a matter of the general principles of the difference original/translation (the latter being "derived" from the former) or a matter of the translations of translation. The translation of translation is said to be "derived" from the original and not from the first translation. Here are some excerpts from the French law; but there does not seem to be from this point of view any opposition between it and the rest of Western law (nevertheless, a study of comparative law should also concern the translation of legal texts). As we shall see, these propositions appeal to the

polarity expression/expressed, signifier/signified, form/substance. Benjamin also began by saying: translation is a form, and the symbolizer/symbolized split organizes his whole essay. Now, in what way is this system of oppositions indispensable to this law? Because only it allows, starting from the distinction between original and translation, acknowledgment of some originality in the translation. This originality is determined, and this is one of the many classic philosophemes at the foundation of this law, as originality of *expression*. Expression is opposed to content, of course, and the translation, which is not supposed to touch the content, must be original only in its language *as expression*; but expression is also opposed to what French jurists call the *composition* of the original. In general one places composition on the side of form; but here the form of expression in which one can acknowledge some originality to the translator, and for this reason the rights of author-translator, is only the form of linguistic expression, the choice of words in the language, and so forth, but nothing else of the form. I quote Claude Colombet, ***Propriété littéraire et artistique***, from which I excerpt only a few lines, in accordance with the law of March 1957, recalled at the opening of the book and "authorizing . . . only analyses and short quotations for the purpose of example or illustration," because "every representation or reproduction, integral or partial, made without the consent of the author or of his beneficiaries or executors, is illegal," constituting "therefore an infraction punishable under articles 425ff. of the Penal Code."

54. Translations are works that are original only in expression [a very paradoxical restriction: the cornerstone of copyright, it is indeed the case that only form can become property, and not ideas, themes, contents, which are common and universal property {here Colombet inserts a footnote: "cf. all of chapter 1 in this book, 'L'absence de protection des idées par le droit d'auteur'"}. If a first consequence is good, since it is this form that defines the originality of the translation, another consequence could be ruinous, for it would lead to abandoning that which distinguishes the original from the translation if, excluding expression, it amounts to a distinction of substance. Unless the value of composition, however lax it may be, were still to indicate the fact that between the original and the translation the relation is neither one of expression nor of content but of something else beyond these oppositions. In following the difficulty of the jurists—sometimes comic in its casuistic subtlety—so as to draw the consequences from axioms of the type "Copyright does not protect ideas; but these can be, sometimes indirectly, protected by means other than the law of March 1957" (21), one measures better the historicity and conceptual fragility of this set of axioms]; article 4 of the law cites them among the protected works; in fact, it has always been admitted that a translator demonstrates originality in the choice of expressions to render best in one language the meaning of the text in another language. As M. Savatier says, "The genius of each language gives the translated work its own physiognomy; and the translator is not a simple workman. He himself participates in a derived creation for which he bears his own responsibility"; translation is in fact not the result of an automatic process; by the choices he makes among several words, several expressions, the translator fashions a work of the mind; but, of course, he could never modify the composition of the work translated, for he is bound to respect that work.[6]

In his language, Henri Desbois (in *Le droit d'auteur en France*) says the same thing, with some additional details:

Derived works that are original in expression. 29. The work under consideration, to be *relatively original* [emphasized by Desbois], need not also bear the imprint of a personality on its composition and its expression, like adaptations. It is enough that the author, while following the development of a preexistent work step by step, has performed a personal act in the expression: article 4 attests to this, since, in a nonexhaustive enumeration of derived works, it puts *translations* in the place of honor. "Traduttore, traditore," the Italians are wont to say, in a bit of wit, which, like every coin, has two sides: if there are bad translators, who multiply misreadings, others are cited for the perfection of their task. The risk of a mistake or an imperfection has as counterpart the perspective of an authentic version, which implies a perfect knowledge of the two languages, an abundance of judicious choices, and thus a creative effort. Consulting a dictionary suffices only for mediocre undergraduates: the conscientious and competent translator "gives of himself" and *creates* just like the painter who makes a copy of a model. The verification of this conclusion is furnished by the comparison of several translations of one and the same text: each may differ from the others without any one containing a misreading; the variety in modes of expression for a single thought demonstrates, with the possibility of choice, that the *task of the translator* leaves room for manifestations of personality. (My emphasis.—JD)[7]

One will note in passing that the *task of the translator*, confined to the duel of languages (never more than two languages), gives rise only to a "creative effort" (effort and tendency rather than completion, artisan labor rather than artistic performance), and when the translator "creates," it

is like a painter who copies his model (a ludicrous comparison for many reasons, is there any use in explaining?). The recurrence of the word "task" is remarkable enough in any case, for all the significations that it weaves into a network, and there is again the same evaluative interpretation: duty, debt, tax, levy, toll, inheritance and estate tax, noble obligation, but labor midway to creation, infinite task, essential incompletion, as if the presumed creator of the original were not also indebted, taxed, obligated by another text, and a priori translating.

Between the transcendental law, in Benjamin's repetition of it, and positive law as it is formulated so laboriously and at times so crudely in treatises on author's rights [*droit d'auteur*] or intellectual property rights, the analogy can be followed quite far, for example, as concerns the notion of derivation and the translations of translations: these are always derived from the original and not from previous translations. Here is a note by Desbois:

> The translator does not even cease to fashion personal work when he goes to draw advice and inspiration from a preceding translation. We will not refuse the status of author for a work that is derived, *in relation to anterior translations*, to someone who would have been content to choose, among several versions already published, the one that seemed to him the most adequate to the original: going from one to the other, taking a passage from this one, another from that one, he creates a new work by the very fact of the combination, which renders his work different from previous productions. He has exercised creativity; since his translation reflects a new form and results from comparisons, from choices. The translator would still deserve a hearing in our opinion, even if his reflection had led him to the same result as a predecessor, whose work, let us suppose, he did not know: his unintentional replica, far from amounting to plagiarism, would bear the mark of his personality and present a "subjective novelty," which calls for protection. The two versions, accomplished separately and each without knowledge of the other, have given rise, separately and individually, to manifestations of personality. *The second is a work derived vis-à-vis the work that has been translated, not vis-à-vis the first.* (ibid. 41; my emphasis in the last sentence—JD)

Of this right to the truth, what is the relation?

Translation promises a kingdom to the reconciliation of languages. This promise, a properly symbolic event adjoining, coupling, marrying two languages like two parts of a greater whole, appeals to a language of the truth (*Sprache der Wahrheit*). Not to a language that is true, adequate

to some exterior content, but to a true tongue, to a language whose truth would be referred only to itself. It would be a matter of truth as authenticity, truth of act or event that would belong to the original rather than to the translation, even if the original is already in a position of demand or debt. And if there is such authenticity and such force of event in what is ordinarily called a translation, it is because it would produce itself in some fashion as an original work. There would thus be an original and inaugural way of indebting oneself; it would be the place and date of what is called an original, a work.

To translate well the intentional meaning of what Benjamin means to say when he speaks of the "language of the truth," perhaps it is necessary to understand what he regularly says about the "intentional meaning" or the "intentional aim" (*Meinung, Art des Meinens*). As Maurice de Gandillac reminds us, these are categories borrowed from the scholastics by Brentano and Husserl. They play a role that is important if not always very clear in "The Task of the Translator."

What is it that seems intended by the concept of intention (*Meinen*)? Let us return to the point where in the translation, a kinship among languages seems to be announced, beyond all resemblance between an original and its reproduction and independently of any historical filiation. Moreover, kinship does not necessarily imply resemblance. With that said, in dismissing the historical or natural origin, Benjamin does not exclude, in a wholly different sense, consideration of the origin in general, any more than a Rousseau or a Husserl did in analogous contexts and with analogous gestures. Benjamin even specifies it literally: for the most rigorous access to this kinship or to this affinity of languages, "the concept of origin [*Abstammungsbegriff*] remains indispensable." Where, then, is this original affinity to be sought? We see it announced in the plying, replying, co-deploying of intentions. Through each language, something is intended that is the same and yet that none of the languages can attain separately. They can claim, and promise themselves to attain it, only by co-employing or co-deploying their intentional modes, "the whole of their complementary intentional modes." This co-deployment toward the whole is a replying because what it intends to attain is "the pure language [*die reine Sprache*]," or the pure tongue. What is intended, then, by this co-operation of languages and intentional aims is not transcendent to the language; it is not a reality that they besiege from all sides, like a tower that they are trying to surround. No, what they are aiming at

intentionally, individually and together, in translation is the language itself as Babelian event, a language that is neither the universal language in the Leibnizian sense nor is it a language that is the natural language each still remains on its own; it is the being-language of the language, tongue or language *as such*, that unity without any self-identity that makes for the fact that there are plural *languages* and that they are *languages*.

These languages relate to one another in translation according to an unheard-of mode. They complete each other, says Benjamin; but no other completeness in the world can represent this one, or that symbolic complementarity. This singularity (not representable by anything in the world) comes no doubt from the intentional aim or from what Benjamin tries to translate into a scholastico-phenomenological language. Within the same intentional aim it is necessary to distinguish rigorously between the thing intended, the intended (*das Gemeinte*), and the mode of intention (*die Art des Meinens*). As soon as he sights the original contract of languages and the hope for the "pure tongue," the task of the translator excludes the "intended" or leaves it in parentheses.

The mode of intention alone assigns the task of translation. Each "thing," in its presumed self-identity (for example, bread *itself*) is intended by way of different modes in each language and in each text of each language. It is among these modes that the translation should seek, produce, or reproduce, a complementarity or a "harmony." And since to complete or complement does not amount to the summation of any worldly totality, the value of harmony suits this adjustment, and what can here be called the accord of tongues. This accord lets the pure language, and the being-language of the language, resonate, announcing it rather than presenting it. As long as this accord does not take place, the pure language remains hidden, concealed (*verborgen*), immured in the nocturnal intimacy of the "core." Only a translation can make it emerge.

Emerge and above all develop, make grow. Always according to the same motif (in appearance organicist or vitalist), one could then say that each language is as if atrophied in its isolation, meager, arrested in its growth, sickly. Owing to translation, in other words, to this linguistic supplementarity by which one language gives to another what it lacks, and gives it harmoniously, this crossing of languages assures the growth of languages, even that "holy growth of language" "unto the messianic end of history." All of that is announced in the translation process, through "the eternal sur-vival of languages [*am ewigen Fortleben der Sprachen*]" or "the

infinite rebirth [*Aufleben*] of languages." This perpetual reviviscence, this constant regeneration (*Fort-* and *Aufleben*) by translation is less a revelation, revelation itself, than an annunciation, an alliance, and a promise.

This religious code is essential here. The sacred text marks the limit, the pure even if inaccessible model of pure translatability, the ideal starting from which one could think, evaluate, measure the essential, that is to say, poetic, translation. Translation, as holy growth of languages, announces the messianic end, surely, but the sign of that end and of that growth is "present" (*gegenwärtig*) only in the "knowledge of that distance," in the *Entfernung*, the *remoteness* that relates us to it. One can know this remoteness, have knowledge or a presentiment of it, but we cannot overcome it. Yet it puts us into relation with that "language of the truth" that is the "true language" (*so ist diese Sprache der Wahrheit—die wahre Sprache*). This putting into relation takes place in the mode of "presentiment," in the "intensive" mode that renders present what is absent, that allows remoteness to approach as remoteness, *fort/da*. Let us say that translation is experience, which one can translate or experience also: experience is translation.

The *to-be-translated* of the sacred text, its pure translatability, that is what would give *at the limit* the ideal measure for all translation. The sacred text assigns his task to the translator—and it is sacred *inasmuch as* it announces itself as translatable, simply translatable, *to-be-translated*, which does not always mean immediately transferable, in the common sense that was dismissed from the start. Perhaps it is necessary to distinguish here between the translatable and the transferable. Translatability pure and simple is that of the sacred text in which meaning and literality are no longer discernible as they form the body of a unique, irreplaceable, and untransferable event, "materially the truth." Call for translation: the debt, the task, the assignation are never more imperious. Never is there anything more translatable, yet by reason of this indistinction of meaning and literality (*Wortlichkeit*), the pure translatable can announce itself, give itself, present itself, let itself be translated *as untranslatable*. From this limit, at once interior and exterior, the translator comes to receive all the signs of remoteness (*Entfernung*) that guide him on his infinite course, at the edge of the abyss, of madness, and of silence: the last works of Hölderlin as translations of Sophocles, the collapse of meaning "from abyss to abyss." This danger is not that of accident; it is translatability, it is the law of translation, the *to-be-translated* as law, the order given,

the order received—and madness waits on both sides. And as the task is impossible at the approaches to the sacred text that assigns it to you, the infinite guilt absolves you immediately.

That is what is named from here on Babel: the law imposed by the name of God who in one stroke commands and forbids you to translate by showing *and* hiding from you the limit. But it is not only the Babelian situation, not only a scene or a structure. It is also the status and the event of the Babelian text, of the text of Genesis (a unique text in this regard) as sacred text. It comes under the law that it recounts and translates in an exemplary way. It lays down the law it speaks about, and from abyss to abyss it deconstructs the tower, and every turn, twists and turns of every sort, in a rhythm.

What comes to pass in a sacred text is the event of a *pas de sens*, a step of meaning/no meaning. And starting from this event, it is also possible to think the poetic or literary text that tends to redeem the lost sacred and there translates itself as into its model. *Pas-de-sens*: this does not signify poverty of meaning but no meaning that would be itself, meaning, beyond any "literality." And right there is the sacred. The sacred surrenders itself to translation, which devotes itself to the sacred. The sacred [*Il*] would be nothing without translation [*elle*], and translation [*elle*] would not take place without the sacred [*lui*]; the one and the other are inseparable. In the sacred text, "the meaning has ceased to be the divide for the flow of language and for the flow of revelation." It is the absolute text, because in its event it communicates nothing, it says nothing that makes sense beyond the event itself. That event melds completely with the act of language, for example, with prophecy. It is literally the literality of its tongue, "pure language." And since no meaning lets itself be detached, transferred, transported, or translated into another tongue as such (as meaning), it commands right away the translation that it seems to refuse. It is translatable (*übersetzbar*) and untransferable. There is only the letter, and it is the truth of pure language, the truth as pure language.

This law would not be an exterior constraint; it grants a liberty to literality. In the same event, the letter ceases to oppress insofar as it is no longer the exterior body or the corset of meaning. The letter also translates itself of itself, and it is in this self-relation of the sacred body that the task of the translator finds itself engaged. This situation, though it is one of pure limit, does not exclude—quite the contrary—gradations, virtuality,

interval, and in-between, the infinite labor to rejoin that which is nevertheless past, already given, right here, between the lines, already signed.

How would you translate a signature? And how would you refrain from doing so, whether it be Yahweh, Babel, Benjamin when he signs right next to his last word? But literally, and between the lines, it is also the signature of Maurice de Gandillac that I quote to conclude in posing my question: can one quote a signature? "For, to some degree, all the great writings, but to the highest point holy Scripture, contain between the lines their virtual translation. The interlinear version of the sacred text is the model or ideal of all translation."

—Translated by Joseph F. Graham

§ 9 Telepathy

July 9, 1979

So, what do you want me to say?[1] I had a premonition of something nasty in it, like a word, or a worm, a piece of worm that would be a piece of word, and that would be seeking to reconstitute itself by slithering, something tainted that poisons life. And suddenly, precisely there, only there, I started to lose my hair, no, to lose some hair that was not necessarily mine, perhaps yours. I was trying to keep it by making knots that, one after the other, came undone only to reform themselves further on. I felt, from a distance and confusedly, that I was searching for a word, perhaps a proper name (for example, Claude, but I do not know why I choose this example right now, I do not remember his presence in my dream). Rather, it was the term that was searching for me, it had the initiative, according to me, and was doing its best to gather itself together by every means, for a period of time that I could not measure, all night perhaps, and even more, or else an hour or three minutes, impossible to know, but is it a question here of knowing? The time of this word remains, does it not, especially if it were a proper name, without comparison with everything that might surround it. The word was taking its time, and by dint of following it

you ask me, I ask myself: where is this leading us, toward what *place*? We are absolutely unable to know, forecast [*prévoir*], /foresee, foretell,

[1] This text was first published in *Furor*, no. 2 (February 1981) (now out of print). With the kind authorization of Daniel Wilhem, it was reprinted in *Cahiers Confrontation* 10 (1983).

fortune-tell/.[2] Impossible anticipation, it is always from there that I have addressed myself to you and you have never accepted it. You would accept it more patiently if something wasn't telling us, behind our backs and in order to subject us to it, that this place, it, knows us, forecasts our coming, predicts us, us, according to its code [*chiffre*, also cipher, figure, initials]. Imagine that an anachronism resembling no other shifts us [*décale*] out of phase, it lifts or displaces the blocks [*les cales*], brakes or accelerates as if we were late with respect to that which has already happened to us in the future, /the one which foresees us/ and by which I sense us predicted, anticipated, snapped up, called, summoned from a single casting, a single coming [*d'une seule venue*]. Called, you hear? You hear this word in several languages? I was trying to explain it to him [or her], to translate it to him the other day, at his first smile I interrupted

and I ask myself, I ask myself how to deform the syntax without touching it, as at a distance. At stake here is what I'd like to call the old-new sentence, as they say over there, you remember, the old-new synagogue. I ask myself, not myself, it is not myself that I ask, it is myself that I ask for when I ask myself, you that I ask. But you cannot answer me for the moment, only when I have met up with you again. Incidentally, do you know that you saved my life again the other day when with an infinitely forgiving movement you allowed me to tell you where the trouble [*le mal*] is, its return always foreseeable, the catastrophe coming in advance [*prévenante* also thoughtful, warning], called, given, dated. It [*Elle*] is readable on a calendar, with its proper name, classified, you hear this word, nomenclatured. It wasn't sufficient to foresee or to predict what would indeed happen one day, /forecasting is not enough/, it would be necessary to think (what does this mean here, do *you* know?) what would happen by the very fact of being predicted or foreseen, a sort of beautiful apocalypse telescoped, kaleidoscoped, triggered off at that very moment by the precipitation of the announcement itself, consisting precisely in this announcement, the prophecy returning to itself from the future of its own to-come [*à-venir*]. The apocalypse takes place at the moment when I write this, but a present of this type keeps a telepathic or premonitory affinity with itself (it senses itself at a distance and warns itself of itself) that loses me on the way and makes me scared. I have always trembled before what I know in this way, it is also what scares the others and through which I disturb them as well, I send them to sleep sometimes. I suffer from it. Do you think that I am speaking here of the unconscious, guess [*devine*]?[3] I

ask myself this, I ask you: when it plays, from the start, the absence or

rather the indeterminacy of some addressee that it nevertheless apostrophizes, a published letter provokes events, /and even the events it foresees and foretells/, what is going on, I ask you. Obviously, I am not talking about all the events to which any writing or publication at all gives rise, starting with the most effaced of marks. Think rather of a series of which the addressee would form part, he or she if you wish, you for example, unknown at that time to the one who writes; and from that moment the one who writes is not yet completely an addressor, nor completely himself. The addressee, he or she, would let her/himself be produced by the letter, from [*depuis*] its program, and, he or she, the addressor as well. I can no longer see very clearly, I've stalled [*je cale*] a bit. Look, I'm trying: suppose that I now write a letter without determinable address. It would be encrypted or anonymous, it doesn't much matter, and I publish it, thus using the credit I still have with our publishing system, along with all that supports it. Now suppose that someone replies, addressing her/himself first to the presumed signatory of the letter, who is supposed by convention to merge with the "real" author, here with "me," whose creature he supposedly is. The publisher forwards the reply. This is a possible route, there would be others and the thing that interests me can happen even if the aforesaid reply does not take the form of a missive in the everyday sense and if its dispatch is not entrusted to the postal institution. So I become the signatory of these letters that are said to be fictive. When I was only the author of a book. Transpose that in the direction of what they still call the unconscious, transpose in any case, it is transference and telepoetics that, deep down, are weaving away. I encounter the other on this occasion. It is the *first time*, apparently, and even if according to another appearance I have known the other, like you, for years. In this encounter the destiny of a life is knotted, of several lives at the same time, certainly more than two, always more than two. A banal situation, you will say, it happens every day, for example between novelists, journalists, their readers and their audience. But you haven't got the point. I am not putting forward the hypothesis of a letter that would be the external occasion, in some sense, of an encounter between two identifiable subjects—and who would already be determined. No, but of a letter that after the event seems to have been launched toward some unknown addressee at the moment of its writing, an addressee unknown to himself or herself, if one can say that, and who is determined, as you very well know how to be, on receipt of the letter; this is then quite another thing than the transfer of a message. Its content and its end no

longer precede it. So then, you identify yourself and you commit your life to the program of the letter, or rather of a postcard, of a letter that is open, divisible, at once transparent and encrypted. The program says nothing, it neither announces nor states anything, not the slightest content, it doesn't even present itself as a program. One cannot even say that it "makes like" a program, in the sense of appearance, but, without seeming to, it makes, it programs. So you say: it is I, uniquely I, who am able to receive this letter, not that it has been reserved for me, on the contrary, but I receive as a present the chance to which this card delivers itself. It falls to me. And I choose that it should choose me by chance, I wish to cross its path, I want to be there, I can and I want—its path or its transfer. In short you say "It was me," with a gentle and terrible decision, altogether otherwise: no comparison here with identifying with the hero of a novel. You say "me" the unique addressee and everything begins between us. Starting out from nothing, from no history, the postcard saying not a single word that holds up. Saying, or after the event predicting "me," you don't have any illusion about the divisibility of the destination, you don't even inspect it, you let it float (committing yourself to it even for eternity—I weigh my words—and you ask yourself if I am describing or if I am committing what is taking place at this very moment), you are there to receive the division, you gather it together without reducing it, without harming it, you let it live and everything begins between us, from you, and what you there give by receiving. Others would conclude: a letter thus *finds* its addressee, him or her. No, one cannot say of the addressee that s/he exists before the letter [*avant la lettre*]. Besides, if one believed it, if one considered that you identify yourself with the addressee as if with a fictional character, the question would remain: how is it possible? how can one identify with an addressee who would represent a character so absent from the book, totally mute, unspeakable? For you remain unspeakable, unnamable, and this is not a novel, or a short story, or a play, or an epic, all literary representation is excluded from this. Of course you protest, and I hear you, and I accept that you're right: you say that you begin by identifying with me, and, in me, with the hollowed-out figure of this absent [feminine] addressee with whom I idle along, musing myself. Certainly, and you are right, as always, but it is no longer to you that I say this, or with you that I wish to play at this, *you* know it's you, so put yourself in the place of another feminine reader, it doesn't matter who, who may even be a man, a feminine reader of the masculine gender. Anyway what happens here, you well know, my

angel, is so much more complicated. What I am able to extract from it in order to speak about it could not in principle measure up to it, not only because of the weakness of my discourse, its poverty, chosen or not: in truth it could only ever add a further complication, another leaf, a further layering to the structure of what is happening and across which I hold you against me, kissing you continuously, tongue deep in the mouth, near a station, and your hair in my two hands. But I am thinking of a single person, of the one and only, the madwoman who would be able to say after the letter "it is I," it was already I, it will have been I, and in the night of this wagered certainty commits her life to it without return, takes all possible risks, keeps upping the stakes without trembling, without a safety net, like the trapeze artist that I have always been. All this can be done gently, must even entrust itself to gentleness, without show and as if in silence. We must not even speak of it together, and everything would be in ashes up to this letter here.

July 9, 1979

You know my question: why do the theoreticians of the performative or of pragmatics take so little interest, to my knowledge, in the effects of the written object, the letter in particular? What are they scared of? If there is something performative in a letter, how is it that it can produce all kinds of events, foreseeable and unforeseeable, and even including its addressee? All that, of course, according to a properly performative causality, if there is such a thing, and it is pure, not dependent on any other consequentiality extrinsic to the act of writing. I admit I'm not very sure what I mean by that; the unforeseeable should not be able to form part of a performative structure *stricto sensu*, and yet . . . ; it would still be necessary to divide, to proliferate the instances: not everything is addressee in an addressee, one part only, which compromises with the rest. Yourself, for example, you love me, this love is greater than yourself and above all greater than myself, and yet it is only a very small part that one thus names with this word, love, my love. That doesn't stop you from leaving me, day after day, and indulging in these little calculations, and so on.

I'm stalled [*je cale*].

I will have to make inquiries and clear this thing up: start from the fact that, for example, the /big bang/ would, let us say at the origin of the universe, have produced a

noise that one can consider as still not having reached *us*. It is still to come and we will be given the chance to tap it, to receive it according to (anyway I will explain to you, the main thing is that from this moment on you draw out all its consequences, for example, from what I said to you so many years ago—and then you wept

I heard the news, but I already knew, by telephone. This wasn't the end of the transfer and it will continue until the end of time, in any case until the end of the Cause

what did she want to give me or take away from me in this way, to turn away from him or in view of him, I don't know and I don't much care [*je m'en fous un peu*], what followed confirmed me in this feeling

in short, it was not a sign of a break but the last written sign, a little before *and* a little after the break (this is the time [*temps*, also "tense"] of all our correspondence): in short a postcard that he sent to Fliess on October 10, 1902. The *Ansichtskarte* represented the Tempio di Nettuno at Paestum: "Einen herzlichen Gruss vom Höhepunkt der Reise, dein Sigm." The history of this transferential correspondence is unbelievable: I'm not talking about its content, about which there has been plenty of gossip, but of the scenario—a postal, economic, even banking, military as well, strategic scenario—to which it has given rise and you know that I never separate these things, especially not the post and the bank, and there is always some training [*de la didactique*] in the middle. Fliess's wife, the "malicious woman," sells the letters from Freud, who, for his part, had destroyed her husband's. The purchaser, S., sells them to Marie Bonaparte (yes, she of "The Purloined Letter" and "The Purveyor of Truth"):[4] for £100 in 1937, so in English money, although the transaction took place in Paris. As you will see, our entire story of Freud also writes itself in English, it happens crossing the Channel [*elle se passe à passer la Manche*], and the Channel knows how to keep quiet. During her training, this time in Vienna, Bonaparte speaks of the matter to the master, who is furious and who tells her a Jewish joke, a story about digging up and throwing away a dead bird a week after the burial (he has other bird stories, you know) and tries to palm her off with £50!! in order to get back his rights to his letters, without explicitly saying so. A little training, then, in exchange for some pieces of my old transference that has made me talk so much. The other—I've told you she wasn't such a fool—refuses. What goes on in her head, I don't know, but talk about having a hold that won't let go (it is,

says poor old Jones, out of "scientific interest" that she "had the courage to go head to head [*tenir tête*] [ah! you see why I often prefer the translation] with the master"). Then it's the Rothschild bank in Vienna, the withdrawal of the letters in the presence of the Gestapo (only a princess of Greece and Denmark was capable of that), their deposit at the Danish legation in Paris (all in all /thanks to/ von Choltitz, who wasn't just any old general!), their crossing the mine-sown Channel, "in waterproof and buoyant material," as Jones goes on to say, as a precaution [*en prévision*] against a shipwreck. And all that, don't forget, *against* the desires of the master; all this violence ends up with Anna, who has copies made of the letters and selects from them for publication! And now we can pick up the scent of lots of things and give seminars on their stories about noses. And the other—one'll never know what he wrote—there are others and it is always like that.

there is only tele-analysis, they will have to draw all the conclusions as we do, get their concept of the "analytic situation" to swallow a new metrics of time (of the multiplicity of systems, etc.) as well as another reading of the transcendental imagination (from the *Kantbuch* and beyond . . . up to the present [*jusqu' à présent*] as people venture to say in French). You and me, our tele-analysis has lasted for such a long time, years and years, "*la séance continue*," eh, and yet we never see each other outside the sessions (and the fact that we employ the very long session doesn't change things in the slightest, we punctuate quite differently). So, never outside sessions, that's our deontology, we're very strict. If they did the same, all of them, as they ought, would grass grow again in the salons? We would have to come back to masks that is if at least

the last postcard was sent to Fliess, it seems, at the end of a journey, which should have taken Freud (him too!) to Sicily. He seems to have given up on the idea, but it is from Amalfi that he goes to Paestum. Remember that he is traveling with his brother, Alexander, and that between two postcards he sees his double ("not Horch," he says, "another" double).[5] He recognizes in this an omen of death: "Does this signify *Vedere Napoli e poi morire*?" he asks. He always associated the double, death, and premonition. I'm not making anything up with regard to the two postcards, before and after the encounter with the double. The first, August 26, 1902, to Minna, his sister-in-law. He sends it from Rosenheim. The other, after Venice, and Jones writes: "The following day, at half past two in the morning, they have to change trains at Boulogne, in order to get the Munich express. Freud finds the time to send another postcard."

Meanwhile, for the reasons I have told you, I am leafing through the *Saga* rather absentmindedly, without seeing very clearly whether I'll get anything out of it on the side of—of what? Let us say the England of Freud in the second half of the last century. The *Forsyte Saga* begins in England in 1886, and its second part, which Galsworthy entitles *A Modern Comedy*, comes to an end in 1926. Coincidence? 1926, that's when Freud shifted, with regard to telepathy; he comes round to it and that terrifies friend Jones, who in a circular letter declares on this point (Freud's so-called "conversion" to telepathy) that his, Jones's, "predictions have unfortunately been verified"! He had predicted (!) that this would encourage occultism. Freud's circular letter in reply, February 18, 1926: "Our friend Jones seems to me to be too unhappy about the sensation that my conversion to telepathy has made in English periodicals. He will recollect how near to such a conversion I came in the communication I had the occasion to make during our Harz travels. Considerations of external policy since that time held me back long enough, but finally one must show one's colours and need bother about the scandal this time as little as on earlier, perhaps still more important occasions."[6]

At the start of the "modern comedy" there's a magnificent /Forsyte family tree/ spread out over five pages. But I reread the *Forsyth-Forsyte-von Vorsicht-foresight-Freund-Freud* story in the *New Introductory Lectures*, I read it and reread it in three languages but without results, I mean without picking up, behind the obvious, any scent I can follow.

There is, between us, what do you want me to say, a case of */fortune-telling book/* stronger [*plus fort*] than me. Often I ask myself: how are */fortune-telling books/*, for example, the Oxford one, just like fortune-tellings, clairvoyants, mediums, able to *form part of* what they declare, predict, or say they foresee even though, participating in the thing, they also provoke it, let themselves at least be provoked to the provocation of it? There is a meeting here of all the *for, fore, fort*'s, in several languages, and *forte* in Latin and *fortuna, fors,* and *vor,* and *forsitan, fr, fs,* and so on.

Then I dozed off and looked for the words of the other dream, the one that I'd started to tell you. In a half-sleep I had a vague presentiment that it was something to do with a proper name (at any rate, there are only ever proper names there), with a

common name in which proper names were entangled, a common name that was itself becoming a proper name. Untangle a little the hairs of my dream and what they are saying as they fall, in silence. I have just linked it to that photograph by Erich Salomon that I talked to you about yesterday, *The Class of Professor W. Khal* (almost "bald" in German).

for a long time already I have drowned myself. Remember. Why, in my reveries of suicide, is it always drowning that imposes itself, and most often in a *lake*, sometimes a pond but usually a lake? Nothing is stranger to me than a lake: too far from the landscapes of my childhood. Maybe it's literary instead? I think it's more the force of the word, *lac*. Something in it overturns or precipitates (*cla, alc*), plunging down head first. You will say that in these words, in their letters, I want to disappear, not necessarily in order to die there but to live there concealed, perhaps in order to dissimulate what I know. So *glas*, you see, would have to be tracked down thereabouts (*cla, cl, clos, lacs, le lacs, le piège, le lacet, le lais, là, da, fort, hum* . . . [cla, cl, closed, lakes, snare, trap, lace, the silt, there, here, yes, strong, hmm . . .]). Had I spoken to you about "Claude"? You will remind me, I must tell you who this name is for me. You will note that it is androgynous, like *poste*. I missed it in *Glas*, but it has never been far away, *it* has not missed me. The catastrophe is of this name. Suppose I publish this letter, withdrawing from it, for incineration, everything that, here and there, would allow one to identify its destination. Of course, if the determined destination—determination—belongs to the play of the performative, this might conceal a childish simulacrum: beneath the apparent indeterminacy, if one takes account of a thousand coded features, the figure of some addressee takes shape quite distinctly, together with the greatest probability that the response thus induced (asked for) comes from one particular direction and not another. The place of the response would have been fixed by my grids—the grids of culture, language, society, fantasy, whatever you like. Not just any old stranger receives just any old "message," even by chance, and above all doesn't reply to it. And not to reply is not to receive. If, from you for example, I receive a reply to this letter, it is because, consciously or not, as you wish, I'll have asked for this rather than that, and therefore from this man or that woman. As this seems at first, in the absence of the "real" addressee, to happen between myself and myself, within myself [*à part moi*, also "except for myself"], a part of myself that will have announced the other to itself [*qui se sera fait part de l'autre*; also "that will have made itself a part of the other"], I will clearly have to have asked myself . . . What is it that I ask myself, and who? You, for example, but how, my love, could you be only an example? You know it, yourself, tell me the truth, O you the seer, you the soothsayer. What do you want me to say, I am ready to hear everything from you, now I am ready, tell me

It remains unthinkable, this unique encounter with the unique, beyond all calculation of probability, as much programmed as it is unforeseeable. Notice that this word "calculation" is interesting in itself, listen to it carefully, it comes just where the calculation fails perhaps . . . "to have a callus [*cal*] in one's heart," Flaubert writes. It is to Louise, from their very first letters (ah those two!), he is afraid that she is afraid, and there was good reason, on both sides: "Oh! don't be afraid: he is no less good for having a callus in his heart. . . . " Read all. And the next day, after recalling: "I told you, I believe, that it was your voice especially that I loved," without telephone, this time he writes "lake [*lac*] of my heart": "You have come with your fingertips to stir up all that. The old sediment has come back to boiling point, the lake of my heart has thrilled to it. But the tempest is made for the Ocean!—Ponds [*étangs*], when you disturb them give off nothing but unwholesome smells.—I must love you to be able to say that." The next day, /among other things/: "It is now ten o'clock, I have just received your letter and sent mine, the one I wrote last night.—Only just up, I am writing to you without knowing what I am going to say." Doesn't that remind you of anything? It is there that the correspondence communicates with "the book about nothing." And the message of the non-message (there's always some) consists in that. To say that "OK?—OK" doesn't carry any message is only true from the point of view of the apparent content of the utterances, and one must acknowledge that I am not expecting information in response to my question. But for all that the exchange of "OK's" remains eloquent and significant.

From *cal* to *lac* is enough to make one believe that that fellow also had his limp [*sa claudication*]. By the way, I have come across a *claudius* in *Glas*, next to *glavdius* (p. 60).

How would this */fortune-telling book/* have reached me, reached you whom I do not yet know, and it is true, you know it, you with whom I am nevertheless going to live from now on?

"Something shoots [*tire*]! Something hits the target! Is it me who hits

the target or the target that shoots me?" That's my question, I address it to you, my angel; I have extracted [*tirée*] this formula from a *Zen* text on the chivalrous art of archery [*tir à l'arc*]. And when one asks the rabbi of Kotzk why Shavuot is called the time when the Torah was *given* to us and not the time when we *received* it, he gives the following reply: the gift took place one day, the day we commemorate; but it can be received at all times. The gift was given equally to everyone, but not all have received it. This is a Hassidic story from Buber. This is not the Torah, oh no, but between my letters and the Torah, the difference requires both in order to be thought.

July 10, 1979

when you asked me the other day: what is changing in your life? Well you have noticed it a hundred times recently, it is the opposite of what I foresaw, as one might have expected: a surface more and more open to all the phenomena formerly rejected (in the name of a certain discourse of science), to the phenomena of "magic," of "clairvoyance," of "fate," of communications at a distance, to the things said to be occult. Remember

and we, we would

not have moved a step forward in this treatment of the dispatch [*envoi*] (adestination, destinerrance, clandestination) if among all these telethings we did not get in touch with Telepathy in person. Or rather if we didn't allow ourselves to be touched by her. Yes, touch, I sometimes think that thought

before "seeing" or "hearing," touch, put your paws on it, or that seeing and hearing come back to touch at a distance—a very old thought, but it takes some archaic to get to the archaic. So, to touch both ends at once, touch in the area where science and so-called technical objectivity are now taking hold of it instead of resisting it as they used to (look at the successful experiments the Russians and Americans are doing with their astronauts), touch in the area of our immediate apprehensions, our pathies, our receptions, our apprehensions because we are letting ourselves be approached without taking or comprehending anything and because we are afraid ("don't be afraid," "don't worry about a thing"; it's us all right, huh), for example: our last "hallucinations," the telephone call with crossed lines, all the predictions, so true, so false, of the Polish musician woman. . . . The truth, what I always have difficulty getting used to: that nontelepathy is possible. Always difficult to imagine that one can think something to oneself [*à part soi*], deep down inside, without being surprised by the other, without the other being immediately informed, as easily as if he or she had a giant screen inside, at the time of the talkies, with remote control [*télécommande*] for changing channels and fiddling with the colors, the speech dubbed with large letters in order to avoid any misunderstanding. For foreigners and deaf-mutes. This puerile belief on my part, of a part in me, can only refer to this ground—OK, the unconscious, if you like—from which there arose objectivist certainty, this (provisional) system of science, the discourse linked to a state of science that has made us keep telepathy at bay. Difficult to imagine a theory of what they still call the unconscious without a theory of telepathy. They can be neither confused nor dissociated. Until recently I imagined, through ignorance and forgetfulness, that "telepathic" anxiety was contained in small pockets of Freud—in short, what he says about it in two or three articles regarded as minor.[7] This is not untrue, but I am now better able to perceive, after investigation, how numerous these pockets are. And there's a lot, a whole lot of shaking going on there, up and down the legs. (Wait, here I interrupt a moment on the subject of his "legacies" and of everything I'd told you about the step [*pas*], the way [*voie*], viability, our viaticum, the car and *Weglichkeit*, and so on, in order to copy this for you, I fell upon it yesterday evening: "we have being and movement, because we are travelers. And it is thanks to the way that the traveler receives the being and the name of traveler. Consequently, when a traveler turns into or sets out along an infinite way and one asks him where he is, he replies that he is on the way; and if one asks him where he has come from, he replies that he has come from the way; and if one asks him where he is going, he replies that he is going from the way to the way. . . . But be careful about this [oh, yes, because one could easily be careless, the temptation is great, and it is mine, it consists in not being careful, taking care of nothing, being careful of nothing {*prendre garde, garde de rien, garde à rien*}, especially not the truth, which is the guarding itself, as its name *vérité* suggests]: this way that is at the same time life, is also truth." Guess, *you* the soothsayer, who wrote that, which is neither the *tao* (path and discourse) nor Martin's *Weg*; guess what I have left out. It is called *Where Is the King of the Jews?* Despite the tautological viability of the thing, there are addresses, apostrophes, questions, and answers and they put themselves on their guard!) So the pockets are numerous, and swollen, not only in the corpus but also

in the "Movement," in the life of the "Cause": there was no end to the debate on telepathy and the transmission of thought, rather one should say "thought transference" [*transfert de pensée*] (*Gedankenübertragung*). Freud himself wished to distinguish (laboriously) between the two, firmly believing in this "thought transference" and for a long time dancing the hesitation-waltz around the "telepathy" that would signal a warning as regards an "external" (???) event. An interminable debate between him and himself, him and the others, the six other beringed ones. There was the Jones clan, stubbornly "rationalist," Jones making himself even more narrow-minded than he already was because of the situation and ideological tradition of his country where the "obscurantist" danger was stronger; and then the clan of Ferenczi, who rushes into it even faster than the old man—to say nothing of Jung, obviously. He had two wings, of course, two clans and two wings. If you have the time, this vacation, reread the "Occultism" chapter at the end of the Jones, it's full of things, but make allowance for this other Ernest [*fais la part de cet autre Ernest*]: too heavily implicated to be serious, he trembles. You see, one cannot skirt around England, in our story. From the */fortune-telling book/* in *Sp* right up to the *Forsyte Saga* and Herr von Vorsicht, passing through the Joneses and the Ernests (the little one, who must be nearly 70 years old, continues to play with the bobbin in London, where he is a psychoanalyst under the name of Freud—Ernest W. Freud, not William, Wolfgang, but Freud and not Halberstadt, the name of the father or of the son-in-law, poor sons-in-law). Of course, there were all the risks of obscurantism, and the risk is far from over, but one can imagine that between their thought of the "unconscious" and the scientific experimentation of others who verify psychic transference from a distance, a meeting point is not excluded, however distant it may be. Besides, Freud says it, among other places, right at the start of "Psychoanalysis and Telepathy," the progress of the sciences (discovery of radium, theories of relativity) can have this double effect: to render thinkable what earlier science pushed back into the darkness of occultism, but simultaneously to release new obscurantist possibilities. Some draw authority from sciences that they do not understand to anaesthetize into credulity, to extract hypnotic effects from knowledge.

What you will never know, what I have hidden from you and will hide from you, barring collapse and madness, until my death, you already know it, instantly and almost before me. I know that you know it. You do not want to know it because you know it; and you know how not to want to know it, how to want not to know it. For my part, all that you conceal, and because of which I hate you and get turned on [*dont je jouis*], I know it, I ask you to look after it in the very depths of yourself like the reserves of a volcano, I ask of myself, as of you, a burning *jouissance* that would halt at the eruption and at the catastrophe of avowal. It would be simply too much. But I see, that's the consciousness I have of it, I see the contours of the abyss; and from the bottom, which I do not see, of my "unconscious" (I feel like laughing every time I write this word, especially with a possessive mark), I receive live information. Must go via the stars [*Faut passer par les astres*] for the bottom of the volcano, communication by satellite, and disaster [*désastre*], without its for all that reaching its destination. For here is my latest paradox, which you alone will understand clearly: it is because there would be telepathy that a postcard can always not arrive at its destination. The ultimate naïveté would be to allow oneself to think that Telepathy guarantees a destination that "posts and telecommunications" fail to assure. On the contrary, everything I said about the postcarded structure of the mark (interference, parasiting, divisibility, iterability, /and so on/) is found in the network. This goes for any tele-system—whatever its content, form, or medium.

Between July 10 and 12 (probably) /My sweet darling girl/

to organize with Eli our meeting on Saturday and to smuggle this audacious missive as contraband. But it seems to me impossible to defer sending my letter

and yet I couldn't bring myself to take advantage of the few moments when Eli left us alone together. It would have seemed to me to be a violation of hospitality

am I going to receive the letter you [*vous*] told me about? You are leaving and it is essential that we correspond. How to proceed in such a way that no one knows anything about it? I have drawn up a little plan. Just in case a man's handwriting would look strange in her uncle's house, Martha [there, you know which smuggler wrote this letter, on June 15, 1882] might perhaps trace her own address on to a certain number of envelopes with her gentle hand, after which I will fill up these miserable shells with some miserable contents. I can-

not do without Martha's replies . . . End of quotation. Two days later she offers him a ring that has come from her father's finger. Her mother had given it to her but it was too big for her (she hadn't lost it, as I did my father's, on a day that was so odd

). Freud wore it but had a copy made of it! while telling her that the copy had to be the original. F. the wise. And here is the first archive of his telepathic sensibility, a ring-story of the type so frequent in the *Psychoanalysis and Telepathy* material (the woman who removes her wedding-ring and goes to see a certain *Wahrsager* who, according to Freud, did not fail to notice *die Spur des Ringes am Finger.*

): "I have to ask you some serious, tragic questions. Tell me, in all honesty, whether last Thursday at eleven o'clock you loved me less or I had annoyed you more than usual, or else perhaps even whether you were "unfaithful" to me, to use the poet's word [Eichendorff, "The Little Broken Ring"]. But why this formal entreaty and in bad taste? Because we have a good opportunity here to put an end to a certain superstition. At the moment of which I have just spoken, my ring cracked, at the point where the pearl is set. I must admit, my heart did not tremble at it. No presentiment whispers to me that our engagement is going to be broken off and no dark suspicion makes me think that you were at that exact moment in the process of driving my image out of your heart. An impressionable young man would have felt all that, but I, I had only one idea: to have the ring repaired and I was also thinking that accidents of that sort are seldom avoidable. . . . " So little avoidable that twice he breaks this ring and twice in the course of a tonsil operation, at the moment when the surgeon was plunging his scalpel into the fiancé's throat. The second time, the pearl could not be found. In his letter to Martha, you have the entire program, the entire contradiction to come already gathered together in the "but I. . . . " He too hears voices, that of Martha when he is in Paris (the end of the *psychopatho.*) and "each time I got the reply that nothing had happened." Just try to find out if that reassures him or disappoints him.

As is customary for me to do, I have collected all the fetishes, the notes, the bits of paper: the tickets for the Ringtheater in Vienna (the night of the great fire), then each visiting card with a motto in Latin, Spanish, English, German, as I love to do, the cards marking the place of the loved one [*l'aimée*] at table, then the oak leaves on the walk at the Kahlenberg, so well named.

Between July 10 and 12 (probably)

skill

in diverting the address from the words [*l'adresse à détourner des mots l'adresse*]. "Ah! my sweet angel, how grateful I am to you for my skill [*mon adresse*]!" I leave you to discover the context all for yourself, it is in *Le Spleen de Paris* ("Le galant tireur") and in *Fusées* (XVII).

July 12, 1979

for his lectures on telepathy—what I'd like to call fake lectures because he confides in them so much, poor man—were for us as imaginary or fictive as Professor W. Khal's class. Not only did he have all this difficulty reaching a decision [*se prononcer*], but he never made any pronouncement [*il n'a jamais rien prononcé*] on this subject. Nor wrote anything. He wrote with a view to speaking, preparing himself to speak, and he never spoke. The lectures which he composed on this subject were never delivered but remained as writings. Is this insignificant? I don't think so and would be tempted to link it up in some way with this fact: the material that he uses in this domain, especially in "Dreams and Telepathy," is almost always written, literal, or even solely epistolary (letters, postcards, telegrams, visiting cards). The fake lecture of 1921, "Psycho-Analysis and Telepathy," supposedly written for a meeting of the International Association, which did not take place, he never gave it, and it seems that Jones, with Eitingon, dissuaded him from presenting it at the following congress. This text was only published after his death and his manuscript included a postscript relating the case of Dr. Forsyth and the Forsyte Saga, forgotten in the first version out of "resistance" (I quote). The fake lecture of 1922, "Dreams and Telepathy," was never given, as it was supposed to be, to the Society of Vienna, only published in *Imago*. The third fake lecture, "Dreams and Occultism" (30th lecture, the second of the *New Introductory Lectures*), was of course never given, and Freud explains himself on this in the foreword to the *New Introductory Lectures.* It is in this last text that you will find the *Vorsicht Saga* with which I would like to reconstitute a chain, my own, the one I'd told you on the telephone the day that you put your hand on the phone in order to call me at the same moment that my own call started to ring through

he says that he has changed his views on thought

transference. The science called (by others) "mechanistic" will be able one day to give an account of it. The connection between two psychic acts, the immediate warning which one individual can seem to give another, the signal or psychic transfer can be a physical phenomenon. This is the end of "Dreams and Occultism." He has just said that he is incapable of trying to please (come off it, you've got to be joking, like me) the telepathic process would be physical in itself, except at its two extremes; one extreme is reconverted (*sich wieder umsetz*) into the psychical same at the other extreme. Therefore, the "analogy" with other "transpositions," other "conversions" (*Umsetzungen*), would be indisputable: for example, the analogy with "speaking and listening on the telephone." Between rhetoric and the psycho-physical relation, within each one and from one to the other, there is only translation (*Übersetzung*), metaphor (*Übertragung*), "transfers," "transpositions," analogical conversions, and above all transfers of transfers: *über, meta, tele.* These words transcribe the same formal order, the same chain and since our discourse on this passage [*passage*] is taking place [*se passe*] in Latin, add *trans* to your list as well. Today we give greater importance to the electric or magnetic medium [*support*] in order to think this process, this process of thought. And the telematic *tekhnē* is not a paradigm or materialized example of another thing, *it is that* (compare our mystic writing pad, it is an analogous problematic, it all communicates by telephone). But once again, a terrifying telephone (and he, the old man, is frightened, me too); with the telepathic transfer, one could not be sure of being able to cut (no need now to say */hold on/, don't cut,* it is connected day and night, can't you just picture us?) or to isolate the lines. All love would be capitalized and dispatched by a central computer like the Plato terminal produced by Control Data: one day I spoke to you about the Honeywell-Bull software called Socrates, well, I've just discovered Plato. (I'm not making anything up, it's in America, Plato.) So he is frightened, and rightly so, of what would happen if one could make oneself master and possessor (*habhaft*) of this physical equivalent of the psychic act, in other words (but this is what is happening, and psychoanalysis is not simply out of the loop, especially not in its indestructible [*increvable*] hypnotic tradition). if one had at one's disposal a *tekhnē telepathikē.* but my love, this is to lose one's head, no more no less. And don't tell me that you do not understand or that you do not remember, I'd made it known to you right

from the first day, then repeated it at each expiration date. Plato is still the dream of the head capitalizing and guaranteeing exchanges (a software plus a teachware [*didacticiel*], as one now says, the only thing missing is a dialecticware). But then one would have to kiss Plato himself goodbye and start mourning him (that is what we have been doing all the time we have loved each other and you told me about this terrifying parricide, you came since I killed him within myself, in order to finish him off, and there's no end to it, and I forgive you, but he within me finds it difficult . . .) "In such cases as these, only the first step is costly [*Dans des cas pareils, ce n'est que le premier pas qui coûte*]," he says in French at the end of "Psy. and Tele." And he concludes: "*Das Weitere findet sich* [The rest sorts itself out]." No, for us, every step is costly. Reread this final paragraph. Having had the cheek to say that his life has been very poor in terms of occult experiences, he adds: but what a step beyond it would be if . . . (*welch folgenschwerer Schritt über . . .*). So he envisages the consequences and adds the story of the guardian of the Saint-Denis basilica. Saint Denis had walked with his head under his arm after his beheading. He had walked a fair distance (*ein ganzes Stück*). And you know what he had done with his head, to put it under his arm? He had lifted it up [*relevée; aufgehoben*]. Tell me, you will lift me up, eh, you will walk with my head under your arm? I would like that. No. "In such cases as these," concludes the *Kustos*, "only the first step is costly." In the *Gesammelte Werke*, the text that follows, the title of which you read immediately after the "first step," is *Das Medusenhaupt.*

Imagine that I am walking like him, to his rhythm: between fifty and sixty years old (roughly until 1920), I remain undecided. I send them to sleep, allowing them to think what they want: telepathy, you won't know [*vous saurez pas*], and I tell you that I don't know myself whether I believe in it. You see the doves in my hands and coming out of my hat, how do I do it, mystery. So everything in my life (sorry, in our life) organizes or disorganizes itself according to this indecision. One lets Plato or his ghost live without knowing whether it is him or his ghost. Then comes the last stage, the one that is still before us but that I see seeing us coming and that, softwarily [*logiciellement*], will have anticipated us right from the start. In this way, a life totally transformed, converted, paralyzed by telepathy would await us, given over to its networks and its schemes across the whole surface of its body, in all its angles, tangled up [*embobinée*] in the web of histories and times without the least resistance on our part. On

the contrary, we would take on a zealous participation, the most provocative experimental initiatives. People would no longer have us round, they would avoid us as if we were addicts, we would frighten everybody (so *fort*, so *da*!). For the moment I scare *myself*, there is one within me who has begun and who plays at frightening me. You will remain with me, won't you, you will still tell me the truth.

July 13, 1979

I am only interested in the *saga*, first on the mother's side (Safah, the name of the "lip" and of my mother, as I told you in October) at least as far back as the great-grandfather who today has more than 600 descendants. Then hypnosis and I often told you last year: "it is as if I were writing under hypnosis" or "were making one read under hypnosis." Although I don't believe in wakefulness [*la veille*], I must prepare for the great awakening, just in order to change sides, in short, like turning over in a bed

and so my first

period, that of indecision. In the fake lecture entitled "Dreams and Telepathy," my rhetoric is priceless, really incredible. Incredible, that's the word, for I play on credibility or rather acredibility as I did a short while before in *Beyond* . . . I do everything I can so that this audience (that I've set things up so as not to have, finally, to allow myself to be spirited away by poor old Jones with his political scientism advice) cannot either believe or not believe, in any case come to [*arrêtent*] its judgment. That will make them work and transfer during this period, because belief and judgment halt [*arrêtent*] work; and then, a secondary benefit, they will doze off and remain suspended on my lip [*lèvre*]. Mustn't know (and there I am strong because in this domain it is no longer a question of "knowledge." Everything, in our concept of knowledge, is constructed so that telepathy be impossible, unthinkable, unknown. If there is any, our relation to Telepathy must not be of the family of "knowledge" or "non-knowledge" but of another kind). I will therefore do everything so that you cannot believe or not believe that I myself believe or do not believe: but the point is that you will never know if I am doing it intentionally. The question of the *intentional* [l'exprès] will lose all meaning for you

will be astounding to you: in its ruse and naïveté (that's me all right, isn't it?), both equally probable and improbable, distinct and confused, as with an old ape. In the first place I pretend

to disappoint fictive listeners and aleatory readers: ah! there is a lot of interest in the occult today, and because I've put Telepathy on the bill, here you are, all excited about it. You have always taken me, like Fliess, for a "mind reader." Mistake [*Mépris*; also Contempt]. You are waiting holding your breath. You are waiting on the telephone, I imagine you [*vous*] and speak to *you* [*je te parle*] on the telephone, or the teleprinter seeing that I've prepared a lecture that I will never give (like a letter that one doesn't send in one's lifetime, that I allow to be intercepted by Jones and the friends of the Cause, I may as well say by my lieutenants). Well, you are wrong, for once, you will discover nothing from me as regards the "enigma of telepathy." In particular, I will preserve this at all costs, you will not be able to know "whether or not I believe in the existence of a telepathy." This opening could still allow one to think that I know, myself, whether or not I believe, and that, for one reason or another, I am anxious to keep it secret, in particular to produce such and such a transferential effect (not necessarily on you [*toi*] or on you [*vous*], but on this public within myself that does not let go of me). And again, at the end of the fake lecture, when I take up the word "occult" once more, I pretend (more or less, as my father used to say) to admit that I do not myself know. I know nothing about it. I apologize: if I have given the impression of having secretly "taken sides [*pris parti*]" with the reality of telepathy in the occult sense. I am sorry that it is so difficult to avoid giving such an impression. Tell me, whom do you think I'm talking to? What do I take them for? If I don't want to give the impression, I have only to do what is necessary, don't you think? For example, not to play with German. In saying that I would like to be entirely *unparteiisch*, I do not say "impartial," in the sense of scientific objectivity, but rather without bias [*sans parti*, "without party," "without option"]. That's how I want to appear: not to take sides [*Partei nehmen*] and to remain "without bias." And I will have concluded as in *Beyond* . . . , without concluding, by recalling all the reasons I have for remaining without bias. It really is the first step that costs. There you are, asleep, propped up [*calée*] in your armchair. I have no opinion, you understand, "no judgment." This is my last word. At my age, "I do not know anything on this subject." From the first sentence to the last, from the moment that I said, "you will know nothing about it, whether I believe it or not," up to the moment of concluding, "anyway I do not know anything about it myself," you would think that therefore nothing is happening, that there's no progress here. But you don't think

that I might be dissimulating at the start? And again at the end when I say that I do not know anything about it? Through diplomacy and concern for "foreign policy"? You don't have to take my word for it. It's like you when I ask you in the evening: tell me, the truth, my little comma [*dis-moi, la verité, ma petite virgule*]. Do you believe that one can talk about lying in philosophy, or in literature, or better, in the sciences? Imagine the scene: Hegel is *lying* when he says in the greater *Logic* . . . or Joyce, in some passage from *F. W.*, or Cantor? but yes [*mais si*], but yes, and the more one can play at that, the more it interests me. Basically, that's it, discourses in which lying is impossible have never interested me. The great liars are imperturbable, they never mention it. Nietzsche, for example, who unmasks them all, he can't have been much of a liar, he can't really have known how, poor chap . . .

So, not one step further, apparently, in the course of 25 closely written pages. The delimitation of the problem, the strict guard rail (but then what am I frightened of? who is making me frightened?), is the relation between telepathy and dreaming, and "our theory of the dream." Above all, don't speak of anything else, it's that, our theory of the dream, that must be protected at any price. And in order to save a dream, only one, a single dream-generator in any case, to save it against any other theory. What a strategy, don't you admire it? I neutralize all the risks in advance. Even if the existence of telepathy (about which I know nothing and about which you will know nothing, especially not whether I believe in it and whether I want to know anything about it) were attested one day with all its requirements, even if it were assured, *sichergestellt*, there would be no need to change anything in my theory of the dream and my dream would be safe. I am not saying whether I believe in it or not but I leave the field open to every eventuality (just about), I appropriate it in advance as it were. My theory of the dream, ours (the first, the second, it matters little) would be able to adapt to it and even still control it. And the two scenes of "Dreams and Telepathy" are too obvious to be pointed out, one more time. *First scene:* even while forbidding myself [*me défendant*], that is the word, to know anything or conclude anything, I speak only of myself, say I. Totally autobiographical, if not auto-analytical, text, and that devotes itself to constant speculation. *Second scene*: my fake lecture allowing itself, if you like, to be led from start to finish and to be driven by a trace, *Spur*, of a facial wound that I have had since my childhood and that, don't you think, opens the text, holds it open, mouth agape, the analytic material come from elsewhere, in my dossier on telepathy, remains *epistolary* through and through.

July 13, 1979

What will I have told them! that my material is lightweight, that this time I am sorry not to be able to put a personal dream on display as in my *Traumdeutung*, that I have never had a single telepathic dream. Do you believe they'll believe me? There will surely be at least one [*une*] who'll have a premonition (with the exception of you, of course, soothsayer, guess, you know everything in advance) that it is less simple and that, at the moment of demonstration, the dreams that I recount to bring out their ultimately nontelepathic nature, my dreams, then, could well be the most interesting thing and the main subject, the real secret [*la vraie confidence*]. When I say "But I have never had a telepathic dream," there will be at least one [*une*] who'll ask: what does he know about it? and why should I believe him? She's the one I'd like to wake up with one day and start everything afresh. Moreover, I have clearly recognized, from the beginning, that I'd kept from certain dreams the impression that a certain definite event, *ein bestimmtes Ereignis*, was playing itself out in the distance, at such-and-such a place, at the same moment or later. And this indeterminacy allows enough play for them to start asking themselves slightly more complicated questions; those that I suggest to them in their sleep are never valid in themselves

calmly, I know it, calmly, another time, one more time. It is necessary to see "double," over toward the dead brothers (beautiful brothers [or brothers-in-law]), toward homosexualities more or less foreclosed, with the telepathy-calls (so much for changing the number every year, paying for it to be /unlisted/) the majority of which come to me from great-greats [*arrière-arrière*] and grand-grands, and so on (fathers, uncles, aunts, my grandfather, able on occasions to be my great-uncle *und so weiter*). Calmly, what do you want me to say, it will indeed be necessary to agree to wake up

then I leave the domain of the dream that I had nevertheless undertaken not to go beyond. I leave it behind for a little bit, certainly, but already in order to speak about myself: even wide-awake I have often *verspürt*, sensed, experienced the presentiment of distant events. But these Anzeigen, Vorhersagen, Ahnungen, these premonitory signs and

discourses are not themselves, wie wir uns ausdrücken, eingetroffen. In French, one would say that they are not themselves, as we put it, realized [*réalisés*]. /Or in english that they have not come true/, which would be something else again, literally, because I hold that something can *turn out* [s'avérer], can be verified without being realized. Now the fact that I emphasize, wie wir uns ausdrücken colon: nicht eingetroffen clearly shows that something bothers me about this expression that I nevertheless do not highlight in any other way. I would hesitate, for my part, to translate it by "realized." *Eintreffen* does mean, in the broad sense, "to be realized," but I would prefer to translate it by "to happen" [*arriver*], "to be accomplished," and so on, without referring to reality, especially (but not only) to that reality that we so easily assimilate to external-reality. You see what I'm getting at here. An annunciation can be accomplished, something can happen without for all that being realized. An event can take place that is not real. My customary distinction between internal and external reality is perhaps not sufficient here. It signals toward some event that no idea of "reality" helps us think. But then, you will say, if what is announced in the annunciation clearly bears the index "external reality," what is one to do with it? Well, treat it as an index, it can signify, telephone, telesignal another event that arrives before the other, without the other, according to another time, another space, and so on. This is the *abc* of my psychoanalysis. Reality, when I talk about it, it is as if to send them to sleep, you will understand nothing of my rhetoric otherwise. I have never been able to give up hypnosis, I have merely transferred one inductive method onto another: one could say that I have become a writer and in writing, rhetoric, the staging and composition of texts, I have reinvested all my hypnogogic powers and desires. What do you want me to say, to sleep with me, that is all that interests them, the rest is secondary. So the telepathic annunciation /has come true even if/ it is not itself *eingetroffen* in external reality, that is the hypothesis that I offer to be read at the very moment I foreclose it on the surface of my text.

Hypnosis, you're the one who has made me understand it, hypnosis is you. Slowly I wake up from you, I get the circulation going in my limbs, I try to remember everything you made me do and say under hypnosis and I will not manage, I will be on the verge of managing only when I see death coming. And you will still be there to wake me. While I wait, I deviate, I use the power that you lend me—over the others

—"foreclosed" is a superb word, but only where it is valid just for me, my lip, my idiom. It is a proper name

on this hesitation between sleep and wakefulness. More precisely between the dream proper, the nocturnal one, and the presentiments of waking life, look under a microscope at the linking of my very first sentences. In three propositions I am saying (1) that I have never had a telepathic dream, except for those dreams that inform of a determinate event playing itself out at a distance and that leave it to the dreamer to decide if it is taking place now or later. To leave to decide, that's the great lever, I try to place the fictive listener, in short, the reader in the situation of the dreamer where it's up to him to decide—if he's sleeping; (2) that in the waking state I have also had presentiments that, not coming to be "realized" in "external reality," had to be considered as just subjective anticipations. And then here (3) I start a new paragraph and say "for example" in order to recount a story of which one doesn't know whether it illustrates the last proposition (premonitions in waking life) or the last but one (telepathic dreams). The content seems to leave no doubt, it is a question of nocturnal dreams, but the rhetoric of linking trembles a little, listening to me you think you are dreaming.

It is so long since I wrote that to you, I no longer know my two apparently telepathic dreams, which seem not to have been "realized," are two dreams of death. I offer them as hors-d'oeuvres, supposedly to demonstrate negatively that I have never had a telepathic dream and to insist on the poverty of my material. Further on I add that in 27 years of analytic practice (you hear, this is certainly our number today) I have never been in a position to witness or take part in, miterleben, a dream that is truly, precisely, "correctly" telepathic, and I leave them to ruminate on the "richtige." That said, the hors-d'oeuvre, my two dreams of death, *you* have quickly understood, bears the essential points of my fake lecture. The material that follows and that reaches me by *correspondence*, it's sufficient to be vaguely alert or sophisticated to understand it: it is there only in order *to read* my two dreams of death or, if you prefer, so-that-not, in order not to read them, in order, on the one hand, to divert attention from them, while on the other paying attention to them alone. From the moment I started talking about hypnosis and telepathy (at the same time), a long time ago now, I always drew attention to the procedures of diverting attention, just

like "mediums" do. In this way they provoke experiences of thought divination or betrayal of thought (*Gedanken erraten, Gedanken verraten*). Here, my two dreams of death, one reads them without being aware of it, and above all through the rest of the material that has come by correspondence, apparently unconnected with my own dreams.

The material of the others, which comes to me by post, would it seems come only to decipher my two dreams of death, along with their whole system, deciphering at a distance, under hypnosis and by correspondence. It is as if I were speaking a language of diplomacy and cultivating double vision in my patient reader. Always out of concern for "foreign policy," but where does foreign policy begin? where are the borders? Naturally, I let it be clearly understood that I am capable of interpreting my two dreams; and in order to reassure those who are concerned (for me) to preserve the theory of the dream as fulfillment of desire (they make me laugh, these backward types), I declare with a wink that it is not particularly difficult to discover the unconscious motives of my two dreams of death (my son and my sister-in-law). But it won't have escaped *you* that I say nothing of the second dream, though I sketch a reading of the first one (Totsagen of my son in ski costume), cross-reference [*renvoi*] with a fall of this same son while skiing (Skifahrerkostum, Skiunfall), cross-reference this cross-reference with one of my falls when as a child I was trying, having climbed up a ladder, to reach or bring down something nice, probably, from the top of a chest [*coffre*]: a *fort/da* of me when I was scarcely two years old. Some jam, perhaps? Of this fall and the injury that ensued, I still preserve the trace, *Spur*. I tell them then that to this day I can still show it, this trace. I tell it to them in a tone that they have trouble identifying (worried about proof? compulsive display [*exhibition*]? confirmation that I need because I am not very sure?). All of these things, if it is really a question of the dream of July 8, 1915. Three days later I was sent a postcard by my elder son, it alluded to a wound that had already scarred over. I asked for details but I never got a reply. Naturally, I didn't breathe a word of this in my fake lecture. This mark [*trace*] under my beard sets things going [*donne l'envoi*], gives the title and the tone: the lecture deals only with ghosts and scars [*cicatrices*]. At the end of the staging of the last case (this lady correspondent who tells me she is haunted by her dream "as by a ghost," a dream that has nothing telepathic about it and that I bring to the fore for the only (and bad) reason that the dreamer writes to me telling me she has had, *moreover*(!), that she *believes* she has had telepathic experiences . . .), I recall that spontaneous cures, one might as well say auto-analyses, usually leave "scars." They become painful again from time to time. The word "Narbe" [scar] comes twice from my pen, I know that the English had already used the word "scar" to translate Spur much earlier on. This translation may have put some people on the trail [*piste*]. I like these words Narbe, "scar," Spur, trace, and cicatrice in French as well. They say what they mean, eh, especially when it is found under the bristles of some Bart, or beard. Nietzsche already spoke about a scar under Plato's beard. One can stroke and part the bristles so as to pretend to show, that is the whole of my lecture. Of the second dream then, I have preferred to say nothing. It announced to me the death of my sister-in-law, the widow of my elder brother, at the age of 87, in England. My two nieces, in black, are telling me "am Donnerstag haben wir sie begraben." This Thursday of the funeral, apparently the most contingent detail of the story, I say nothing about it, but isn't this the password? I know one woman to whom it won't be necessary to say it twice. I recognize that there is nothing amazing about dying at the age of 87 but the coincidence with the dream would have been unpleasant. Once again it is a letter that reassured me. In the introductory part of the lecture, already, a letter and a postcard come to refute the telepathic appearance of my two dreams—that ought to have troubled the reader. Then in the two cases described the post again officiates: two correspondents who are not "personally" known to me

that's us

[*c'est nous, ça*], who really only know each other by correspondence. The fact that we have often met (often is a feeble word) remains rather by the way. We have confided our telepathies by correspondence. Do we know each other "personally"? it's very problematic. / What does that mean? / And when I say that I don't have the slightest reason for suspecting my correspondents' intention to mislead [*intention mystificatrice*], in the lecture, I see you laugh, you could already see me coming

because you believe in me, you are always ready to not believe a word I say

I am a double, for you, not Horch, another

Take the dream of the twins, the first case. Fido, Fido, remember, I speak of telepathy apropos the double, in *Das Unheimliche*, it's absolutely essential. Here's someone who writes to me: having dreamt that his second wife had twins, and was giving them

her breast and some jam (follow the jam through all these stories), he receives from his son-in-law, oh, yes, a *telegram* informing him that his daughter (first marriage) had just had twins. I recount all this in great detail (and another time, *nearly* in the same way in the *New Introductory Lectures* while dropping the story that my correspondent had added. It had no connection with any dream and to be consistent with the subject, I should have dropped it from "Dreams and Telepathy" as well. I preserved this supplement because of a postcard and a child's death: the moment the postman brings him a postcard, my correspondent realizes that it is to inform him of the death of his young brother, aged 9 and living alone with his parents. Sudden and unexpected death all the same, but his three other brothers, whom he hasn't seen together for 30 years, apart from at his parents' funerals, told him that they had had an exactly similar experience (similar up to a point that is not clear to him, he admits). In my new fake lectures, I insist as always on reestablishing the legitimate order: only psychoanalysis can teach something about telepathic phenomena and not vice versa. Of course, for that it must integrate telepathy without obscurantism and some transformation may ensue for psychoanalysis. But it is not opportune to present things in this way for the moment. I continue doggedly to distinguish between telepathy and "thought transference," to explain why I have always had greater difficulty in accepting the first than the second, of which so little is said in the ancient accounts of miracles (I am now less sure about it); in any case that can mean two things: either that one considered this "transference" as going without saying, the easiest operation in the world; or else, precisely because of the (scarcely advanced) state of the relationship to scientifico-technical objectivity, a certain schema of transmission was not thinkable, imaginable, interesting. In this way you would explain to yourself the constant association, at least in terms of the figures, comparisons, analogies, and so on, between a certain structure of telecommunications, of the postal technology (telegrams, letters and postcards, telephone) and the material that is today situated at my disposal when I hear talk about telepathy. I have scarcely even selected for you

our story of twins, I'm coming back to it.

Yes, I have inserted the postcard about the young dead brother, although it has nothing to do with any dream and it's getting off the subject. After which, I collect everything together on a central "Sie sollte lieber meine (zweite) Frau sein." And admire my audacity, I say that (it is rather she

whom I would have liked as a (second) wife) in the first person, in a mimetic or apocryphal style as Plato would say. Admire it, and don't forget that it was written, all in all, a very short time after Sophie's death. I ought to write one day on this speculation, these telegrams and the generation of sons-in-law [*gendres*]. The clause on which I blocked the interpretation ("I would have preferred her as a second wife") would translate the unconscious thought of the grandfather of the twins, that is to say, of my correspondent. And I preface all that with some innocent reflections on the love of a daughter for her father (I know that his daughter clings to him, I am convinced that during the pains of giving birth, she thought of him a great deal, and moreover I think that he is jealous of his son-in-law, for whom my correspondent has some derogatory remarks in one of his letters. The bonds between a daughter and her father are "customary and natural," one should not feel ashamed of them. In everyday life, it expresses itself in a tender interest, the dream alone pushes this love to its final conclusions, etc.). You remember, one day I told you: you are my daughter and I have no daughter. Previously, I am going back still, I had recalled that the psychoanalytic interpretation of dreams lifts up [*relève*], suppresses and preserves (aufhebt) the difference between the dream and the event (Ereignis), giving the same content to both. In other words, if there should one day be someone of either sex to follow me, to follow what I still hold back in the inhibition of the too soon, it will be to think: from the new thought of this *Aufhebung* and this new concept of the Ereignis, from their shared possibility, one sees the disappearance of all the objections in principle to telepathy. The system of objections rested on a thousand naïvetés with regard to the subject, the ego, consciousness, perception, and so on, but above all on a determination of the "reality" of the event, of the event as essentially "real"; now that belongs to a history of grandad's philosophy, and by appearing to reduce telepathy to the name of a psychoanalytic neopositivism, I open up its field. For that they must also free themselves from the massively Oedipal training ware [*didacticiel*] by which I pretend to maintain law and order in my class. I wanted to delay the arrival of the ghosts [*fantômes*] en masse. With you it was no longer possible to drag it out. Their martyrdom is very close to its end

I leave you to follow on your own the details of my slalom. This is some high rhetoric—in the service of a hypnopoetics. I always talk of it in the first person (ah, if this were my second wife, and if my first wife were still alive, it wouldn't

be enough for her to have just one grandchild, she'd have to have at least twins: this is what I call, you know, Fido, the first one second [*la première seconde*]—double the stakes the grandfather wins). After which I play the three-card trick with the dream and telepathy, and this is the slalom: (1) if it is a dream with a slight difference between the oneiric content and the "external" event, the dream is interpreted according to the classical ways of psychoanalysis; then it is only a dream, telepathy has nothing to do with it, any more than with the problem of anxiety, for example: this is my conclusion; (2) the content of the dream corresponds exactly with that of the "real" event; so, admire, I put the question: who says it is a dream and that, as often happens, you are not confusing two separate terms: sleeping state and dream? Wouldn't it be better to speak then, not of dream, but rather of telepathic experience in the sleeping state? I do not exclude that possibility but it remains outside the subject here. Well played, wouldn't you say? The subject is the reine telepathische Traum. And in its purity, the concept of telepathic dream appeals to the perception of something external with regard to which psychic life would behave in a "receptive and passive" manner.

July 14, 1979

I prepare absentmindedly for the journey to Oxford. It is as if, crossing the Channel from the opposite direction, I were going to meet Socrates and Plato in person; they are waiting for me over there, at the bend, just after the anniversary. The voices that Socrates heard, the voice rather, what was it, *Telepathie* or *Gedankenübertragung*? And me when he inspires me, diverts me in the hollow of my ear, and you?

The other, when he says "receptive and passive" without raising any further questions, one regrets that he hasn't read a certain *Kantbuch* that was being written just at the time that he himself was changing his views on the possibility of telepathy, between "Dreams and Telepathy" and the *New Introductory* fake *Lectures*. I was not born but things were programming themselves.

As for what is "outside the subject" (and telepathy, that's what it is, the outside-the-subject, he knows the score), the second case in "D. and T." is not, any more than is the first, a case of a telepathic dream. It is not presented as such by his correspondent. She has only had, *on the other hand*, numerous telepathic experiences. Writes

she, says he. Freud then deals only with a dream that comes back incessantly, "like a ghost," to visit his correspondent. Completely outside the subject, isn't it? So, before discussing it again, follow my clues [*indices*]. I do not have any new hypothesis for the moment. Pick out and link up what you can on your side, I myself am scanning to begin with as follows, without grammar: the ghost, the inflammation of the eyes and double sight or double vision (*Doppeltsehen*) and scars (*Narben*), clear-sightedness and clear hearing (*hellsehen, hellhören*), the postcard, again, this time announcing the death of the brother who had called his mother and that the correspondent claimed to have heard as well, then (again!) the husband's first wife, the agrammaticality of symbolic language as he recalls it at the moment of saying that the passive and the active can be represented in the same image, through the same "kernel" [*noyau*] (this word comes back all the time, be it a question of the kernel of the dream, the "kernel of truth" in telepathic experiences, and the core [*noyau*] of the earth that couldn't possibly be made of jam, at the beginning of the *N.I.L.*), the exact place where F. recalls that the psychoanalyst also has his "prejudices," again the scars, the admission that in this second case there has been a complete neglect of the question of telepathy (!), the point that can be neither proved nor refuted, the decision to deal only with the (epistolary) testimony of the daughter-sister, leaving the telepathic experience of the mother completely out of play; then the strange return to the previous case (the young dead brother, the older brothers equally convinced of the altogether superfluous nature of the youngest, of his birth, I mean; finally, the eldest daughter dreaming of becoming the second wife on the death of her mother (once again)—and the brazenly Oedipal interpretation with no two ways about it. . . . Lastly, I am perhaps more mistaken than ever, I punctuate badly, but anyway place a grid [*calque*] over it, pick out and tell yourself whatever story you like in the gaps, tomorrow we play, or the day after, when I have done the same thing for our saga. Do not forget the reversal at the end. He is not content with repeating that Ps. should be able to help in understanding telepathy, he adds, *as if this were his real concern*, that Ps. would help to isolate more effectively those phenomena that are indubitably telepathic! Ps. and Telepathy would then make a couple: a telepathic message may not coincide with the event in time (understand: the time of consciousness, or even of the ego, which is also the time naïvely believed to be "objective" and, as he says, "astronomical," in accordance with an old science), that does not disqualify

it in its telepathic power [*vertu*]. It will have needed the time it takes to reach consciousness. With the aid of psychic temporality, of its discrepant [*décalée*] heterogeneity, its time differences [*décalages horaires*] if you prefer, depending on the instances one takes, one can safely envisage the probability of telepathy. The conversion to telepathy will not have waited until 1926. "No more problem," he says, if the telepathic phenomenon is an operation of the unconscious. The laws of the unconscious apply to it and everything goes without saying. Which doesn't prevent him from concluding as he had begun: I know nothing, I don't have any opinion, behave as if I hadn't told you anything. Bye now, OK

if you wish to understand this apparent oscillation, it is necessary to add this: even at the moment when, some years later, around 1926, he declares his "conversion to telepathy," he does not seek to integrate it in a definite [*décidée*] or univocal way into psychoanalytic theory. He continues to make it a private affair, along with all the fog in which such a notion can be wrapped. "The theme of telepathy," he will say in a letter to Jones, "is in essence foreign to psychoanalysis," or the "conversion to telepathy is my private affair like my Jewishness, my passion for smoking and many other things. . . . " Who would be satisfied with such a declaration coming from him? Not that it is false or worthless, and I have suggested it often enough, it was certainly necessary to read his propositions (including the theoretical ones) about telepathy in relation to his "private affair," and so on, but how does one accept this dissociation pure and simple on the part of someone who has struggled with the theorization of telepathy? And then, if it is foreign to psychoanalysis, like a foreign body precisely, as though "off the subject," must psychoanalysis remain silent about the structure and the incorporation of the foreign body? At the end of "Dreams and Occultism" (*New Introductory Lectures*), he indeed speaks of a foreign-body (*Fremdkörper*) story, and it is true that he deals with a phenomenon of thought transmission in the face of which he acknowledges the failure of the analyst. The case is all the more interesting in that it is about the mother's childhood memory (a gold coin) that bursts in on the following generation (her son, aged 10, brings her a gold coin for her to put aside on the same day she had talked about it in analysis). Freud, who hears the thing from Dorothy Burlingham (the one to whom, I heard from M., he had wanted to offer two rings, but Anna had dissuaded him),[8] admits to failure in the face of the foreign body: "But the analysis reveals nothing, the act itself being

that day introduced like a foreign body into the little boy's life." And when, a few weeks later, the kid begs for the coin in order to show it to *his* psychoanalyst, "the analysis is incapable of unearthing any access to this desire," once again. Failure, then, in the face of the foreign body—which takes the form here of a gold coin: *Goldstück*, value itself, the authentic sign of allegedly authentic value. Freud has such an awareness (or such a desire) of having himself thus arrived at the limit of psychoanalysis (inside or outside?) that he begins a new paragraph and in this way concludes the lecture (these are the last words and one doesn't know whether they mean that the return to Freudian psychoanalysis has just begun or remains to come): "Und damit wären wir zur Psychanalyse zurückgekommen von der wir ausgegangen sind": "And this brings us back to psychoanalysis, which was what we have started out from." Started out from? Gotten away from.

For, finally, if the theme of telepathy is foreign to psychoanalysis, if it is a private affair ("I am Jewish," "I like smoking," "I believe in telepathy") why take public positions on this subject, and after devoting several studies to it? Can one take this reserve seriously? Now, take account of this fact as well: he doesn't say to Jones, "It is a private affair," he advises him to make that response in case he should have difficulty in publicly assuming Freud's positions. I quote the whole letter, because of the allusion to Ferenczi and to his daughter (Anna), it seems to me important (note in passing that he abandons the idea, on the subject of the said foreign body, of making peace with England): "I am extremely sorry that my utterance about telepathy should have plunged you into fresh difficulties. But it is really hard not to offend English susceptibilities. . . . I have no prospect of pacifying public opinion in England, but I should like to explain at least to you my apparent inconsistency in the matter of telepathy. You remember how I had already at the time of our Harz travels expressed a favourable prejudice towards telepathy. But there seemed no need to do so publicly, my own conviction was not very strong, and the diplomatic consideration of guarding psycho-analysis from any approach to occultism easily gained the upper hand. Now the revising of *The Interpretation of Dreams* for the Collected Edition was a spur to reconsider the problem of telepathy. Moreover, my own experiments through tests made with Ferenczi and my daughter won such a convincing force for me that the diplomatic considerations on the other side had to give way. I was once more faced with a case where on a reduced scale I had to repeat the great

experiment of my life: namely, to proclaim a conviction without taking into account any echo from the outer world. So then it was unavoidable. When anyone adduces my fall into sin, just answer him calmly that conversion to telepathy is my private affair like my Jewishness, my passion for smoking and many other things, and that the theme of telepathy is in essence alien to psycho-analysis" (March 7, 1926).[9] Even if one takes into account what he says about "diplomacy" and the diplomatic advice that he again gives to Jones, this letter is contradictory from start to finish. Enough to make one lose one's head, I was saying to you the other day, and he himself once declared that this subject "perplexed him to the point of making him lose his head." It is indeed a question of continuing to walk with one's head under one's arm ("Only the first step is costly" etc.) or, what amounts to the same thing, of admitting a foreign body into one's head, into the ego of psychoanalysis. Me, psychoanalysis, I have a foreign body in my head (you remember

As for Ferenczi and his daughter, and the "experiments" he apparently carried out with them, there'd be so much to say. I have said enough about his daughters, even though . . . , but for Ferenczi, the trail to follow is essential. One of the most startling moments consists again (from 1909 onward) of a story of letters (letters between the two of them on the subject of the letters that a clairvoyant, Frau Seidler, appeared to be able to read blindfold. Ferenczi's brother mediates between them and the medium; he introduces them to her and passes on the letters, see Jones, III, 411–12). As regards Jones, who no doubt wasn't as "hard"-headed about this as he said, why, in your opinion, does he in 1926 compare the dangers of telepathy for psychoanalysis to "wolves" who "would not be far from the sheepfold"?[10]

July 15, 1979

a terrifying consolation. Sometimes I also approach Telepathy as if it were an assurance finally

instead of muddling everything up, or complicating the parasitism, as I told you and as I believe, I hope for complete presence [*la toute-présence*] from it, fusional immediacy, a parousia to keep you, at a distance, in order to keep myself within you, I play pantheism against separation, so you are no longer leaving, you can no longer even confront me with your "determination," nor I

Fort: Da, *tele*pathy against tele*pathy*, distance against menacing immediacy, but also the opposite, feeling (always close to oneself, it is thought), against the suffering of distancing that would also be called telepathy I

pass on to the second and last great epoch today, the turn has begun, I was starting to get steadied [*calé*], I am going to tip over, I am tipped over already. You can no longer do anything, I believe, I believe

keep a little time, we'll reread things together

here already, as toothing stone,[11] my first punctuation for the *Forsyte Saga* ("Dreams and Occultism" in the *New Introductory Lectures*), I don't rule out that it misses [*passe à côté*] or carries everything off, according to a bad time lag [*décalage*]. It is *your* punctuation that interests me, you will tell me the truth. So I start from the "kernels" (core of the earth, kernel of truth, jam, *der Erdkern aus Marmelade besteht*, pointless to tell you that he doesn't believe in it, not as much as I do), then mediums and imposture, the kernel again, "around which imposture (*Trug*) has, with the force of imagination (*Phantasiewirkung*), spread out a veil that would be difficult to pass through," the "everything happens as if she had been informed [*prévenu*] by telephone (*als ob . . . telephonisch*)," "one could speak of a psychical counterpart to wireless telegraphy (*gewissermassen ein psychisches Gegenstück zur drahtlosen Telegraphie*)," "I don't have any conviction in this respect." "It was in 1922 that I made my first communication on this subject," then the "telegram" again and our "twins," then "in the unconscious this 'like' is abolished," dead, the woman of 27 (!) who takes her ring off at "Monsieur le Professeur's" (in parentheses, on the subject of 7, 27 and of our 17, did you know he chose the 17th as the date of his engagement after choosing the number 17 in a lottery that was supposed to tell the nature of your character—and it was "constancy"!),[12] a Parisian /fortune-teller/, the "greatest preponderance of probability in favour of an effective thought-transference," the little card (*Kärtchen*) at the graphologist's, and so on. Finally, there's the arrival of David Forsyth, and Freud puts into play all the names that are linked with it, Forsyte, foresight, *Vorsicht*, *Voraussicht*, precaution, or prediction [*prévision*], and so on, but never makes a point of drawing our attention to (so it seemed to me, I will have to reread) the supplementary fold of the too obvious, namely, that the proper name itself speaks foresight [*la prévue*]. Forsyth, who had an appointment, leaves *eine Karte* for Sigi then in session with

M.P., who that very day tells him how a certain virgin nicknamed him, M.P., Herr von Vorsicht because of his prudent or discreet [*pudique*] reserve. Sigi seems to know a lot about the real motives of this reserve, he shows him the card and tells us without any transition about the Saga, that of the Forsytes, which M.P., alias von Vorsicht, had anyway led him to discover starting with *The Man of Property*! Naturally, you are taking account of the fact that Jones, who knew Forsyth, suspected Freud of having "unconsciously touched up the story," reproached him for small errors in this instance, "the slightest," which he has "related" to us, you follow all the twists and turns of proper names, in passing through Freud and von Freund, you collect and file, classify all the visits, visiting cards, letters, photographs, and telephone communications in the story, then you focus on two centers in this long ellipsis. First of all, the theme of interrupted analysis. There is interrupted analysis in there, and I would like to say, while stretching out the ellipsis: telepathy is the interruption of the psychoanalysis of psychoanalysis. Everything turns, in the Vorsicht case, around M.P.'s fear of seeing his analysis broken off, as Freud had given him to understand. The arrival of Dr. Forsyth, the visitor *à la carte*, would have been the omen. Unless it has to do with another interruption of analysis, marked by another card, from another Dr. F. One has to sniff around in that area. Next, another focal point, the mother/child couple, the case related by the friend of Anna (herself in analysis—with whom was it, now?) and the gold coin (*Goldstück*) leading from the "foreign body," and so on.

and naturally I'm following all that along an invisible fold line: without reducing it, you fold it over onto autobio-thanatography, you are looking for the foreign body on the side of the doctor

and in the *Gradiva* piece, in front of a woman who resembled a dead patient, he had said, "So after all it's true that the dead can come back to life." He thinks he is a pretty good medium himself and in 1925, at the period in which he dares to declare his "conversion," he wrote to Jones: "Ferenczi came here one Sunday recently. We all three [with Anna] carried out some experiments concerning the transmission of thoughts. They were astonishingly successful, especially those where I was playing the role of the medium and analysing my associations. The affair is becoming urgent to us" (March 15, 1925). With whom were they speaking, that Sunday? Who was M.P.?[13] Plato the master thinker [*maître-penseur*], the postmaster [*maître des postes*], but still,

soothsayer [*devine*], at that date . . .

So psychoanalysis (and you're still following the fold line) resembles an adventure of modern rationality set on swallowing *and* simultaneously rejecting the foreign body named Telepathy, assimilating it and vomiting it up without being able to make up its mind to do one or the other. Translate all that in terms of the politics—internal and external—of the psychoanalytic state (c'est moi). The "conversion" is not a resolution or a solution, it is still the speaking scar of the foreign body

half a century already,
commemorates
the big Turn, it's

going to go very quickly now. I am going to reread everything trying out the keys one after the other, but I am afraid of not finding (or of finding) all alone, of no longer having the time. Will you will give me your hand?

no more time to

lose, ὸ γὰρ καιρὸς ἐγγύς, Telepathy comes upon us, *tempus enim prope est.*

—*Translated by Nicholas Royle*

§ 10 *Ex abrupto*

"Der Ort sagt . . . " It is the place that dictates to me. In my mind, I have always displaced and also deformed at the same time these words of Creon's. . . . And now the memory of the abrupt. Here I do not want to speak of it, and cannot, except according to memory, a fragment split off from memory, from what, at the end of June 1978, at the very instant, in the then present, came to be gathered up in what was already the memory of the abrupt word: fall, rupture for a descent that leaves no more time, abyss by interruption in the angle of a place, aspiration toward the bottomless at the moment of the face-to-face with the impossible. For in the abrupt, in the abrupt word "abrupt," for what reason I hardly know, I also see a face-to-face, without mediation, without transition, without third party, which is to say without communication or passageway. And only a cadence, the rhythm of a fall, tragedy without tragedy. . . . First of all, having come to Strasbourg to see and hear *Antigone*, I recall having read the translation, some translation, in the airplane, out loud and yet silently, now the German, now the French, and from one to the other, with the desire finally for the accident, let it fall, let it fall as it may, good,

This essay was written on the occasion of the performance, by the National Theater of Strasbourg, of Sophocles' *Antigone*, retranslated from Hölderlin by Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe. The production was directed by Michel Deutsch and Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe. The first of two series of performances took place in the abandoned buildings of the Arsenal, which were destroyed soon afterward, and the second in the disaffected buildings of the Old Strasbourg Forge. First publication in *Avant-guerre* 2 (1981).

and in a single blow let there take place and let the end come between the two flanks, the two sides, *ex abrupto*. . . . And I again pronounced the word "cliff" [in English], the wall, the same brutal declivity, and it was also, of course, the caesura. . . . It resonates still in the cadence and the tomb of the same memory: "Ihn deket mit dem Grab' und heiliget. . . . Dass keiner ihn begrabe, keiner traure, / Dass unbegraben er gelassen sey. . . . Nichts feierlichs. Es war kein Grabmal nicht. . . . Weisst du, wie eine Quaal jetzt ist in deinen Worten? . . . / Geschwungen. . . . Sie ein Mann aber. . . . / Führt sie gleich weg, enclose her / in the dark shadow of the crypt, Umschattet ihr sie. . . . " And before that: "Die vielfache Weheklage des Vaters / Und alles / Unseres Schiksaals, / Uns rühmlichen Labdakiden. / Io! du mütterlicher Wahn. . . . " Then, after many forgotten transitions, there was the given place, I was on the edge of the abyss in the disaffected, *defunctus*, defunct warehouse . . . . Friendship very close by, the commentary on impossible filiation and the identification of the father. . . . The warehouse because it was gutted no longer stored anything. With no longer the least adornment, it was now but a great empty structure unfit for mediating, storing, or standing between anything, except the abrupt. In this state, the emptied word itself, like the warehouse giving place, seemed to me predestined to what then happened in defiance of any destination. The vertical necessity on the edge of vertigo, on the edge of which the voices took off in a bound so as to match the risk at every instant of the actor's misstep—and above all Creon's. They reached us. . . . The discourse on the caesura, like everything already said by Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Michel Deutsch, took place over there, more than once, but uniquely. . . . To say that I witnessed it would be still to speak of a spectacle, but it was something else. . . . I forgot: Hölderlin came to mingle with the crowd, a little lost, wondering no longer . . .

—Translated by Peggy Kamuf

§ 11 The Deaths of Roland Barthes

How to reconcile this plural? How to concede, grant, or accord it? And to whom? How to make it agree or bring it into accord? And with whom? Such questions must also be heard with an ear to music. With a confident obedience, with a certain abandon that I feel here in it, the plural seems to follow: an order, after the beginning of an inaudible sentence, like an interrupted silence. It follows an order, that's it, and it even obeys; it lets itself be dictated. It asks (for) itself. And as for myself, at the very moment I allowed myself to order a plural for these deaths, I too had to give myself over to the law of the name. No objection could resist it, not even the modesty immediately following an uncompromising and punctual decision, a decision that takes place in the almost no time of a (camera's) click: it will have been like this, uniquely, once and for all. And yet I can scarcely bear the apparition of a title in this place. The proper name would have sufficed, for it alone and by itself says death, all deaths in one. It says death even while the name's bearer is still alive. While so many codes and rites work to take away this privilege, because it is so terrifying, the proper name alone and by itself forcefully declares the unique disappearance of the unique—I mean the singularity of an unqualifiable death (and this word "unqualifiable" already resonates like a quotation from one of Roland Barthes's texts that I will reread later). Death inscribes itself right in the name, but *so as* immediately to disperse itself there, so as to insinuate a strange syntax—in the name of only one to answer as many, to answer to several names in just one name.

First French publication in *Poétique* 47 (September 1981).

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I do not yet know, and in the end it really does not matter, if I will be able to make it clear why I must leave these thoughts for Roland Barthes fragmentary, or why I value them less for their fragmentation than for their incompleteness. Their pronounced incompleteness, for their punctuated yet open interruption, without even the authoritative edge of an aphorism. Little stones of thought, each time just one, alongside a name as the promise of return.

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These thoughts are *for him*, for Roland Barthes, meaning that I think of him and about him, not only of or about his work. "For him" seems to suggest that I would like to dedicate these thoughts to him, give them to him, and destine them for him. Yet they will no longer reach him, and this must be the starting point of my reflection; they can no longer reach him, reach all the way to him, assuming they ever could have while he was still living. So where do they go? To whom and for whom? Only for him in me? In you? In us? For these are not the same thing, already so many different instances, and as soon as he is in another, the other is no longer the same—I mean, the same as himself. And yet Barthes himself is no longer there. We must hold fast to this evidence, to its excessive clarity, and continually return to it as if to the simplest thing, to that alone which, while withdrawing into the impossible, still leaves us to think and gives us occasion for thought.

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(No) more light, leaving something to be thought and desired. To know or rather to accept that which leaves something to be desired, to love it from an invisible source of clarity. From where did the singular clarity of Barthes come? From where did it come *to him*, since he too had to receive it? Without simplifying anything, without doing violence to either the fold or the reserve, it always *emanated* from a certain point that yet was not a point, remaining invisible in its own way, a point that I cannot locate—and of which I would like, if not to speak, at least to give an idea, as well as of what he and it remain for me.

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To keep alive, in itself/within oneself, is this the best sign of fidelity? With the uncertain feeling of going toward what is most living, I have just read two of his books I had never read before. I thus secluded myself on this island as if to convince myself that nothing had been finalized or had come to an end. And so I believed this, and each book told me what to think of this belief. I had, for quite different reasons, postponed reading these two books, the first and the last. First, *Writing Degree Zero*: I understood better its force and necessity beyond all that had previously turned me away from it, and it was not only because of the capital letters, the connotations, the rhetoric, and all the signs of an era from which I had then thought I was *taking leave* [sortir] and from which it seemed necessary to take and rescue [sortir] writing. But in this book of 1953, as in those of Blanchot to which he often refers us, the movement that I awkwardly and mistakenly call the taking leave or the exit [*la sortie*] is under way. And second, *Camera Lucida*, whose time and tempo accompanied his death as no other book, I believe, has ever kept watch over its author.

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For a first and a last book, *Writing Degree Zero* and *Camera Lucida* are fortunate titles. A terrible fortune, vacillating terribly between chance and predestination. I like to think of Roland Barthes now, as I endure this sadness, the one I feel today and the one I always thought I felt in him, a sadness that was cheerful yet weary, desperate, lonely, refined, cultivated, Epicurean, so incredulous in the end, always letting go without clinging, endless, fundamental and yet disappointed with the essential. I like to think of him in spite of the sadness as someone who all the same never renounced any pleasures [*jouissance*] but, so to speak, treated himself to them all. If one may say that, but I have the impression that I may feel certain and that—as families in mourning naïvely say—he would have liked this thought. Or to put it differently, the image of the I of Barthes would have liked this thought, the image of the I of Barthes that Barthes inscribed in me, though neither he nor I is completely in it. I tell myself now that this image likes this thought in me, that it rejoices in it here and now, that it smiles at me. Ever since reading *Camera Lucida*, Roland Barthes's mother, whom I never knew, smiles at me at this thought, as at

everything she breathes life into and revives with pleasure. She smiles at him and thus in me since, let's say, the Winter Garden Photograph, since the radiant invisibility of a look that he describes to us only as clear, so clear.

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For the first time, then, I read the first and last Barthes, with the welcome naïveté of a desire, *as if* by reading the first and last without stopping, back to back, as a single volume with which I would have secluded myself on an island, I were finally going to see and know everything. Life was going to continue (there was still so much to read), but a history was perhaps going to come together, a history bound to itself, History having become Nature through this collection, *as if*. . .

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I have just capitalized Nature and History. He used to do it almost all the time. With massive frequency in *Writing Degree Zero*, and from the very beginning: "No one can without formalities pretend to insert his freedom as a writer into the resistant medium of language because, behind the latter, the whole of History stands unified and complete in the manner of a Natural Order."[1] And again in *Camera Lucida*: "this couple who I know loved each other, I realize: it is love-as-treasure that is going to disappear forever; for once I am gone, no one will any longer be able to testify to this: nothing will remain but an indifferent Nature. This is a laceration so intense, so intolerable, that, alone against his century, Michelet conceived of History as love's Protest."[2] I myself used these capital letters out of mimetism, but he too played with them, in order to mime and, already, to quote. They are quotation marks ("this is how you say"), which, far from indicating a hypostatization, actually lift up and lighten, expressing disillusionment and incredulity. I believe that he did not believe in this opposition (Nature/History) or in any others. He would use them only for the time of a passage. Later, I would like to show that the concepts that seemed the most squarely opposed, or opposable, were put in play by him, the one *for* the other, in a metonymic composition. This light way of mobilizing concepts by playing them against one another could frustrate a certain logic while at the same time resisting it with the greatest force, the greatest force of play.

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As if: I read these two books *one after the other*, as if the negative of an idiom were finally going to appear and develop before my eyes, as if the pace, step, style, timbre, tone, and gestures of Roland Barthes—so many obscurely familiar signatures, already recognizable among all others—were all of a sudden going to yield their secret to me as one more secret hidden behind the others (and I was calling *secret* not only what is intimate but a certain way of doing things: the inimitable); I read these two books as if the unique trait were all of a sudden going to appear in full light. And yet I was so grateful for what he said about the "unary photograph," which naturally he was against since it negates the "poignant" in the "studied," the *punctum* in the *studium*. I was dreaming: as if the point of singularity, even before becoming a line, though continuously asserting itself from the first book right up to that which in the last book was its interruption, resisting in different ways, though resisting nonetheless, the mutations, upheavals, or displacements of terrain, the diversity of objects, of corpora and contexts, as if the insistence of the invariable were finally going to be revealed to me as it is in itself—and in something like a detail. Yes, it was from a detail that I asked for the ecstasy of revelation, the instantaneous access to Roland Barthes (himself, him alone), a free and easy access requiring no labor. I was expecting this access to be provided by a detail, at once very visible and hidden (too obvious), rather than by the great themes, subjects, theories, or strategies of writing that, for a quarter of a century, I thought I knew and could easily recognize throughout the various "periods" of Roland Barthes (what he called "phases" and "genres" in *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes*). I was searching *like him*, as him, for in the situation in which I have been writing since his death, a certain mimetism is at once a duty (to take him into oneself, to identify with him in order to let him speak within oneself, to make him present and faithfully to represent him) and the worst of temptations, the most indecent and most murderous. The gift *and* the revocation of the gift, just try to choose. Like him, I was looking for the *freshness* of a reading in relation to detail. His texts are familiar to me, but I don't yet know them—that is my certainty—and this is true of all writing that matters to me. This word "freshness" is his, and it plays an essential role in the axiomatics of *Writing Degree Zero*. The interest in detail was also his. Benjamin saw in the analytic enlargement of the fragment or minute signifier a point of intersection between the era of psychoanalysis and that of technical reproduction, in cinematography, photography, and so on.[3] (Moving through, extending beyond, and exploiting the resources of phenomenological *as well as* structural analysis, Benjamin's essay and Barthes's last book could very well be the two most significant texts on the so-called question of the Referent in the modern technological age.) The word *punctum*, moreover, translates, in *Camera Lucida*, one meaning of the word "detail": a point of singularity that punctures the surface of the reproduction—and even the production—of analogies, likenesses, and codes. It pierces, strikes me, wounds me, bruises me, and, first of all, seems to concern only me. Its very definition is that it addresses itself to me. The absolute singularity of the other addresses itself to me, the Referent that, in its very image, I can no longer suspend, even though its "presence" forever escapes me, having already receded into the past. (That is why the word "Referent" could be a problem if it were not reformed by the context.) Also the solitude that rends the fabric of the same, the networks or ruses of economy, addresses itself to me. But it is always the singularity of the other insofar as it comes to me without being directed toward me, without being present to me; and the other can even be "me," me having been or having had to be, me already dead in the future anterior and past anterior of my photograph. And, I would add, in my name. Although it seems, as always, only lightly marked, this range of the dative or accusative that addresses to *me* or destines for *me* the *punctum* is, I think, essential to the very category of the *punctum*, at least as it is put to work in *Camera Lucida*. If we were to bring together two different aspects or exposures of the same concept, then it would appear that the *punctum* aims at *me* at the instant and place where I aim at it; it is thus that the punctuated photograph pricks me, points me. On its minute surface, the same point divides of itself: this double punctuation disorganizes right from the start both the unary and the desire that is ordered in it. *First exposure*: "It is this element that rises from the scene, shoots out of it like an arrow, and pierces me. A Latin word exists to designate this wound, this prick, this mark made by a pointed instrument: the word suits me all the better in that . . . " [*Camera Lucida*, 26]. (This is the form of what I was looking for, something that *suits him*, that suits and concerns only him; as always, he claims to be looking for what comes *to him* and suits him, what agrees with him and fits him like a garment; and even if it is a ready-made garment, and only in fashion for a certain time, it must conform to the inimitable *habitus* of a unique body; thus to choose one's words, whether new or very old, from the storeroom of languages, as one picks out a garment, taking everything into account: the season, fashion, place, fabric, shade, and cut.) "The word suits me all the better in that

it also refers to the notion of punctuation, and because the photographs I am speaking of are in effect punctuated, sometimes even speckled with these sensitive points; precisely, these marks, these wounds are so many *points*. This second element that will disturb the *studium* I shall therefore call *punctum*; for *punctum* is also: sting, speck, cut, little hole—and also a cast of the dice. A photograph's *punctum* is that accident that pricks me, points me (but also bruises me, is poignant to me)" [ibid., 26–27]. This parenthesis does not enclose an incidental or secondary thought: as it often does, it lowers the voice—as in an *aside*—out of a sense of modesty. And elsewhere, several pages later, *another exposure*. "Having thus reviewed the *docile interests* that certain photographs awaken in me, I deduced that the *studium*, insofar as it is not traversed, lashed, striped by a detail (*punctum*) that attracts or distresses me, engenders a very widespread type of photograph (the most widespread in the world), which we might call the *unary photograph*" [ibid., 40].

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His *manner*, the way in which he displays, plays with, and interprets the pair *studium/punctum*, all the while explaining what he is doing by giving us his notes—in all of this we will later hear the music. This manner is unmistakably his. He makes the opposition *studium/punctum*, along with the apparent "versus" of the slash, appear slowly and cautiously in a new context, without which, it seems, they would have had no chance of appearing. He gives to them or he welcomes this chance. The interpretation can at first appear somewhat artificial, ingenuous, elegant perhaps, but specious, for example, in the passage from the "point" to the "pointing me" [*me poindre*] to the "poignant," but little by little, it imposes its necessity without concealing the artifact under some putative nature. It demonstrates its rigor throughout the book, and this rigor becomes indistinguishable from its productivity, from its performative fecundity. He makes it *yield* the greatest amount of meaning, of descriptive or analytic power (phenomenological, structural, and beyond). The rigor is never rigid. In fact, the supple is a category that I take to be indispensable to any description of Barthes's manners. This virtue of suppleness is practiced without the least trace of labor or even labor's effacement. He never departed from it, whether in theorization, writing strategies, or social intercourse, and it can even be read in the graphics of his writing, which I read as the extreme refinement of the civility he locates, in *Camera Lucida* and while speaking of his mother, at the limits of the moral and even above it. It is a suppleness that is at once *liée*, linked, and *déliée*, unlinked, flowing, shrewd, as one says of writing or of the mind. In the liaison as well as in the undoing of the liaison, it never excludes accuracy, what is just right [*justesse*]—or justice; it must have secretly served him, I imagine, even in the impossible choices. The conceptual rigor of an artifact remains supple and playful here, and it lasts the time of a book; it will be useful to others but it suits perfectly only the one who signs it, like an instrument that can't be lent to anyone, like the unique history of an instrument. For above all, and in the first place, this apparent opposition (*studium/punctum*) does not forbid but, on the contrary, facilitates a certain *composition* between the two concepts. What is to be heard in "composition"? Two things that compose together. First, separated by an insuperable limit, the two concepts compromise with each other. They compose together, the one *with* the other, and we will later recognize in this a *metonymic* operation; the "subtle beyond" of the *punctum*, the uncoded beyond, composes with the "always coded" of the *studium* [*Camera Lucida*, 59, 51]. It belongs to it without belonging to it and is unlocatable within it; it is never inscribed in the homogeneous objectivity of the framed space, but instead inhabits or, rather, haunts it: "it is an addition [*supplément*]: it is what I add to the photograph and *what is none the less already there*" [ibid., 55]. We are prey to the ghostly power of the supplement; it is this unlocatable site that gives rise to the *specter*. "The *Spectator* is ourselves, all of us who glance through collections of photographs—in magazines and newspapers, in books, albums, archives. . . . And the person or thing photographed is the target, the referent, a kind of little simulacrum, any *eidolon* emitted by the object, which I should like to call the *Spectrum* of the Photograph, because this word retains, through its root, a relation to 'spectacle' and adds to it that rather terrible thing that is there in every photograph: the return of the dead" [ibid., 9]. As soon as the *punctum* ceases to oppose the *studium*, all the while remaining heterogeneous to it, as soon as we can no longer distinguish here between two places, contents, or things, it is not entirely subjugated to a concept, if by "concept" we mean a predicative determination that is distinct and opposable. This concept of a ghost is as scarcely graspable, in person, as the ghost of a concept. Neither life nor death, but the haunting of the one by the other. The "versus" of the conceptual opposition is as unsubstantial as a camera's click. "*Life/Death*: the paradigm is reduced

to a simple click, the one separating the initial pose from the final print" [ibid., 92]. Ghosts: the concept of the other in the same, the *punctum* in the *studium*, the completely other, dead, living in me. This concept of the photograph *photographs* every conceptual opposition; it captures a relationship of haunting that is perhaps constitutive of every "logic."

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I was thinking of a second meaning of *composition*. In the ghostly opposition of two concepts, in the pair S/P, *studium/punctum*, the composition is also the music. One could open here a long chapter on Barthes as musician. In a note, one would begin by locating a certain analogy between the two heterogeneous elements S and P. Since this relation is no longer one of simple exclusion, since the punctual supplement parasites the haunted space of the *studium*, one would discreetly suggest, parenthetically, that the *punctum* gives rhythm to the *studium*, that it "scans" it. "The second element will break (or scan) the *studium*. This time it is not I who seek it out (as I invest the field of the *studium* with my sovereign consciousness), it is this element that rises from the scene, shoots out of it like an arrow, and pierces me. A Latin word exists . . . *punctum*" [ibid., 26]. With the relationship to scansion already stressed, music returns, from some other place, at the bottom of the same page. Music and, more precisely, composition: the analogy of the classical sonata. As he often does, Barthes is in the process of describing his way of proceeding, of giving us an account of what he is doing while he is doing it (what I earlier called his notes). He does so with a certain cadence, progressively, according to the tempo, in the classical sense of tempo; he marks the various stages (elsewhere he emphasizes in order to stress and, perhaps, to play point counter point, or point counter study: "*at this point in my investigation*" [ibid., 55]). In short, he is going to let us hear, in an ambiguous movement of humility and defiance, that he will not treat the pair of concepts S and P as essences coming from outside the text in the process of being written, essences that would then lend themselves to some general philosophical signification. They carry the truth only within an irreplaceable musical composition. They are motifs. If one wishes to transpose them elsewhere, and this is possible, useful, and even necessary, one must proceed analogically, though the operation will not be successful unless the other opus, the other system of composition, itself also carries these motifs in an original

and irreplaceable way. Hence: "Having thus distinguished two themes in Photography (for in general the photographs I liked were constructed in the manner of a classical sonata), I could occupy myself with one after the other"[ibid., 27].

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It would be necessary to return to the "scansion" of the *studium* by a *punctum* that is not opposed to it even though it remains completely other, a *punctum* that comes to stand in or double for it, link up to it, and compose with it. I am now thinking of a musical composition in counterpoint, of all the sophisticated forms of counterpoint and polyphony, of the fugue.

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The Winter Garden Photograph: the invisible *punctum* of the book. It does not belong to the corpus of photographs he exhibits, to the series of examples he displays and analyzes. Yet it irradiates the entire book. A sort of radiant serenity comes from his mother's eyes, whose brightness or clarity he describes, though we never see it. The radiance composes with the wound that signs the book, with an invisible *punctum*. *At this point*, he is no longer speaking of light or of photography; he is seeing to something else, the voice of the other, the accompaniment, the song, the accord, the "last music": "Or again (for I am trying to express this truth) the Winter Garden Photograph was for me like the last music Schumann wrote before collapsing, that first *Gesang der Frühe* that accords with both my mother's being and my grief at her death; I could not express this accord except by an infinite series of adjectives" [*Camera Lucida*, 70]. And elsewhere: "In a sense I never 'spoke' to her, never 'discoursed' in her presence, for her; we supposed, without saying anything of the kind to each other, that the frivolous insignificance of language, the suspension of images must be the very space of love, its music. Ultimately I experienced her, strong as she had been, my inner Law, as my feminine child"[ibid., 72].

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For him, I would have wanted to avoid not evaluation (if this were possible or even desirable) but all that insinuates itself into the most implicit

evaluation in order to return to the coded (once again to the *studium*). For him I would have wanted, without ever succeeding, to write at the limit, as close as possible to the limit but also beyond the "neutral," "colorless," "innocent" writing of which *Writing Degree Zero* shows at once the historical novelty and the infidelity. "If the writing is really neutral . . . then Literature is vanquished. . . . Unfortunately, nothing is more unfaithful than a colorless writing; mechanical habits are developed in the very place where freedom existed, a network of set forms hem in more and more the pristine freshness of discourse" [*Writing Degree Zero*, 78]. It is not a question here of vanquishing literature but of preventing it from neatly and cleverly sealing up the singular and flawless wound (nothing is more unbearable or laughable than all the expressions of guilt in mourning, all its inevitable spectacles).

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To write—to him, to present to the dead friend within oneself the gift of his innocence. For him, I would have wanted to avoid, and thus spare him, the double wound of speaking of him, here and now, as one speaks of one of the living *or* of one of the dead. In both cases I disfigure, I wound, I put to sleep, or I kill. But whom? Him? No. Him in me? In us? In you? But what does this mean? That we remain among ourselves? This is true but still a bit too simple. Roland Barthes looks at us (inside each of us, so that each of us can then say that Barthes's thought, memory, and friendship concern only us), and we do not do as we please with his look, even though each of us has it at his or her disposal, in his own way, according to her own place and history. It is within us but it is not ours; we do not have it available to us like a moment or part of our interiority. And what looks at us may be indifferent, loving, dreadful, grateful, attentive, ironic, silent, bored, reserved, fervent, or smiling, a child or already grown old; in short, it can give us any of the innumerable signs of life or death that we might draw from the circumscribed reserve of his texts or our memory.

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What I would have wanted to avoid for him is neither the Novel nor the Photograph but something in both that is neither life nor death, something he himself said before I did (and I will return to this—always the promise of return, a promise that is not just one of the commonplaces of composition). I will not succeed in avoiding this, precisely because this *point* always lets itself be reappropriated by the fabric it tears toward the other, because the studied veil always mends its way. But might it not be better not to get there, not to succeed, and to prefer, in the end, the spectacle of inadequacy, failure, and, especially here, truncation? (Is it not derisory, naïve, and downright childish to come before the dead to ask for their forgiveness? Is there any meaning in this? Unless it is the origin of meaning itself? An origin in the scene you would make in front of others who observe you and who also play off the dead? A thorough analysis of the "childishness" in question would here be necessary but not sufficient.)

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Two infidelities, an impossible choice: on the one hand, not to say anything that comes back to oneself alone, to one's own voice, to remain silent, or at the very least to let oneself be accompanied or preceded in counterpoint by the friend's voice. Thus, out of zealous devotion or gratitude, out of approbation as well, to be content with just quoting, with just accompanying that which more or less directly comes back or returns to the other, to let him speak, to efface oneself in front of and to follow his speech, and to do so right in front of him. But this excess of fidelity would end up saying and exchanging nothing. It returns to death. It points to death, sending death back to death. On the other hand, by avoiding all quotation, all identification, all rapprochement even, so that what is addressed to or said of Roland Barthes truly comes from the other, from the living friend, one risks making him disappear again, as if one could add more death to death and thus indecently pluralize it. We are left then with having to do and not do both at once, with having to correct one infidelity by the other. From one death, the other: is this the uneasiness that told me to begin with a plural?

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Already, and often, I know that I have written *for him* (I always say "him," to write, to address, or to avoid "him"); well before these fragments. For

him: but I am determined to recall, for him, that there is today no respect, no living respect, that is, no living attention paid to the other, or to the name alone now of Roland Barthes, that does not have to expose itself without respite, without weakness, and without mercy to what is too transparent not to be immediately exceeded: Roland Barthes is the name of someone who can no longer hear or bear it. And he will receive nothing of what I say here of him, for him, to him, beyond the name but still within it, as I pronounce his name that is no longer his. This living attention here comes to tear itself toward that which, or the one who, can no longer receive it; it rushes toward the impossible. But if his name is no longer his, was it ever? I mean simply, uniquely?

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The impossible sometimes, by chance, becomes possible: as a utopia. This is in fact what he said before his death, though for him, of the Winter Garden Photograph. Beyond analogies, "it achieved for me, utopically, *the impossible science of the unique being*" [*Camera Lucida*, 71]. He said this uniquely, turned toward his mother and not toward the Mother. But the poignant singularity does not contradict the generality, it does not forbid it from having the force of law, but only arrows, marks, and signs it. Singular plural. Is there, then, already in the first language, in the first mark, another possibility, another chance except the pain of this plural? And what about metonymy? And homonymy? Can we suffer from anything else? But could we speak without them?

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What we might playfully call the *mathesis singularis*, what is achieved for him "utopically" in front of the Winter Garden Photograph, is impossible and yet takes place, utopically, metonymically, as soon as it marks, as soon as it writes, even "before" language. Barthes speaks of utopia at least twice in *Camera Lucida*. Both times between his mother's death and his own—that is, inasmuch as he entrusts it to writing: "Once she was dead I no longer had any reason to attune myself to the progress of the superior Life Force (the race, the species). My particularity could never again universalize itself (unless) utopically, by writing, whose project henceforth would become the unique goal of my life" [*Camera Lucida*, 72].

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When I say Roland Barthes, it is certainly him whom I name, him beyond his name. But since he himself is now inaccessible to this appellation, since this nomination cannot become a vocation, address, or apostrophe (supposing that this possibility revoked today could ever have been pure), it is him in me that I name, toward him in me, in you, in us that I pass through his name. What happens around him and is said about him remains between us. Mourning began at this point. But when? For even before the unqualifiable event called death, interiority (of the other in me, in you, in us) had already begun its work. With the first nomination, it preceded death as another death would have done. The name alone makes possible the plurality of deaths. And even if the relation between them were only analogical, the analogy would be singular, without common measure with any other. Before death without analogy or sublation, before death without name or sentence, before that in the face of which we have nothing to say and must remain silent, before that which he calls "my total, undialectical death" [*Camera Lucida*, 72], before the last death, all the other movements of interiorization were at once more and less powerful, powerful *in an other way*, and, *in an other way*, more and less certain of themselves. More, inasmuch as they were not yet disturbed or interrupted by the deathly silence of the other that always comes to recall the limits of a speaking interiority. Less, inasmuch as the appearance, the initiative, the response, or the unforeseeable intrusion of the living other *also* recalls this limit. Living, Roland Barthes cannot be reduced to that which each or all of us can think, believe, know, and already recall of him. But once dead, might he not be so reduced? No, but the chances of the illusion will be greater *and* lesser, other in any case.

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"Unqualifiable" is another word I borrow from him. Even if I transpose and modify it, it remains marked by what I read in *Camera Lucida*. "Unqualifiable" there designates a way of life—it was for a short time his, after his mother's death—a life that already resembled death, one death before the other, more than one, which it imitated in advance. This does not prevent it from having been an accidental and unforeseeable death, outside the realm of calculation. Perhaps this resemblance is what allows

us to transpose the unqualifiable in life into death. Hence the *psyche* (the soul). "It is said that mourning, by its gradual labor, slowly erases pain; I could not, I cannot believe this; because for me, Time eliminates the emotion of loss (I do not weep), that is all. For the rest, everything has remained motionless. For what I have lost is not a Figure (the Mother), but a being; and not a being, but a *quality* (a soul): not the indispensable, but the irreplaceable. I could live without the Mother (as we all do, sooner or later); but what life remained would be absolutely and entirely *unqualifiable* (without quality)" [*Camera Lucida*, 75]. "A soul"—come from the other.

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La chambre claire, the light room, no doubt says more than *camera lucida*, the name of the apparatus anterior to photography that Barthes opposes to *camera obscura*. I can no longer not associate the word "clarity," wherever it appears, with what he says much earlier of his mother's face when she was a child, of the distinctness or luminosity, the "clarity of her face" [*Camera Lucida*, 69]. And he soon adds: "the naïve attitude of her hands, the place she had docilely taken without either showing or hiding herself."

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Without either showing or hiding herself. Not the Figure of the Mother but his mother. There should not be, there *should* not be, any metonymy in this case, for love protests against it ("I could live without the Mother").

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Without either showing or hiding herself. This is what took place. She had already occupied her place "docilely," without initiating the slightest activity, according to the most gentle passivity, and she neither shows nor hides herself. The possibility of this impossibility derails and shatters all unity, and this is love; it disorganizes all studied discourses, all theoretical systems and philosophies. They must decide between presence and absence, here and there, what reveals and what conceals itself. Here, there, the unique other, his mother, appears, that is to say, without appearing, for the other can appear only by disappearing. And she "knew" how to do this so innocently, because it is the "quality" of a child's "soul" that he

deciphers in the pose of his mother who is not posing. Psyche without mirror. He says nothing more and underscores nothing.

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Clarity once again, the "evidential power," he says, of the Photograph [*Camera Lucida*, 47]. But this carries both presence and absence; it neither shows nor hides itself. In the passage on the *camera lucida*, Barthes cites Blanchot: "The essence of the image is to be altogether outside, without intimacy, and yet more inaccessible and mysterious than the thought of the innermost being; without signification, yet summoning up the depth of any possible meaning; unrevealed yet manifest, having the absence-as-presence that constitutes the lure and fascination of the Sirens" [ibid., 106].[4]

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He insists, and rightly so, upon the adherence of the "photographic referent": it does not relate to a present or to a real but, in an other way, to the other, and each time differently according to the type of "image" whether photographic or not. (Taking all differences into account, we would not be reducing the specificity of what he says about photography were we to find it pertinent elsewhere: I would even say everywhere. It's a matter of at once acknowledging the possibility of suspending the Referent [not the reference], wherever it is found, including in photography, and of suspending a naïve conception of the Referent, one that has so often gone unquestioned.)

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Here is a brief and very preliminary classification drawn simply from common sense: in the *time* that relates us to texts and to their presumed, nameable, and authorized signatories, there are at least three possibilities. The "author" can already be dead, in the usual sense of the term, at the moment we begin to read "him," or when this reading orders us to write, as we say, about him, whether it be about his writings or about himself. Such authors whom we never "knew" living, whom we never met or had a chance to like or love (or the opposite), make up by far the greatest number. This asymbiosis does not exclude a certain modality of the contemporaneous (and vice versa), for it too implies a degree of in-

teriorization, an a priori mourning rich in possibility, a whole experience of absence whose originality I cannot really describe here. A second possibility is that the authors are living when we are reading them, or when this reading orders us to write about them. We can, knowing that they are alive, and this involves a bifurcation of the same possibility, know them or not, and once having met them, "love" them or not. And the situation can change in this regard; we can meet them after having begun to read them (I have such a vivid memory of my first meeting with Barthes), and there are any number of means of communication to bring about the transition: photographs, correspondence, hearsay, tape recordings, and so on. And then there is a "third" situation: at the death and after the death of those whom we also "knew," met, loved, and so forth. Thus, I have had occasion to write about or in the wake of texts whose authors were dead long before I read them (for example, Plato or John of Patmos) or whose authors are still living at the time I write, and it would seem that this is always the most risky. But what I thought impossible, indecent, and unjustifiable, what long ago and more or less secretly and resolutely I had promised myself never to do (out of a concern for rigor or fidelity, if you will, and because it is in this case *too* serious), was to write *following the death*, not after, not long after the death *by returning* to it, but just following the death, *upon or on the occasion of the death*, at the commemorative gatherings and tributes, in the writings "in memory" of those who while living would have been my friends, still present enough to me that some "declaration," indeed, some analysis or "study," would seem at that moment completely unbearable.

—But then what, silence? Is this not another wound, another insult?

—To whom?

Yes, to whom and of what would we be making a gift? What are we doing when we exchange these discourses? Over what are we keeping watch? Are we trying to negate death or retain it? Are we trying to put things in order, make amends, or settle our accounts? With the other? With the others outside and inside ourselves? How many voices intersect, observe, and correct one another, argue with one another, passionately embrace or pass by one another in silence? Are we going to seek some final evaluation? For example, to convince ourselves that the death never took place, or that it is irreversible and we are protected from a return of the dead? Or are we going to make the dead our ally ("the dead with me"), to take him by our side, or even inside ourselves, to show off some secret contract, to finish him off by exalting him, to reduce him in any case to what can still be contained by a literary or rhetorical performance, one that attempts to turn the situation to its advantage by means of stratagems that can be analyzed interminably, like all the ruses of an individual or collective "work of mourning"? And this so-called work remains here the name of a problem. For if mourning works, it does so only to dialectize death, a death that Roland Barthes *called* "undialectical" ("I could do no more than await my total, undialectical death"[*Camera Lucida*, 72]).

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A piece [*morceau*] of myself like a piece of the dead [*mort*]. In saying "the deaths," are we attempting to dialectize them or, as I would want, the contrary? But here we are at a limit where wanting is more than ever found wanting. Mourning and transference. In a discussion with Jean Ristat about the "practice of writing" and self-analysis, I remember him saying: "Self-analysis is not transferential, and it is here that psychoanalysts would perhaps disagree." No doubt. For there is, no doubt, still transference in self-analysis, particularly when it proceeds through writing and literature, but it plays in another way, it plays more—and the difference in the play is essential here. When we take the possibility of writing into account, another concept of transference is needed (that is, if there ever was one).

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For what was earlier called "following the death," "on the occasion of the death," we have a whole series of typical solutions. The worst ones—or the worst in each of them—are either base or derisory, and yet so common: still to maneuver, to speculate, to try to profit or derive some benefit, whether subtle or sublime, to draw from the dead a supplementary force to be turned against the living, to denounce or insult them more or less directly, to authorize and legitimate oneself, to raise oneself to the very heights where we presume death has placed the other beyond all suspicion. There are, of course, lesser offenses, but offenses nonetheless: to pay homage with an essay that treats the work or a part of the work bequeathed to us, to talk on a theme that we confidently believe would have interested the author who has passed away (whose tastes, curiosities, and projects should, it seems, no longer surprise us). Such a treatment would

still point out the debt, but it would also pay it back; and one would tailor one's remarks according to the context. For example, in *Poétique*, to stress the immense role Barthes's works have played and will continue to play in the open field of literature and literary theory (this is legitimate, one has to do it, and I am doing it now). And then, why not, to undertake some analysis, as an exercise made possible and influenced by Barthes (an initiative that would gain approval in us through the memory of him). For example, to analyze a genre or discursive code, or the rules of a particular social arrangement, and to do so with his meticulousness and vigilance, which, as uncompromising as they were, still knew how to yield with a certain disabused compassion, a nonchalant elegance that would make him give up the fight (though I sometimes saw him get angry, for reasons of ethics or fidelity). But what "genre"? Well, for example, what in this century has come to replace the funeral oration. We could study the corpus of declarations in newspapers, on radio and television; we could analyze the recurrences, the rhetorical constraints, the political perspectives, the exploitations by individuals and groups, the pretexts for taking a stand, for threatening, intimidating, or reconciling. (I am thinking of the weekly newspaper that, upon Sartre's death, dared to put on trial those who deliberately, or simply because they were away, had said nothing or had said the wrong thing. Using their photographs to bring them to justice, the newspaper accused them all in the headline of still being afraid of Sartre.) In its classical form, the funeral oration had a good side, especially when it permitted one to call out directly to the dead, sometimes very informally [*tutoyer*]. This is of course a supplementary fiction, for it is always the dead in me, always the others standing around the coffin to whom I call out in this way. But because of its caricatured excess, the overstatement of this rhetoric at least pointed out that we were obliged to remain no longer among ourselves. The interactions of the living must be interrupted, the veil must be torn toward the other, the other dead *in us* though other still, and the religious promises of an afterlife could indeed still grant this "as if."

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The deaths of Roland Barthes: *his* deaths, that is, of those close to him, those deaths that must have inhabited him, situating places and solemn moments, orienting tombs in his inner space (ending and no doubt beginning with his mother's death). *His* deaths, those he lived in the plural, those he must have linked together, trying in vain to "dialectize" them before the "total" and "undialectical" death; those deaths that always form in our lives a terrifying and endless series. But how did he "live" them? No answer is more impossible or forbidden. Yet a certain movement had quickened in those last years; I could feel a sort of autobiographical acceleration, as if he were saying, "I feel that I have little time left," I must concern myself first with this thought of a death that begins, like thought and like death, in the memory of the idiom. While still living, he wrote a death of Roland Barthes by himself. And, finally, *his* deaths, his texts on death, everything he wrote, with such insistence on displacement, on death, on the theme of Death, if you will, if indeed there is such a theme. From the Novel to the Photograph, from *Writing Degree Zero* (1953) to *Camera Lucida* (1980), a certain thought of death set everything in motion, or rather set it traveling, on a sort of journey toward the beyond of all closed systems, all forms of knowledge, all the new scientific positivisms whose novelty always tempted the *Aufklärer* and discoverer in him, though only for a time, the time of a passage, the time of a contribution that, after him, would become indispensable. And yet he was already elsewhere, and he said so; he would speak openly about this with a calculated modesty, with a politeness that revealed a rigorous demand, an uncompromising ethic, like an idiosyncratic destiny naïvely assumed. In the beginning of *Camera Lucida* he tells—and tells himself—of his "discomfort" at always

> being the subject torn between two languages, one expressive, the other critical; and at the heart of this critical language, between several discourses, those of sociology, of semiology, and of psychoanalysis—but [I tell myself] that, by ultimate dissatisfaction with all of them, I was bearing witness to the only sure thing that was in me (however naïve it might be): a desperate resistance to any reductive system. For each time, having resorted to any such language to whatever degree, each time I felt it hardening and thereby tending to reduction and reprimand, I would gently leave it and seek elsewhere: I began to speak differently. (*Camera Lucida*, 8)

The beyond of this journey is no doubt the great headland and enigma of the Referent, as it has been called for the past twenty years, and death is clearly not for nothing in this (it will be necessary to return to this in another tone). In any case, all this passes through the Novel as early

as *Writing Degree Zero*, and "The Novel is a Death" [ibid., 38]—the beyond of literature as literature, literary "modernity," literature producing itself and producing its essence as its own disappearance, showing and hiding itself at the same time (Mallarmé and Blanchot, among others): "Modernism begins with the search for a Literature that is no longer possible. Thus we find, in the Novel too, this machinery directed towards both destruction and resurrection, and typical of the whole of modern art. . . . The Novel is a Death; it transforms life into destiny, a memory into a useful act, duration into an orientated and meaningful time" [ibid., 38–39]. And it is the modern possibility of photography (whether art or technique matters little here) that combines death and the referent in the same system. It was not for the first time, and this conjugation of death and the referent did not have to wait for the Photograph to have an essential relationship to reproductive technique, or to technique in general, but the immediate proof given by the photographic apparatus or by the structure of the *remains* it leaves behind are irreducible events, ineffaceably original. It is the failure, or at any rate the limit, of all that which, in language, literature, and the other arts, seemed to permit grandiose theories on the general suspension of the Referent, or of what was classified, by a sometimes gross simplification, under that vast and vague category. By the time—at the instant—that the *punctum* rends space, reference and death are in it together in the photograph. But should we say reference or referent? Analytical precision must here be equal to the stakes, and the photograph puts this precision to the test: in the photograph, the referent is noticeably absent, suspendable, vanished into the unique past time of its event, but the reference to this referent, call it the intentional movement of reference (since Barthes does in fact appeal to phenomenology in this book), implies just as irreducibly the having-been of a unique and invariable referent. It implies this "return of the dead" in the very structure of both its image and the phenomenon of its image. This does not happen in other types of images or discourses, let us say of marks in general, at least not in the same way, the implication and form of the reference taking very different paths. From the beginning of *Camera Lucida*, the "disorder" introduced by the photograph is largely attributed to the "unique time" of its referent, a time that does not let itself be reproduced or pluralized, and whose referential implication is inscribed as *such right on* the very structure of the photogram, regardless of the number of its

reproductions and even the artifice of its composition. Whence "this stubbornness of the Referent in always being there" [*Camera Lucida*, 6]. "It is as if the Photograph always carries its referent with itself, both affected by the same amorous or funereal immobility. . . . In short, the referent adheres. And this singular adherence . . . " [ibid., 5–6]. Though it is no longer *there* (present, living, real), its *having-been-there* presently a part of the referential or intentional structure of my relationship to the photogram, the return of the referent indeed takes the form of a haunting. This is a "return of the dead," whose spectral arrival in the very space of the photogram indeed resembles that of an emission or emanation. Already a sort of hallucinating metonymy: it is something else, a piece come from the other (from the referent) that finds itself in me, before me, but also in me like a piece of me (since the referential implication is also intentional and noematic; it belongs neither to the sensible body nor to the medium of the photogram). Moreover, the "target," the "referent," the "*eidolon* emitted by the object," the "*Spectrum*" [ibid., 9], can be me, seen in a photograph of myself. "I then experience a micro-version of death (of parenthesis): I am truly becoming a specter. The Photographer knows this very well, and himself fears (if only for commercial reasons) this death in which his gesture will embalm me. . . . I have become Total-Image, which is to say, Death in person. . . . Ultimately, what I am seeking in the photograph taken of me (the 'intention' according to which I look at it) is Death: Death is the *eidos* of that Photograph"([ibid., 74–75].

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Carried by this relationship, drawn or attracted by the pull and character of it (*Zug, Bezug*), by the reference to the spectral referent, Roland Barthes traversed periods, systems, modes, "phases," and "genres"; he marked and punctuated the *studium* of each, passing *through* phenomenology, linguistics, literary mathesis, semiosis, structural analysis, and so on. But his first move was to recognize in each of these their necessity or richness, their critical value and light, in order to turn them against dogmatism.

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I shall not make of this an allegory, even less a metaphor, but I recall that it was *while traveling* that I spent the most time alone with Barthes. Sometimes head to head, I mean face to face (for example, on the train from

Paris to Lille or Paris to Bordeaux), and sometimes side by side, separated by an aisle (for example, on the trip from Paris to New York to Baltimore in 1966). The time of our travels was surely not the same, and yet it was also the same, and it is necessary to accept these two absolute certainties. Even if I wanted or was able to give an account, to speak of him as he was for me (the voice, the timbre, the forms of his attention and distraction, his polite way of being there or elsewhere, his face, hands, clothing, smile, his cigar, so many features that I name without describing, since this is impossible here), even if I tried to reproduce what took place, what place would be reserved for the reserve? What place for the long periods of silence, for what was left unsaid out of discretion, for what was of no use bringing up, either because it was too well known by both of us, or else infinitely unknown on either side? To go on speaking of this all alone, after the death of the other, to sketch out the least conjecture or risk the least interpretation, feels to me like an endless insult or wound—and yet also a duty, a duty toward him. Yet I will not be able to carry it out, at least not right here. Always the promise of return.

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How to believe in the contemporary? It would be easy to show that the times of those who seem to belong to the same epoch, defined in terms of something like a historical frame or social horizon, remain infinitely heterogeneous and, to tell the truth, completely unrelated to one another. One can be very sensitive to this, though sensitive at the same time, on another level, to a being-together that no difference or differend can threaten. This being-together is not distributed in any homogeneous way in our experience. There are knots, points of great condensation, places of high valuation, paths of decision or interpretation that are virtually unavoidable. It is there, it seems, that the law is produced. Being-together refers to and recognizes itself there, even though it is not constituted there. Contrary to what is often thought, the individual "subjects" who inhabit the zones most difficult to avoid are not authoritarian "superegos" with power at their disposal, assuming that Power can be at one's disposal. Like those for whom these zones become unavoidable (and this is first of all their history), they inhabit them, and, rather than ruling there, take from them a desire or an image. It is a certain way of relinquishing authority, a certain freedom, in fact, an acknowledged relationship to their own

finitude, which, by an ominous and rigorous paradox, confers on them an additional authority, an influence, radiance, or presence that leads their ghost to places where they are not and from which it never returns to them. It is this, in short, that makes one always ask, more or less explicitly: What does he or she think about this? Not that one is ready to agree that they are right, a priori and in all cases, not that one awaits a verdict or believes in a lucidity without weakness, but, even before looking for it, the image of an evaluation, look, or affect imposes itself. It is difficult to know then who addresses this "image" to whom. I would like to describe, patiently and interminably, all the trajectories of this address, especially when its reference passes through writing, when it then becomes so virtual, invisible, plural, divided, microscopic, mobile, infinitesimal, specular even (since the demand is often reciprocal and the trajectory easily lost), punctual, seemingly on the verge of the zero point even though its exercise is so powerful and so diverse.

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Roland Barthes is the name of a friend whom, at bottom, at the bottom of a certain familiarity, I knew very little, and of whom, it goes without saying, I have not read everything, I mean reread, understood, and so on. And my first response was most often certainly one of approval, solidarity, and gratitude. Yet not always, it seems to me, and as insignificant as it may be, I must say this so as not to give in too much to the genre. He was, I mean, he remains, one of those of whom I have constantly wondered, for almost twenty years now, in a more or less articulated way: What does he think of this? In the present, the past, the future, the conditional, and so on? Especially, why not say it, since this should surprise no one, at the moment of writing. I even told him this once in a letter long ago.

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I return to the "poignant," to this pair of concepts, this opposition that is not one, the ghost of this pair, *punctum/studium*. I return to this because *punctum* seems to say, to let Barthes himself say, the point of singularity, the traversal of discourse toward the unique, the "referent" as the irreplaceable other, the one who was and will no longer be, who returns like that which will not come back, who marks the return of the dead right on the reproductive image. I return to this because Roland Barthes is the

name of that which "points" me, or "points" (to) what I am awkwardly trying to say here. I return to this also in order to show how he himself treated and properly signed this simulacrum of an opposition. He first highlighted the absolute irreducibility of the *punctum*, what we might call the unicity of the *referential* (I appeal to this word so as not to have to choose between reference and referent: what adheres in the photograph is perhaps less the referent itself, in the present effectivity of its reality, than the implication in the reference of its having-been-unique). The heterogeneity of the *punctum* is rigorous; its originality can bear neither contamination nor concession. And yet, in other places, at other times, Barthes accedes to another descriptive demand, let's call it *phenomenological*, since the book *also* presents itself as a phenomenology. He accedes to the requisite rhythm of the composition, a musical composition that, to be more precise, I would call contrapuntal. It is indeed necessary for him to recognize, and this is not a concession, that the *punctum* is not what it is. This absolute other composes with the same, with its absolute other that is thus not its opposite, with the locus of the same and of the *studium* (it is the limit of the binary opposition and, undoubtedly, of a structural analysis that the *studium* itself might exploit). If the *punctum is* more or less than itself, dissymmetrical—to everything and in itself—then it can invade the field of the *studium*, to which, strictly speaking, it does not belong. It is located, we recall, outside all fields and codes. As the place of irreplaceable singularity and of the unique referential, the *punctum* irradiates and, what is most surprising, lends itself to metonymy. As soon as it allows itself to be drawn into a network of substitutions, it can invade everything, objects as well as affects. This singularity that is nowhere *in* the field mobilizes everything everywhere; it pluralizes itself. If the photograph bespeaks the unique death, the death of the unique, this death immediately repeats itself, as such, and is itself elsewhere. I said that the *punctum* allows itself to be drawn into metonymy. Actually, it induces it, and this is its force, or rather than its force (since it exercises no actual constraint and exists completely in reserve), its *dynamis*, in other words, its power, potentiality, virtuality, and even its dissimulation, its latency. Barthes marks this relationship between force (potential or in reserve) and metonymy at certain intervals of the composition that I must here unjustly condense. "However lightning-like it may be, the *punctum* has, more or less potentially, a power of expansion. This power is often metonymic" [*Camera Lucida*, 45]. Further on: "I had just realized that however immediate and incisive it was, the *punctum* could accommodate a certain latency (but never any examination)" [ibid., 53]. This metonymic power is essentially related to the supplementary structure of the *punctum* ("it is a supplement") and of the *studium* that receives from it all its movement, even if it must content itself, like the "examination," with turning round the point and never getting down to it.[5] Henceforth, the relationship between the two concepts is neither tautological nor oppositional, neither dialectical nor in any sense symmetrical; it is supplementary and musical (contrapuntal).

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The metonymy of the *punctum:* scandalous as it may be, it allows us to speak, to speak of the unique, to speak of and to it. It yields the trait that relates to the unique. The Winter Garden Photograph, which he neither shows nor hides, which he speaks, is the *punctum* of the entire book. The mark of this unique wound is nowhere visible as such, but its unlocatable brightness or clarity (that of *his* mother's eyes) irradiates the entire study. It makes of this book an irreplaceable event. And yet only a metonymic force can continue to assure a certain generality to the discourse and offer it to analysis by submitting its concepts to a quasi-instrumental use. How else could we, without knowing her, be so deeply moved by what he said about *his* mother, who was not only the Mother, or a mother, but the only one she was and of whom such a photo was taken "on that day"? How could this be poignant to us if there were not at work a metonymic force, not to be mistaken for something that facilitates the movement of identification, on the contrary? The alterity remains almost intact; that is the condition. I do not put myself in his place, I do not tend to replace his mother with mine. Were I to do so, I could be moved only by the alterity of the without-relation, the absolute unicity that the metonymic power comes to recall in me without effacing it. He is right to protest against the confusion between she who was his mother and the Figure of the Mother, but the metonymic power (one part for the whole or one name for another) will always come to inscribe both in this relation without relation.

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The deaths of Roland Barthes: because of the somewhat indecent violence

of this plural, one might perhaps think that I was resisting the unique; I would have thus avoided, denied, or tried to efface his death. As a sign of protection or protest, I would have in the process accused and given over his death to the trial of a studied metonymy. Perhaps, but how do we speak otherwise and without taking this risk? Without pluralizing the unique or generalizing what is most irreplaceable in it, his own death? And didn't he himself speak right up until the very last moment about his death and, metonymically, about his deaths? Didn't he say what is essential (especially in *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes*, a metonymic title and signature par excellence) about the undecidable vacillation between "speaking and keeping silent"?[6] And one can also remain silent by speaking: "The only 'thought' I can have is that at the end of this first death, my own death is inscribed; between the two, nothing more than waiting; I have no other resources than this *irony*: to speak of the 'nothing to say'" [*Camera Lucida*, 93]. And just before: "The horror is this: nothing to say about the death of one whom I love most, nothing to say about her photograph" [ibid., 92–93].

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Friendship: we have no right to take anything for ourselves from the few pages at the end of the volume that bears this title.[7] What links Blanchot to Bataille was unique, and *Friendship* expresses this in an absolutely singular way. And yet the metonymic force of the most poignant writing allows us to *read* these pages, which does not mean to expose them outside their essential reserve. It lets us think that which it nonetheless never forces open, never shows or hides. Without being able to enter into the absolute singularity of this relationship, without forgetting that only Blanchot could write this, and that only of Bataille could he be speaking, without understanding, or in any case without knowing, we can think what is being written here. Though we should not be able to quote, I nonetheless take upon myself the violence of a quotation, especially of one that has been necessarily truncated.

> How could one agree to speak of this friend? Neither in praise nor in the interest of some truth. The traits of his character, the forms of his existence, the episodes of his life, even in keeping with the search for which he felt himself responsible to the point of irresponsibility, belong to no one. There are no witnesses. Those who were closest say only what was close to them, not the distance that affirmed itself in this proximity, and distance ceases as soon as presence ceases. . . . We are only looking to fill a void, we cannot bear the pain: the affirmation of this void. . . . Everything we say tends to veil the one affirmation: that everything must fade and that we can remain loyal only so long as we watch over this fading movement, to which something in us that rejects all memory already belongs.

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In *Camera Lucida*, the value of *intensity* (*dynamis*, force, latency), which I have been following, leads to a new contrapuntal equation, to a new metonymy of metonymy itself, a new metonymy of the substitutive virtue of the *punctum*. And this is Time. For is not Time the ultimate resource for the substitution of one absolute instant by another, for the replacement of the irreplaceable, the replacement of this unique referent by another that is yet another instant, completely other and yet still the same? Is not time the punctual form and force of all metonymy—*its last recourse*? Here is a passage where the passage from one death to another, from that of Lewis Payne to that of Roland Barthes, seems to pass (among and between others, dare one say) through the Winter Garden Photograph. And on the theme of Time. There is here, in short, a terrifying syntax, from which I pick out first a singular accord, at the point of transition between S and P: "The photo is handsome, as is the boy"[*Camera Lucida*, 96]. And here is the passage from one death to the other:

> I now know that there exists another *punctum* (another "stigmatum") than the "detail." This new *punctum*, which is no longer of form but of intensity, is Time, the lacerating emphasis of the *noeme* (*"that-has-been"*), its pure representation.
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> In 1865, young Lewis Payne tried to assassinate Secretary of State W. H. Seward. Alexander Gardner photographed him in his cell, where he was waiting to be hanged. The photograph is handsome, as is the boy: that is the *studium*. But the *punctum* is: *he is going to die*. I read at the same time: *this will be* and *this has been*; I observe with horror an anterior future of which death is the stake. By giving me to the absolute past of the pose (aorist), the photograph tells me death in the future. What *points* me, *pricks* me, is the discovery of this equivalence. In front of the photograph of my mother as a child, I tell myself: she is going to die: I shudder, like Winnicott's psychotic patient, *over a catastrophe that has already occurred*. Whether or not the subject is already dead, every photograph is this catastrophe. (*Camera Lucida*, 96)

And further on: "It is because each photograph always contains this imperious sign of my future death that each one, however attached it seems to be to the excited world of the living, challenges each of us, one by one, outside of any generality (but not outside of any transcendence)"[ibid., 97].

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Time: the metonymy of the instantaneous, the possibility of the narrative magnetized by its own limit. The instantaneous in photography, the snapshot, would itself be but the most striking metonymy in the modern technological age of an older instantaneity. Older, even though it is never foreign to the possibility of *tekhnē* in general. Remaining as attentive as possible to all the differences, one must be able to speak of a *punctum* in all signs (and repetition or iterability already structures it), in any discourse, whether literary or not: As long as we do not hold to some naïve and "realist" referentialism, it is the relation to some unique and irreplaceable referent that *interests us* and animates our most sound and studied readings: what took place only once, while dividing itself already, in the sights or in front of the lens of the *Phaedo* or *Finnegans Wake*, the *Discourse on Method* or Hegel's *Logic*, John's Apocalypse or Mallarmé's *Coup de dés*. The photographic apparatus reminds us of this Irreducible referential by means of a very powerful telescoping.

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The metonymic force thus divides the referential trait, suspends the referent and leaves it to be desired, while still maintaining the reference. It is at work in the most loyal of friendships; it plunges the destination into mourning while at the same time engaging it.

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Friendship: between the two titles, that of the book and that of the final farewell in italics, between the titles and the exergue ("quotations" of Bataille that speak twice of "friendship"), the exchange is still metonymic, though the singularity does not lose any of its force; quite the contrary.[8]

> I know there are the books. . . . The books themselves refer to an existence. This existence, because it is no longer a presence, begins to be deployed in history, and in the worst of histories, literary history. . . . One wants to publish "everything," one wants to say "everything," as if one were anxious about only one thing: that everything be said; as if the "everything is said" would finally allow us to stop a dead voice. . . . As long as the one who is close to us exists and, with him, the thought in which he affirms himself, his thought opens itself to us, but preserved in this very relation, and what preserves it is not only the mobility of life (this would be very little), but the unpredictability introduced into this thought by the strangeness of the end. . . . I also know that, in his books, Georges Bataille seems to speak of himself with a freedom without restraint that should free us from all discretion—but that does not give us the right to put ourselves in his place, nor does it give us the power to speak in his absence. And is it certain that he speaks of himself? We must give up trying to know those to whom we are linked . . . by something essential; by this I mean we must greet them in the relation with the unknown in which they greet us as well, in our estrangement. (*Friendship*, 289–91)

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Where does the desire to date these last lines (September 14 and 15, 1980) come from?[9] The date—and this is always something of a signature—accentuates the contingency or insignificance of the interruption. Like an accident and like death, it seems to be imposed from the outside, "on that day" (time and space are here given together, the conditions of a publication), but it no doubt also indicates another interruption. Though neither more essential nor more interior, this interruption announces itself in another register, as another thought of the same one . . .

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Having returned from the somewhat insular experience wherein I had secluded myself with the two books, I look today only at the photographs in other books (especially in *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes*) and in newspapers; I cannot tear myself away from the photographs and the handwriting. I do not know what I am still looking for, but I'm looking for it in the direction of his body, in what he shows and says of it, in what he hides of it, perhaps—like something he could not *see* in his writing. I am looking in these photographs for "details"; I am looking, without any illusion, I believe, without any indulgence, for something that regards me, or has me in view, without seeing me, as I believe he says at the end of *Camera Lucida*. I try to imagine the gestures around what we believe to

be the essential writing. How, for example, did he choose all these photographs of children and old people? How and when did he choose these lines for the back cover where Marpa speaks of his son's death?[10] And what about those white lines on the black background of the inside cover of *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes*?[11]

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Today somebody brought me a note (less than a letter, a single sentence) that had been destined for me but never given to me twenty-four years ago, almost to the day. On the eve of a journey, the note was to accompany the gift of a very singular book, a little book that even today I find unreadable. I know, or I think I know, why this gesture was interrupted. Actually, it was detained (and the little book ended up being placed inside another) as if to preserve the memory of the interruption itself. This interruption, for reasons at once serious and playful, in fact concerns something I would be tempted to call the whole of my life. This note (which I thus received today on the eve of the *same* journey, I mean to the same places) was found by chance, long after the death of the one who destined it for me. Everything is very close to me, the form of the writing, of the signature, these very words. Another interruption makes all this as distant and unreadable as that little, insignificant *viaticum.* But in the interruption, the other, returning, addresses himself to me, in me, the other truly returning, truly ghostly.[12] The paper retains the folds of these twenty-four years; I read the blue writing (and more and more I am sensitive to the color of writing, or at any rate, I am now more aware that I am sensitive to it) of someone who, speaking about death, had told me in a car one day, and I recall these words often: "It will happen to me soon." And it was true.

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That was yesterday. Today, another strange coincidence: a friend sent me from the United States a photocopy of a text by Barthes that I had never read before ("Analyse textuelle d'un conte d'Edgar Poe," 1973).[13] I will read it later. But while "leafing" through it, I picked out this:

> Another scandal of enunciation is the reversal of the metaphor in the letter. It is indeed common to utter the sentence "I am dead!" . . . [But] the transposition of the metaphor into the letter, *precisely for this metaphor*, is impossible: the utterance "I am dead" is, literally, according to the letter, foreclosed. . . . It is a question, if you like, of a scandal of language . . . of a performative utterance, to be sure, but one that neither Austin nor Benveniste had foreseen in their analyses. . . . [T]he extraordinary sentence "I am dead" is by no means the incredible statement, but much more radically, the *impossible utterance.*

•

Would the impossible utterance "I am dead" really never have taken place? He is right when he says that, "literally, according to the letter," it is "foreclosed." Yet one understands it, one hears its so-called literal meaning, even if only to declare it legitimately impossible as a performative utterance. What was he thinking of at the moment he referred to "the letter"? Probably, to begin with, that in the idea of death, all other predicates remaining questionable, one might analytically deduce the inability to utter, to speak, to say "I" in the present: a punctual I, punctuating in the instant a reference to the self as to a unique referent, this autoaffective reference that defines the very heart of the living. To return from this point to metonymy, to the metonymic force of the *punctum*, without which there would undoubtedly be no *punctum* as such. . . . For at the heart of the sadness felt for the friend who dies, there is perhaps this point: that after having been able to speak of death as plural, after having said so often "I am dead" metaphorically or metonymically, he was never able to say "I am dead" literally or according to the letter. Were he to have done so, he would have again given in to metonymy. But metonymy is no mistake or falsehood; it does not speak untruths. And literally, according to the letter, there is perhaps no *punctum.* Which makes all utterances possible but does not reduce suffering in the least; indeed, it is even a source, the unpunctual, illimitable source of suffering. Were I to write *revenant à la lettre* and were I to try to translate it into another language . . . (All these questions are also questions of translation and transference.)

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I: the pronoun [*pronom*] or the first name [*prénom*], the assumed name [*prête-nom*] of the one to whom the *utterance* "I am *dead*" can never hap-

pen, the literal utterance, that is, and, assuming this is possible, the non-metonymic *utterance*? And this, even when the enunciation of it would be possible?

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Wouldn't the utterance "I am dead," which he says is impossible, fall into the province of what he calls elsewhere—and calls on as—*utopic*? And doesn't this utopia impose itself in the place, if one can still say this, where metonymy is already at work on the I in its relation to itself, the I when it refers to nothing else but the one who is *presently* speaking? There would be something like a sentence of the I, and the time of this elliptical sentence would leave room for metonymic substitution. To give ourselves time, we would have to return here to that which implicitly links, in *Camera Lucida*, Time as a *punctum* to the metonymic force of the *punctum* . . .

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"What must I do?" Barthes seems in *Camera Lucida* [67] to approve of the one who places—of she who placed—"civil value" above "moral value." In *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes* [145], he says that *morality* must be understood as "the precise opposite of ethics (it is the thinking of the body in a state of language)."

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Between the possibility and the impossibility of the "I am dead," there is the syntax of time and something like a category of imminence (that which points from the future and is on the point of taking place). The imminence of death presents itself; it is always at the point—in presenting itself—of presenting itself no longer, so that death then stands between the metonymic eloquence of the "I am dead" and the instant when death ushers in absolute silence, allowing nothing more to be said (one point and that's it, period [*un point c'est tout*]). This punctual, punctuating singularity (and I understand "punctuating" here as an adjective but also as a type of verb, the enduring syntax of a sentence) irradiates the corpus from its place of imminence and allows one to breathe, in *Camera Lucida*,

this "air" that becomes more and more dense, more and more haunted and peopled with ghosts. I use his words to speak of this: "emanation," "ecstasis," "madness," "magic."

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It is inevitable [*fatal*], both just and unjust, that the most "autobiographical" books (those of the end, as I have heard said) begin at death to conceal all the other books. What is more, they begin with death. Were I myself to yield to this movement, I would no longer leave this *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes*, which, on the whole, I never knew how to read. Between the photos and the graphics, all these texts I should have talked about, started with, or come closer to. . . . But didn't I do this without realizing it in the preceding fragments? For example, just a moment ago, almost by chance, under the titles "His Voice" ("inflection is the voice in so far as it is always past, silenced," "the voice is always *already* dead"), "Plural," "Difference," "Conflict," "What Is a Utopia For?" "Forgeries ('I Write Classic')," "The Circle of Fragments," "The Fragment as Illusion," "From the Fragment to the Journal," "Pause: Anamneses" ("The *biographeme* . . . is nothing but a factitious anamnesis: the one I lend to the author I love"), "Limpness of Important Words" ("History" and "Nature," for example), "Passing Bodies," "Foreseeable Discourse" (example: *Text of the Dead*: a litaneutical text, in which no word can be changed), "Relation to Psychoanalysis," "I Like / I Don't Like" (one line before the end, I try to understand how he could have written "*I don't like . . . fidelity*"; I know that he also said he liked it and that he was able to make a gift of this word; I suppose—it's a matter of tone, mode, inflection, and a certain way of saying quickly but incisively "I like, I don't like"—that in this case he did not like a certain pathos with which fidelity is so easily charged, and especially the word, the discourse on fidelity, which so quickly becomes tired, drab, listless, stale, forbidding, unfaithful), "Choosing Clothes," "Later . . . "

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Contrapuntal theory or a procession of stigmata: a wound no doubt comes in (the) place of the point signed by singularity, in (the) place of

its very instant (*stigmē*), at its point, its tip. But *in (the) place of* this event, place is given over, for the same wound, to substitution, which repeats itself there, retaining of the irreplaceable only a past desire.

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I still cannot remember when I read or heard his name for the first time, and then how he became one for me. But anamnesis, even if it breaks off always too soon, promises itself each time to begin again: it remains to come.

—Translated by Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas

§ 12 An Idea of Flaubert: "Plato's Letter"

My Loulou,

I have nothing to tell you except that I miss you and want to see you very much.

N.B. . . . I am pleased to see my old pupil devote herself to serious reading. As for my opinion on these matters, here it is in a word: I don't know what is meant by the two substantives "Matter" and "Spirit"; we don't know the one any better than the other. Perhaps they are only abstractions of our intellect. In short, I consider Materialism and Spiritualism *equally impertinent* [deux impertinences égales].

Ask Monseigneur to lend you Plato's *Symposium* and *Phaedo* (in Cousin's translation). Since you love the ideal, my Loulou, you will discover it, in these books, at its very source. As art, it's marvelous.

It is March 1868, and Flaubert is writing to his niece, Caroline. He capitalizes the great words of philosophy, "Matter" and "Spirit." Like a good pedagogue, he also underlines what he feels is most important, the very substance of his argument: *equally impertinent.*[1] Caroline, twenty-two, is the daughter of Flaubert's sister and bears her name. As you know, she was born a month before the death of her mother and namesake. That was in 1846. That same year, several months after the birth of Caroline, nicknamed Loulou, and thus after the death of her mother, there was the encounter with Louise Colet and the latter's breakup with Victor Cousin, whom Flaubert quickly dubs the Philosopher, with a capital P. In the

Lecture delivered in Paris in 1980 at a colloquium organized for the centenary of Flaubert's death. Published in the *Revue d'histoire littéraire de la France*, vol. 81, and in *Confrontation* 12 (1984).

same year, a few weeks later, Louise sends Flaubert a love letter from the Philosopher, which she would have forwarded to him, so to speak, as a sign of fidelity or sworn faith. Flaubert thanks her for it. Only a few days beforehand, on August 11, 1846, he had written her the following (and I emphasize the "stones"): "You would make a dead man fall in love. How can I help loving you? You have a power of attraction to make *stones* stand on end at the sound of your voice." And then he acknowledges receipt of the letter and thanks her: "Thank you for sending the Philosopher's letter. I understand the meaning of this gesture. You are paying me another tribute, another sacrifice you would like to make to me. It is as if to say: 'Here's yet another one whom I cast at your feet. Look how little he means to me; for it's you whom I love.' You give me everything, poor angel" (August 8, 1846).

You may wonder whether I am not already skirting the subject suggested to me, "Flaubert and Philosophy," which I was foolhardy enough to accept, and for which therefore I would try to substitute, at the cost of a few intercepted letters, "Flaubert and the Philosopher," so as to lose myself or take refuge in stories of forwarded letter exchanges, family drama, an impossible desire, who can tell, for the sister or the daughter, for the child or the daughter who is the sister's homonym, and so on. In fact, for such a substitution to have been possible, a subject such as "Flaubert and Philosophy" would have to have been viable, above all identifiable, and then one would need far more time than I have here even to imagine treating it. Can such a subject take place somewhere, a place that is not the whole of Flaubertian space? With this latter expression, I certainly mean neither to assume the unity of an idiom nor to suppose that Flaubert's relation to philosophy can be fixed; I do not believe that relation is absolutely singular, strictly identifiable, immune from the most contradictory utterances. For the moment I say "Flaubertian" as one advances a working hypothesis, naming thereby a corpus *received* under the legal sign of this name, the corpus of the works and the correspondence, as well as all that we naïvely accept under the rubric of its bibliographical, biographical, and autobiographical context. We are installed, settled to begin with in the space of the *received* Flaubert;[2] my intent would be to situate, within that space, a relation to the philosophical as such, let us not say for the moment a relation to Philosophy or to the Philosopher.

I thus find myself in the commonplace, among received ideas. You know how contradictory the profound evaluation of the commonplace and the received idea remains in Flaubert; or rather, how indecisive, ambivalent, fascinated it is, where both attraction and repulsion are traversing the same affect. Now, what is called philosophy is never separated from a tradition. In philosophy, the delivery, transmission, and reception of ideas, coded arguments, classifiable responses or solutions lend themselves more readily to stereotyping than anywhere else. Paradoxically, this is not incompatible with the requirement, which no philosopher will have ever willingly renounced, to be critical or anti-dogmatic. Even when it is put into practice, this critical vigilance must give rise to *ideas*, to what has been called the *idea* up to Hegel and ever since Plato, ever since Platonism, ever since the "source" of ideality, as Gustave reminds Loulou. Ideas are also fixed forms (and among all the ideas amassed in the idea of the idea, it is that of form, of the *eidos* or formal contour, that Flaubert will constantly retain). In philosophy, these fixed forms join together into a system, where they become eminently reproducible, identical to themselves, and on this account, in every sense of the word, receivable and received. No amount of critical vigilance will prevent philosophy—as history of the idea or the history of ideas, from Plato to Hegel—from becoming, in the very life of its tradition, a vast circulation par excellence, an unending procession of received ideas, the encyclopedia of commonplaces. This encyclopedia may be alive and critical, but insofar as it generates and preserves ideas, it carries within itself its own necrosis. Sartre writes, speaking precisely of Flaubert, "the first instance of stupidity is the Idea become matter, or matter aping the Idea." One should perhaps sharpen this statement by noting that this becoming-matter is never deferred, but lies in wait for ideality; it takes possession of the very form of the idea in its first instance and its first instant. Hence the attraction to stupidity and the stupidity of the most lucid of minds. Hence also the equal impertinence of materialism and spiritualism when they come to oppose one another. A certain idealism, as perhaps we shall see, is another story entirely.

This is why we find the most explicit, if not the least equivocal, declarations and proclamations on the subject of philosophy in *Bouvard and Pécuchet*, in the *Dictionary of Received Ideas*, and also, of course, in the correspondence; that is to say, in places outside the work, *hors-d'œuvre*, or at least in those texts that, mimicking the literary hors d'oeuvre, abound in the discourse of knowledge on the subject of knowledge, even in metalanguage on language, and most notably on Flaubert's own literary project. As we shall see, philosophy—or, in any event, a certain discourse of

the Idea—is tried out there, in vain moreover, in order to speak about literature, about the literature signed Flaubert, beyond the philosophical.

The difficulty of our position stems not only from the limited time at our disposal; it is that we don't really know what to look for under the heading of a "relation to the philosophical."

And thus we do not know where to look, even if we wanted to install ourselves and settle, as I put it a moment ago, in the received idea. Will it be a question of Flaubert's relation to philosophy as discipline, as tradition accredited in that name, recognizable by the names of the great philosophers, their works and their systems? Will it be a question of Flaubert's declared philosophy, the set of all his phrases or themes that one believes can be classified under the philosophical type? But then how does one recognize this type? This is a formidable problem. Finally, will it be a question of something like an implicit philosophy at work in Flaubert's practice of writing, or in a project said to be literary, fictional, novelistic, or poetic? Is there such a thing? Is it not here, precisely, that there looms a certain overstepping of its bounds by the philosophical? What is the recognizable sign of this? Depending on which of these three questions is privileged, one will examine a different area of the corpus—and they are all very rich. The most ambitious question of all is one I hardly dare formulate; but in time it would be entitled to an absolute priority. It concerns a relation to philosophy that would be irreducible to any one of the three types or places and yet that would order the secret law of their unity. What I shall venture here in the name of Flaubert's *historial* relation to the Idea will perhaps be oriented by this question, but will by no means provide an answer to it.

Even if, fleeing the greatest of our difficulties, we wanted to fall back on the received idea in its most received form, and first of all on what Flaubert says of philosophy as received idea in the *Dictionary*, we would find no respite. And for at least two reasons. First, the idea itself is not part of the catalogue; the idea is not pinned down like an object or theme that can give rise to stereotyping. The idea does not appear in the series of received ideas. This may be a sign: Flaubert, who uses the word "idea" thousands of times and rotates its sense to show every facet according to his context or intention at the moment, took note of the fact that the empire of the Idea could not give rise, for this very reason, to an ironic objectification or parodic quotation. The "ideal" on the other hand, this word that appears in the letter to Loulou (you who love the ideal, you will imbibe it at its source, in Plato, as translated by the Philosopher), does figure as a received idea: "*Ideal.* Completely useless." So too do the words "metaphysics" and "philosophy." Both appear to be relegated to the ridiculous and the laughable, but one never knows who speaks in the *Dictionary*, and that is precisely the effect of the received idea. When one formulates a received idea as a received idea, one does not let on whether one is subscribing to it or mocking those who do; whether one speaks *it* or speaks *of* it like those who speak of it or like that of which others speak, to the extent that in the end no one any longer dares to speak.[3] Thus, under *Metaphysics*: "laugh at it: give off an air (that's proof) of a superior mind." Then under *Philosophy*: "Should always be snickered at." Is it Flaubert who is declaring this? Like any question on the philosophical in Flaubert, it can be answered both *yes* and *no*, with as much evidence on either side, which makes the question impertinent and precludes in any case our considering any Flaubertian utterance whatsoever as an *un hors-d'œuvre* belonging to a metalinguistic, theoretical, or philosophical genre. Not even a certain letter to Louis Bouilhet (September 4, 1850), where he speaks of a Preface to the *Dictionary* and hence of a so-called explicating presentation, which would be "contrived in such a way that the reader would not know whether his leg was being pulled, yes or no." One must not know; one must not be able to conclude, even on the topic of stupidity, which consists in "wanting to conclude." What is stupid about philosophy, what makes it both ridiculous and fascinating for Flaubert, is that it wants to conclude, to decide *whether-yes-or-no*, one way or the other. It is in this same letter to Bouilhet that Flaubert heaps sarcasms upon Auguste Comte's *Positive Philosophy*, a "socialist book" that is "overwhelmingly stupid": "It contains vast mines of comedy, grotesqueness the size of several Californias. Perhaps there is something else to it as well. It's just possible." And further down: "*Ineptitude consists in wanting to conclude.* . . . it is not understanding the twilight; it is wanting only midnight or noon. . . . Yes, stupidity consists in wanting to conclude."

In its very grotesqueness, the essential stupidity of the philosophical exerts a properly diabolical fascination on Flaubert, a fascination that orients everything in his life and in his work. It dictated his avid yet nauseated acquisition of philosophical culture, whose bibliographic instruments, stages, textbooks, and autodidactic fervor are now well known. A fascination and a temptation, in that word's most dangerous sense. The temptation of Saint Anthony is also the philosophical temptation. From

the beginning, Anthony speaks of his "hatred" for the "claims of the philosophers"; Hilarion soon takes him to task for such impatient scorn. The most terrifying affirmations, like that of Clement of Alexandria who declares that "Matter is eternal," are drawn from a treasury of the philosophical propositions that most tantalized Flaubert, above all those of Spinoza, for whom his admiration was unlimited,[4] the Spinoza of the *Ethics* and particularly of the *Tractatus Theologico-politicus*.[5] If we had the time, we could uncover a panoply of Spinozisms in the devil's discourse at the end of *The Temptation of Saint Anthony*. This discourse is not purely Spinozist: it is not homogeneous in this respect, but it has recourse to recognizable schemata from the *Ethics*. The devil, to be sure, is no atheist; no one is less atheist than the devil. But he does not deny God's extension and therefore his substance any more than Spinoza does; Anthony is terrified at this thought, just as he is overwhelmed by the total dehumanization of a God who, to be free of all anthropomorphic subjectivity, must be without love or anger, feeling or form, providence or purposiveness. The devil is no more an atheist than Spinoza, and Flaubert says that all those who "accuse" Spinoza of atheism are "asses." But he plays this Spinoza off against religion and its forms of imagination, against the illusions of figures in the politics of religion; and in this regard, the *Tractatus Theologico-politicus* is even more important than the *Ethics*. Flaubert discovered the *Tractatus* in 1870, while he was working on the *Temptation*. The book, he says, "dazzles" and "astounds" him; he is "transported with admiration." In a moment, I will venture a hypothesis on the privileged place of Spinoza in Flaubert's library or philosophical dictionary, as well as in his company of philosophers, for his first impulse is always one of admiration for Spinoza the man ("My God, what a man! what an intellect! what learning and what a mind!" "What a genius!"). Perhaps this impulse reveals the spontaneity and the slightly naïve astonishment of an amateur autodidact, but it also bespeaks a certainty (I will return to this point) that the system is fundamentally just a work of art, reflecting first and foremost the artist's power. With this gesture, Flaubert also shows himself to be Nietzsche's brother.

Spinoza's place is equally curious in what I will call, with Bouvard and Pécuchet, their philosophical *cabinet de lecture*. What happens in this "reading room" would merit centuries of analysis; still, if the comic quality of Bouvard and Pécuchet resides not in their incompetence or stupidity (generally speaking, they are devoid of both), but rather in a certain

acceleration, in a certain rhythm to their philosophical assimilation, in the speed with which they examine, manipulate, and substitute ideas, systems, proofs, and so on, then, at the rate I am going, I am caricaturing them. I will thus limit myself to indicating a scansion within their philosophical epic, beginning with their return to the library, when they "renewed their subscription to a lending library," which they do precisely in order to answer Loulou's question. In their words, the question is: "What, then, is matter? What is spirit? Whence comes the influence of the one upon the other—and vice versa?"[6] Not insignificantly, this question guides the two penultimate chapters of the manuscript. In the last chapter, when they take up education, they begin by telling each other that "it would be necessary to banish all metaphysical ideas" (306). But they already know this is not easy. To be sure, nearly at the end of their encyclopedic rounds they had already admitted that they "were tired of philosophers. So many systems serve only to confuse. Metaphysics has no use. One can exist without it" (249). A moment later, however, they are forced to acknowledge that "metaphysics kept on returning" (250). It is all the more difficult to abandon metaphysics since "philosophy heightened them in their own esteem" (246). And so, in the course of their passage through the philosophical, they are struck by the madness of a quintessentially philosophical *and* anti-philosophical desire; they conceive the senseless project of *seeing stupidity itself*. Nothing is more stupid than the very intelligence of this desire that is their strongest point. "The evidence of their superiority gave umbrage. As they upheld immoral points of view they were surely immoral themselves; slanders were invented about them. Then a pitiable faculty developed in their spirit, that of perceiving stupidity and finding it intolerable" (258).

Among the immoral theses they had just developed, several emphasized a denial of Providence, which again harks back to Spinoza, while others, such as "Vices are properties of nature"—flaunt a certain disregard for morality, thus opening up a reference to Sade that is never wholly absent from the Flaubertian landscape.[7] But I will insist here only on Spinoza's exceptional place in the accelerated theory, the philosophical cortege that Bouvard and Pécuchet march out. Everything is assimilated, digested, and left behind, except Spinoza. For Spinoza is the point of greatest fascination; the locus of the greatest temptation, but also of a terror that leaves him out of reach, at an inassimilable distance. It is too much, too strong and too beautiful. When Bouvard obtains Saisset's translation of the *Eth-*

ics, which Flaubert recommends in one of his letters, they quickly take fright. "The *Ethics* frightened them with its axioms and corollaries. They read only the passages marked in pencil, and gathered this" (243). There follow sentences from the *Ethics* that they understand more or less, punctuated at one point by Pécuchet's "Oh, that would be splendid!" and in the face of which they finally give up, because it was "too much for them": "They felt as if they were in a balloon, at night, in icy cold, borne away in endless flight to a bottomless abyss, with nothing around them but the incomprehensible, the immobile, the eternal. It was too much for them. They gave up" (244). To this shrinking in terror from the *Ethics* corresponds the sense of abomination that marks a later passage inspired by the *Tractatus*. The curé asks Bouvard where he had uncovered such "splendid things": "'In Spinoza.' At this name the curé leapt. 'Have you read him?'" Bouvard reassures him, "'God forbid!'" (284).[8]

We could read the entire encyclopedic and philosophical drama of *Bouvard and Pécuchet* as a garrulous development of the *Nota Bene* addressed to Loulou, and would be justified in doing so not only by what Flaubert himself said: "I am so filled with Bouvard and Pécuchet that I have become them. Their stupidity is my stupidity; I am bursting with it!" I read again the *Nota Bene*, which also begins with the question of matter and spirit:

> My Loulou. . . . As for my opinion on these matters, here it is in a word: I don't know what is meant by the two substantives "Matter" and "Spirit"; we don't know the one any better than the other. Perhaps they are only abstractions of our intellect. In short, I consider Materialism and Spiritualism *equally impertinent.*
>
> Ask Monseigneur to lend you Plato's *Symposium* and *Phaedo* (in Cousin's translation). Since you love the ideal, my Loulou, you will discover it, in these books, at its very source. As art, it's marvelous.

Whether in one word or in five propositions, time enough for a quip, it is tempting to recognize there a whole scene being thrown in front of Philosophy, in any event some directional arrows orienting a space we would have to decipher if we wanted to know not what *the* philosophy *of* Flaubert was, nor what philosophy was *for* him, but rather a relation to philosophy resembling not an indivisible line but many divisible ones, the systematization of which would, by definition, be out of the question. Some arrows and some lines, because the irony of the blow delivered

marks the entire scene, and at the same a trait drawn and withdrawn, distance taken in a space that was not homogeneous and empty. This space belongs to a determined, differentiated possibility, a historical or historial possibility that *bears Flaubert's signature*. This possibility is inseparable from what is called the Idea; if it bears the signature of Flaubert, that can mean that it is, to be sure, signed with the name "Flaubert," a proper name and an idiom we cannot simply erase, reduce, or deduce in this context. But it can also mean that we know this name, and the idea it evokes, to be borne by an era. It is about that which bears this signature, as it concerns philosophy, that I am attempting to speak.

For the sake of economy, I have chosen to recognize the features of this signature in the *Nota Bene* of a letter. There we see, for example, that Flaubert prefers to speak of substantives rather than concepts. "Matter" and "Spirit" are treated first as words. This verbal activity, this verbosity is perhaps the sign of a fetishism that Flaubert begins by rejecting. Perhaps he does so as a nominalist vaguely reminiscent of Condillac, but one who reproduces a properly philosophical line of argument that is historically attributable and classified by type, something of which Flaubert had an expert command and which he would develop and catalogue in *Bouvard and Pécuchet* at the moment his protagonists, pursuing the question of matter and spirit, "tackled the origin of ideas." This is the central phase of the philosophical drama that is being played out between them and that is ultimately a drama of the Idea. After asking into matter and spirit, they are obliged to review all the arguments on the origin of ideas, on representative ideas (for example of matter and spirit). It is in the course of this inspection that, among other arguments, they mention the risks of "abstraction" and of "using words incorrectly," just as Flaubert had suggested to Loulou. The encyclopedic grand tour or tourism of the philosophers Bouvard and Pécuchet is so clearly a tourism of the Idea that, after having picked apart the doctrines of the representative idea and its genesis, they must proceed to the Hegelian Idea. They had in the meantime run across Cousin.[9] Pécuchet acquires an introduction to Hegelian philosophy and explains it to Bouvard: "The only thing that is real is the idea," he tells him. And to the curé who passes by, clutching his breviary: "No religion has so firmly established this truth: 'Nature is only a moment of the idea!'" With an exclamation point, which should never punctuate a philosophical proposition. Bouvard and Pécuchet "are" philosophy, exclamation point. "'A moment of the idea!' murmured the priest, stupefied."

A second characteristic of the *Nota Bene*: insofar as this nominalism is doubled normally by a certain empiricism (another coded argument), matter and spirit, the ideas of matter and spirit, correspond to no essences whatsoever. The idea—and the same could be said of the idea of the idea—is only a word associated with an abstraction of our intellect. The uncle says "perhaps" to his niece, to his sister or to her daughter; with a hint of skepticism, this "perhaps" tempers the somehow negative hypotheses accumulated in the two sentences (this nominalism as an agnosticism or phenomenalism, an empiricism or subjectivism: I don't know what those two words mean, matter is no better known than spirit; "perhaps they are only abstractions of our intellect"). But very quickly—and the difference is all in the tempo, in the game that casts one system against the other—Loulou is apprised of the conclusion. Very quickly, the conclusion brings out the uncle's opinion in a word: "In short," he says, "I find Materialism and Spiritualism *equally impertinent.*" In short, he dismisses back to back the two opposable theses, the two oppositions, concluding (stupidly therefore) that he does not want to conclude (that would be too stupid). He dismisses the arguments with a "neither . . . nor" that is less the syntax of heuristic hesitation than a jump beyond an opposition perceived as fundamentally out of date, worn out, and exhausted, too admitted [*reçu*] to be still admissible [*recevable*], or too admissible to remain interesting. Like Bouvard and Pécuchet, he confesses that he is "tired of philosophers." History seems over, the code finished, the systematic combinations and permutations are too well known. It is therefore equally impertinent to parade a profession of materialism or of spiritualism, and the word "impertinent" targets both naïve incompetence and the insolence that consists in answering where no answer is called for, that monumental arrogance (and for Flaubert, stupidity is always monumental, equal in size to a stone monument covered in inscriptions)[10] of those who seriously pass themselves off as materialists or spiritualists, who link their names to a system when, like children, they don't even know what the grand words "matter" and "spirit" mean to say.

Several gestures are being combined here. On the one hand, there is the avid and gluttonous interest in philosophy (to a degree seldom found in writers of the time), an eagerness to study philosophy, to interrogate its systems, to learn, like Bouvard and Pécuchet, its constitutive arguments, its techniques and rhetoric, but always from a certain distance, from an exterior position that has been deliberately staked out but also somewhat

constrained. On the other hand, with that apparent mixture of bookish or autodidactic artlessness and sophisticated (that is, too old) culture, Flaubert makes two gestures at the same time. With one hand, he turns philosophy's arguments against philosophy, playing one philosophical system or typology against the other with the agility *and* heavy-handedness of the self-taught expert who has quickly learned to mimic the philosopher-artist's or the philosopher-prestidigitator's manipulation. But with his other hand, the tired one, he signals that he doesn't want to play any longer and that no position taken in philosophy is worth more than any other and oppositions are impertinent. He thus sketches a movement beyond the Philosopher and Philosophy. How is this movement possible (in his pronouncements, but also in the so-called literary work)? How does it come to terms with the other one? And what can produce this accommodation within the history, and *under* the signature of Flaubert, as well as that which bears it? This is the question I would have liked at least to broach under the heading of Flaubert's idea.

To this end, I will refer again to the *Nota Bene* of the letter to Loulou, and more specifically to the second paragraph, which recommends two Platonic dialogues. And not just any two. The *Symposium* and the *Phaedo* present love, the Beautiful, and the system of the Ideas in their purest, most dualistic, and, one might say, most ideal form. "Since you love the ideal," as Flaubert himself says, advising Loulou to have someone lend her idealism (which is neither materialism nor spiritualism) in Victor Cousin's translation; Cousin, whom he dubs the Philosopher, and occasionally even Plato in the correspondence with Louise Colet;[11] the one he had screwed [*qu'il s'est envoyé*] and whose letter he had had Louise Colet send to him (she, moreover, had led Cousin to think he was the father of her daughter, Henriette Colet; another hijacking of correspondence, another dissemination to be treated all the less anecdotally with regard to Flaubert's work, since this work was produced in the place from which Flaubert could write: "I don't want a child *of my own.* . . . I love my little niece as if she were my daughter" [to Louise Colet, April 22, 1854], and since, furthermore, Louise's miscarriage, in the first weeks of their affair, led Flaubert to write a letter of profound relief, which must be read attentively in this connection. After having said that he preferred to forgo all posterity and liked the "idea" of "absolute nothingness," he rushes to Cousin's rescue: "Why do you spurn the good philosopher with such cruel harshness that he is made to feel the slight and then reproaches

you for it? What's the poor fellow done to deserve such mistreatment?" [September 15–16, 1846]. This is Flaubert's version; to remain within this labyrinth of epistolary diversions, it turns out that Louise's letters ended up in the hands of Loulou.) The scene is all the more overdetermined in that Flaubert's aggressive irony toward the Philosopher, as a past or potential rival, is never free of a certain indebted respect. He refers Louise to Cousin's authority, as though the pact between the two men, the Philosopher and the writer, remained invulnerable, or even inaccessible to what tied the one or the other of them to a woman, be it a woman of letters.

Flaubert may be merciless toward the Philosopher, but he still refers Louise to the teachings of her former lover, precisely to those dealing with the Idea, and above all with the Idea of pure Beauty, that is to say, according to Flaubert, what women have difficulty thinking because they always mix in, like an impurity, some desire for the pleasant or the useful. For whoever would analyze Flaubert's relation to philosophy and to the philosopher, it would be incoherent, in principle, to set aside his discourse on woman, who seems to him "an impossible thing," and on sexual difference, particularly all the evaluations that characterize his poetics or the figuration of his poetics.[12] He loves, as he puts it, "sentences as taut as an athlete's biceps" (to Louise Colet, June 6–7, 1853) and "above all the sentence [that is] vigorous, substantial, and clear, whose skin is swarthy and whose muscles bulge . . . male sentences, not female ones like those of Lamartine," who "lacks balls" and "has never pissed anything but pure water."[13] Speaking of Art and the Beautiful, the only thing he "admires and values," Flaubert "scolds" Louise and directs her to her [or his] Philosopher: "As for you, you adulterate the Beautiful with a bunch of things that are foreign to it, with the useful, the pleasant, and who knows what else? You must tell the Philosopher to explain the idea of pure Beauty to you as he expounded it in his course of 1819, and as I conceive it" (September 13, 1846, some two days before the loss of her child).[14] Cousin the Philosopher is more than just a mediating figure in the duel played out here between Gustave and Louise; he also occupies in general the place of the *messenger*, understood as a translator in both the broad and narrow senses of that term. He is the eclectic philosopher who assimilates and delivers tradition (to Flaubert, to Bouvard, and to Pécuchet); he is the translator of Plato, that is, of the first great thinker of the Idea, whose name Flaubert bestowed on him as a nickname; he is also the translator or letter carrier [*facteur*] in France of the last great thinker of the Idea,

namely, Hegel. Flaubert read him. From Plato to Hegel, a certain history of the Idea, as well as of the word "idea," unfolds, destines itself, and seals itself off; without this history, there would be no chance of acceding to what bears the signature "Flaubert," especially when that signature inscribes itself across the word "idea," which is used so abundantly and singularly in Flaubert's discourse, and which, to be sure, modifies and modalizes its meanings according to context. One form of the question could be as follows: What does it mean to say, what is it that still wishes to say, what is it that already no longer wishes to be said, can no longer want to mean to say when Flaubert allows himself literally to be besieged by the word "idea," when he does or does not thematize the term, given that he never makes a theme of *this very question*? It is indisputable and thousands of quotations could attest to it: he mobilizes, according to the contexts, all the semantic resources bequeathed him by the history of the language and of philosophy, and then, as if with an invisible leap the idea surpassed the idea, he seems to use it to name a certain *X* that perhaps no longer belongs to those histories. In this sense, through the curious proximity of a post-Hegelian to Hegel, to an Idea in which is gathered an entire Platonic-Hegelian destiny, Flaubert occupies a position not unlike that of Mallarmé—and this is not meant to overlook any of the essential differences that may separate them, beginning with a certain idea of prose or of verse. Both of them are inscribed in a locus of philosophical exhaustion, wherein they can no longer order their literary writing, their art if you will, according to a philosophical system or position and so must continue to manipulate philosophemes as a sort of metalanguage instrumental to the display of their writing. They then resort to the philosophical forms best suited to express both this limit and this impossibility, for example and par excellence, both of them, to a simulacrum of the dialectic and of the idea (both Platonic *and* Hegelian), a simulacrum that would allow one at once to reassemble the philosophical and to mark its limits while discrediting its oppositions, that is, finally all philosophical concepts as such (neither materialism nor spiritualism, but also *neither/nor* so many other things). And the word "idea," in a given Mallarmean or Flaubertian context, mimics the Platonic-Hegelian Idea while emptying it of its metaphysical or dialectical content, wearing it down to the negative sublimity of the Mallarmean Book or the "book about nothing," or one could say the book-about-nothing-of-Flaubert. Let us not forget that this "book about nothing" of which he speaks to Louise Colet is not simply an

ideal book; it is the book of ideality that is no longer anything. The Beautiful (all the more beautiful "the less [subject] matter [*matière*] there is"), "the future of art," the "liberation from materiality" through a "prose" that "becomes attenuated":[15] all this merely passes through a certain formalism of the idea so as to present itself, but then right away crosses through it toward a "nothing" [*un rien*] that stands alone beyond oppositions, for example between form and matter, form and content, and so on. The idea of idea, the word "idea," is still the philosophical translation of a text that is no longer philosophical.[16] Philosophy has taken place; there is nothing more to be expected of it; it has already saturated its field and our culture. All that remains to be done, so as to do something else at last, is perhaps to receive it as an enormous legacy of received ideas, to read it and to translate it. Our only delay with respect to this philosophy that has taken place is a delay in translation. I am reminded of Flaubert's well-known remark on the translation of Hegel. He speaks above all of the devastation that critical discourses can bring in their capacity as philosophical discourses on aesthetics, art, or literature, in this way comparable to the metalanguage of a regent who claims that his own word is the law: "Plautus would have laughed at Aristotle had he known him! Corneille struggled under his authority. Voltaire, despite himself, felt the pinch of Boileau! Had it not been for Schlegel, we would have been spared much that's bad in modern drama; and God knows where we're headed once the translation of Hegel is finished!"[17] The translation of Hegel, in other words, the unchecked deployment of its historical reception, will be the end of everything: of literature and of art, of a literature entirely subjected to, and sterilized by, philosophy's regency, and owing the little bit of life or survival it has left for the moment only to some not-yet-translated nooks in Hegel. With regard to this Hegel-to-be-translated, I recall that Victor Cousin, the Philosopher and self-imputed father of Louise Colet's daughter, had implored him in a letter to impregnate France with his ideas, "to implant in the entrails of the nation some of those productive seeds that develop naturally there. . . . I feel myself strong enough to carry the load. . . . Hegel, tell me the truth. I shall then pass on to my country as much of it as it can comprehend" (August 1, 1826). The reign of Hegel would be the unlimited dominion of a certain idea, but at the same time, as paradoxical as this might appear, it would perhaps free up the passage toward the literature or the writing that Flaubert calls Art. Philosophy having reached its end or its ends, one may still, one may then both cease

to give it credit, even discredit it or, in what amounts to the same thing, one can treat it as an art and read the great philosophers as artists. This is the end of the *Nota Bene*. Flaubert praises Plato for Loulou who loves the ideal: "As art," the uncle tells her, "it's marvelous." Twelve years later he will tell her that "morality is but a part of Aesthetics" (March 8, 1880) and, in the same letter, announce that he has no doubts about the "philosophical import" of *Bouvard and Pécuchet*.

Now a fiction to *conclude* and give myself over to what is stupidity itself. Imagine that I proposed to you a table listing all Flaubert's uses of the word "idea" (I have some 666 quotations here at hand). I would classify all the apparently trivial, inattentive, or simply operative uses, for example, when it has the sense of "content": "it will be less lofty than *Saint Anthony* as to *ideas* (which I don't think very important), but perhaps it will be tauter and more unusual, without appearing so" (to Louise Colet, February 8, 1852); or the meaning of human representation, for example: "Religion is . . . a matter of human invention, in short an idea"—as opposed to faith, which is a "feeling" (to Louise Colet, March 31, 1853); accordingly, "ideas are facts" that can be described and catalogued (January 15, 1853), and so on. In another taxonomic table I would place those 666 cases where the word "Idea," often capitalized, is the theme, indeed, the hero of the discourse, this time denoting neither a "representation" nor a "content," but rather a "pure idea," on the side of a form and an art that themselves become the content, but that therefore are not opposed to content and do not belong to any opposition of philosophical concepts. For example, and in no particular order: "for men of our breed, happiness is in the idea, and nowhere else" (to Alfred Le Poittevin, September 1845): "now more than ever I enter into the pure idea, into infinity. . . . I am going a bit mad" (to Maxime Du Camp, April 7, 1856); "yes, work hard, love Art. Still, of all the lies, this one lies the least . . . the idea alone is eternal and necessary" (to Louise Colet, August 9, 1846); "you will not subtract the form from the Idea, for the Idea exists only by virtue of its form. Try to imagine an idea having no form—it's impossible, just as impossible as a form that doesn't express an idea. Such are the stupidities upon which criticism feeds" (to Louise Colet, August 18, 1846); "One must . . . write as little as possible, and then only to assuage the irritation caused by the Idea, which revolves about in our minds, demanding to take form" (to Louise Colet, December 13, 1846); "My only goal . . . is to realize the idea, and I think my work would even lose all its *meaning* by

being published" (to Louise Colet, August 16, 1846); "Style . . . excites my nerves most terribly. . . . I find I am incapable of rendering the *Idea*" (to Louise Colet, October 2, 1846). In all these examples—dating from the 1840s and 1850s—the Idea, in a way that conforms to several philosophical programs, is at once content in search of its form and already form itself, all of which would have its own place in a philosophical genealogy if what Flaubert calls Art, as locus of the Idea and not as moment of the idea, did not designate a space other than the philosophical, and hence, in the name of the Idea, something other than this dialectic of form and content. Thus: "Where Form is in fact absent the idea no longer exists. . . . They are as inseparable as substance is from color, and that is why Art is truth itself. All this, watered down into twenty lectures at the Collège de France, would make a bevy of humble students, clever gentlemen, and distinguished ladies take me for a great man for two weeks" (to Louise Colet, May 23, 1852); "Life is such a hideous affair that the only way to endure it is to avoid it. You avoid it by living through Art, in a constant quest for the True as rendered by the Beautiful" (to Mlle Leroyer de Chantepie, May 18, 1857). Elsewhere: "I am morally *beautiful*. But I think I'm becoming stupid, intellectually speaking" (to Ernest Feydeau, September–October, 1860). We cannot conclude with these propositions on Art as Truth for avoiding Life or dwell upon them—as one might do for example in a joint reading of analogous propositions, at once similar and different, from Nietzsche or Valéry; and all the less so since Flaubert elsewhere calls this Truth into play again in a sort of perspectivism and antinaturalism of writing. Two examples: "A fervor for the *idea* robbed them [the poets of the sixteenth century] of all feeling for nature. Their poetics was antiphysical" (to Hippolyte Taine, December 20, 1865); or again, "This mania for believing that nature has just recently been discovered and that we are truer than our predecessors exasperates me. Racine's *tempest* is every bit as true as Michelet's. There is no True! There are only ways of seeing. Is a photograph a good resemblance? No more so than an oil portrait, or just as much. Down with all the Schools! Down with meaningless words! Down with Academies, Poetics, Principles!" (to Léon Hennique, February 3, 1880).

This perspectivism precludes our fixing a truth of the Idea; it precludes the very possibility that, behind all these regulated variations, behind all these contexts (and one could find still more of them), the invariable truth of an idea of the idea might impose itself as law. The desire for such

an idea of the idea would still be philosophical, even if it meant seeking this truth of the idea as a primal or paradigmatic scene, for example, the scene of negativity or resentment in an art of the idea that would shelter us from life, or as the scene of a guilt-ridden indebtedness to the idea: when, for example, Flaubert refuses to "divert the least thing" from Art, which would be "nearly a crime," a "theft from the idea" (to Louise Colet, August 22, 1853); or again when he speaks of his use of received ideas as an act of literary and moral vengeance ("I shall have taken my literary revenge [in the projected preface to an edition of Ronsard], just as in the *Dictionary of Received Ideas* I shall avenge myself morally" [to Louise Colet, September 7, 1853]); or when he speaks of the idea as an instrument of power and torture, both for oneself and for others, in this famous letter to Louise Colet: "It is splendid to be a great writer, to hold men in the frying pan of your sentences and sauté them like chestnuts. There must be a delirious pride in the feeling that you are bringing the full weight of your idea to bear on mankind." But it is true that, in this sentence about sentences, the idea is still conceived of as a content, for Flaubert continues, taking back all his aggressivity: "But for that you must have something to say. Now, I will confess to you that I seem to have nothing that others don't. . . . Art . . . is perhaps no more serious than a game of ninepins" (November 3, 1851).

Through all these scenes, perspectives, and multiple contexts of the idea, through the dialectical or aesthetic movements of negativity, the resentment against life ("I hate life," to Maxime Du Camp, October 21, 1851), through all the vengeance, indebtedness, duty, and impotence, what remains—in a sense of the remainder that perhaps no longer returns to the philosophical idea—is that an affirmation is inscribed, which is the object of no declaration, no metalinguistic discourse, no reference to philosophy. Perhaps this affirmation, which I am describing in a somewhat Nietzschean code, had to come to terms with an idea of the idea that no doubt does not belong in a simple manner to the Platonic-Hegelian continuum—I mean Spinoza's idea, which neither is nor gives rise to a representation, mimetic or otherwise, nor to any idea of the idea, and which Spinoza rightly opposes to tradition, most notably to the Cartesian idea, as an act or affirmation is opposed to a reproductive copy, and even to its model. This hypothesis may be reckless: while he accords Spinoza a place quite apart from, and above, the whole society of philosophers, Flaubert never, to my knowledge, refers to the Spinozist idea as such. But this

silence should not deter us, for without that idea the *Ethics* and the *Tractatus* are impossible and unreadable. And if I conclude with this silence of Flaubert's, it is because the affirmative power of such an idea likewise gave rise to no eloquent declaration from him, as I said a moment ago. It cannot be distinguished from his act of writing, his literature, his very work—which I have not been asked to speak about.

Will I have time for an epilogue?

This epilogue or envoi would also be a dedication to my friend Eugenio Donato, with whom last year in California I began to read Flaubert differently.

Who is the idea of Flaubert? Perhaps you would be tempted to render the grammar of my question in these words, and more boldly still to answer with a proper name or a part of a proper name or the endless transference of identity fragments not yet named. We can hear someone whisper: Flaubert's idea is Loulou, between Caroline and Louise; but first it is Caroline, the dead sister, the impossible.[18]

I had first chosen as my title "The Idea of Flaubert."

The definite article was sanctioned by the author who so often says "the idea," that "happiness . . . is in the idea," that he "enters . . . into the pure idea," that "only the idea is eternal and necessary," that "Art and Religion" are the "two great manifestations of the Idea."

Why did I finally prefer the indefinite article, "An Idea of Flaubert"? No doubt to moderate my intent, which amounts to giving modestly *an* idea of Flaubert. One of his ideas, from among other possible ones. But it was also necessary to do justice to a sentence, a single sentence, which I would have liked to inscribe on the stone of all that is petrified near the cadaver of Caroline, Loulou's mother and namesake. That is why for the past halfhour I have been preparing the stone, the one on which someone is always stupid enough to carve a name, the "pillar" "of granite, hard and resistant." Seated by his sister's deathbed, Flaubert wrote letters: "my mother is a statue that weeps"; "my eyes are as dry as marble"; then, after the burial: "I felt the lead bend in my hands. It was I who had her mold taken. I saw the great paws of those boors touching her and covering her with plaster. I shall have her hand and her face. . . . I was as dry as a tomb-stone" (to Maxime Du Camp, March 25, 1846).

I am going to say this sentence; you will admire the way it passes from the indefinite to the definite, and especially from the singular to the plural, apparent effects of the most lucid carelessness. In it the translation

is unerring; one ought to make it speak, like this stone itself; it tells of Flaubert's relentlessness, of what led him to track relentlessly "the impossible thing." This sentence gives advice, it is a precept, a complaint, and an imperative, as well as a gesture of compassion for a friend in mourning (to Feydeau, November 12–15, 1859).

> acharne-toi sur une idée! ces femmes-là au moins ne meurent pas et ne trompent pas!
>
> be relentless in going after an idea! at least those women do not die and do not deceive!

Flaubert often exhorted his friends and also gave himself courage by citing Goethe, a sinister and joyous phrase that he found "sublime": "beyond the graves, onward!"[19] He admitted, moreover, that he expected no consolation from it.

—Translated by Peter Starr

§ 13 Geopsychoanalysis "and the rest of the world"

Before naming Latin America, I will open a parenthesis.

" . . . and the rest of the world" is a quotation, a bon mot by the International Psycho-Analytic Association. The Association's proposed constitution of 1977, as endorsed by its 30th Congress in Jerusalem, contains a sentence in parentheses that attempts after a fashion to divide up the psychoanalytic world: "(The Association's main geographical areas are defined at this time as America north of the United States–Mexican border; all America south of that border; and the rest of the world.)" The bon mot is too good not to begin with this "rest." Basically, it names Europe, the land of origin and old mother country of psychoanalysis, a body covered with institutional apparatuses and tattoos and, in the same "rest of the world," all the still virgin territory, all the places in the world where psychoanalysis has not yet set foot, so to speak. "The rest of the world," for the IPA constitution, is thus the common title, the common name, the common place of the origins of psychoanalysis and of what, beyond its confines, has yet to be opened up to it (all hopes on this score remaining legitimate), a kind of Far West or no man's land, but also a kind of foreign body already named, incorporated, and circumscribed by the IPA constitution, which acts out in advance, as it were, the psychoanalytic colonization of a non-American rest-of-the-world, of a virginity parenthetically married to Europe.

I close this parenthesis provisionally and name Latin America. The only performance I dream of this morning is to name Latin America and to do so differently from the constitution of the International Psycho-Analytic Association. For we must start out from this obvious fact: this is an international meeting, also a psychoanalytic meeting, that no international psychoanalytic association has legitimized. It's somewhat as if the specter of another International were haunting these places so as to confer on them in advance another legitimacy.

So I will name Latin America. What is Latin America today? In a moment I will say why, in my opinion, it is necessary to name it. But does it for that reason exist, and if it exists, what is it? Is it the name of something that holds itself together enough—in other words, a continent—to have an identity? Is it the name of a concept? What could this concept have to do with psychoanalysis?

Well, the answer I bring to this question, which I asked myself upon arriving here, is yes. Yes, Latin America is the name of a concept. And I would even add that, in the conjoined history of humanity and psychoanalysis, it is the name of a psychoanalytic concept.

If I announced some geopsychoanalysis, as one says geography or geopolitics, it was not, you no doubt suspect, in order to propose a psychoanalysis of the earth, as was done a few decades ago when Gaston Bachelard spoke of "The Earth and Reveries of Repose" and "The Earth and Reveries of the Will." But if I take my distance today from any such psychoanalysis of the earth, and likewise from the more recent and more urgent theme of an anti-psychoanalysis of territorialization, it is nevertheless on the earth that I would like to advance, on what the earth is today for psychoanalysis.

There would be an earth of psychoanalysis, which is one and unique. It should be distinguished from the world of psychoanalysis. My intention now is not to wonder how things are going in the psychoanalytic world, or to ask whether or not psychoanalysis is a world or of this world, but rather to observe the figure that this becoming-world, this ongoing becoming-worldwide [*mondialisation*] of psychoanalysis draws upon the

Lecture delivered at the opening of a Franco–Latin American meeting that took place in Paris, February 1981, on the initiative of René Major. The papers from the meeting, which were devoted above all to the institutions and politics of psychoanalysis today, were published in *Confrontation* (Green and Black collection) in 1981, in an issue that took its name from this lecture, with the subtitle: *The Undergrounds of the Institution*. [Another translation, by Donald Nicholson Smith, appeared in *American Imago* 48, 2 (1991) and was reprinted in *The Psychoanalysis of Race*, ed. Christopher Lane (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998). Trans.]

earth, right on the earth of mankind, the body of the earth and of mankind.

The idea for this perhaps first came to me simply when I read the program of your colloquium: that there exists within the psychoanalytic *socius* an entity named "Latin America," that a continental unit, which is both geographic—let's say "natural"—*and* cultural, linguistic, or historico-linguistic, would somehow be pertinent to the worldwide organization of psychoanalysis, is not self-evident and raises several questions. It suggests that for psychoanalysis there are continents, half-continents, peninsular units, some peninsulas thickly populated by psychoanalysts and psychoanalysis, and then virgin peninsulas, some black or white semi-continents; and it suggests that there is more or less than a black continent, more or less than one black one, black as in the uncleared, the unexplored, the feminine, black also like a sex, like some people's skin, black like evil, black like the unspeakable horror of violence, torture, or extermination. All of this gave me the idea of reading psychoanalysis à la carte, so to speak, that is, according to the map. And since I did not approach this hypothesis lacking all ulterior political motive, the thing accelerated, and necessity became more insistent when I read two relatively recent documents.

I asked myself if I was going to dare to tell with what naïveté, with what freshness of mind, and out of what depth of ignorance I read them.

I asked myself if I would dare to do so. It was not exactly my first question or my first worry. For, in the first place, I wondered why I had been asked here and what one wanted to ask of me. Why ask me to speak here, to be the first to speak one morning, the first morning, early in the morning, to say what and to do what. And to whom. Notice that I am not wondering why I accepted. In that case the answer is simple: I accepted so as to try to understand the reason for which I had been asked. To respond to a question or an invitation without knowing and solely in order to understand what the other is getting at is perhaps a common enough attitude, but it is a dangerous foreign policy, although it is true that without it nothing would ever happen. Would there be event [*de l'événement*] if no one ever responded except after having understood the question or the invitation, after having checked the identity and the sense of the question, demand, or provocation?

My first hypothesis, drawn from my experience, was the following. In this particular psychoanalytic world, in Paris, one seeks to understand as

quickly as possible, both as soon and as rapidly as possible, without losing any time, what this foreigner might be saying, this foreign body that belongs to no body, that is not a member, in any capacity, of any of the analytic corporations of the world or of the rest of the world, whether or not they are represented here, whether European or Latin American. I say "foreign body" to designate this thing that can neither be assimilated, rejected, interiorized, nor, at the limit of a divisible line between inside and outside, foreclosed. But I am also quoting Freud. Within the space of a few lines, in *New Introductory Lectures*, nos. 30–31, Freud speaks twice of the foreign body (*Fremdkörper*) or of the body most foreign to the ego (*am Ichfremdesten*). The first time, the context is a discussion of telepathy and *Gedankenübertragung* (thought-transference), at the very moment when the trajectory of a certain gold coin (*Goldstück*) marks a failure and a limit of analysis. I note that it is precisely on the subject of telepathy and thought-transference that, in a letter to Jones, Freud uses the expressions "external politics" or "foreign policy" in speaking of the worldwide psychoanalytic institution, as if the latter were some sort of state governing its relations with the rest of the world. Freud explained to Jones (who always had great difficulty following him on this question of telepathic telecommunication) that if, out of concern for "foreign policy," he had until now kept silent about his own "conversion to telepathy," thereby taking into account, as Jones repeatedly pressed him to do, the obscurantist effects and accusations of occultism that such a declaration might evoke in certain regions of the world, henceforth his conviction was too overwhelming and too verifiable to continue making allowances for the strategic imperatives and diplomacy of the psychoanalytic superstate. The second allusion to the foreign body, a few lines later, defines the symptom, no more no less, as a body foreign to the ego. The symptom is always a foreign body and must be deciphered as such; and, of course, a foreign body is always a symptom, it always *does* symptom [fait *symptôme*] on the body of the ego, it is a body foreign to the body of the ego. That is what I am doing here: I do symptom, I do the symptom, I am the symptom, it's a role I'm playing, if not for each of you, then at least for a certain ego of the analytic institution. And if you want to understand the foreigner or the stranger very quickly, early in the morning, then perhaps it's also in order to make the symptom disappear, as quickly as possible, to file away his discourse without delay, in other words, to forget it without ado. The discourse of the stranger is filed away or forgotten all the more

quickly, it is set aside more easily and upsets less easily when it comes in the honorary place, for by honorary one also understands insignificant. The ostracized foreign body is politely expelled following the traditional protocol that grants to an external and supposedly neutral party the responsibility for opening an inaugural session or for innocently drawing a paper out of a hat.

This is naturally what the symptom is going to do, and the stranger who is only too happy to go along with the game. I am therefore going to speak to you about two papers that I might have drawn out of a hat.

I am a stranger here not only because I have no psychoanalytic credentials, being neither an analyst, not even in training, nor as you say and as I now write in a single word or a single breath, "innanalysis." I am thus psychoanalytically irresponsible and it is perhaps so that certain things be said from the mouth of an irresponsible party that I have been summoned here. I do not have to answer for what I say to any analytic authority, be it Parisian, national, or international. I am also a stranger because I am neither American—North or South—nor European, northern or southern. I am not even really a Latin. I was born in Africa, and I assure you that something of that remains with me. Why do I remember this today? Because there is practically no psychoanalysis in Africa, white or black, just as there is none, practically, in Asia, or in Oceania, practically. These are parts of the "rest of the world" where psychoanalysis has not set foot or in any case never took off its European shoes. I don't know if you find what I am saying to you now trivial or shocking. Of course, on these continents and notably in Africa, in certain formerly or presently colonized or even neocolonized regions, there may be branch offices of your European or American societies. In Algeria, the country that I come from and that I left for the first time only at age nineteen, the psychiatric and embryonically psychoanalytic apparatus was in the main, before the war of independence, an emanation of the apparatus in the "metropole" (as one used to say profoundly). De facto and de jure. African psychoanalysis was European, structured in the deepest way by the colonial state apparatus. So as to situate the political problem to which I'm alluding, I will do no more here than name Frantz Fanon and evoke his work. At that time and in that place, it was altogether exceptional and atypical to see psychoanalysts posing for themselves the political, ethno-psychoanalytic, and socio-institutional problem of their own practice. The law, the deontology, the ethics of psychoanalysis, as these were instituted or merely presupposed

by the colonial societies or by the international society of psychoanalysis were supposed to govern practice and oversee relations with the two powers, that of the state apparatus and that of the medical apparatus. The Fanons were very few and far between, marginal or marginalized, let this be said by way of a notorious and painful point of reference, and not in order to set up a discourse and the positions of Fanon as a model beyond discussion. Since that time, the political geography of the world has changed, intercontinental balances of power have undergone great turbulence, and this, I said to myself, must have had effects on the political geography of psychoanalysis.

What, then, were the two documents I pulled from a hat so graciously held out to me? You don't believe in random chance: before the end of the session you will have drawn a map of the programmed paths that had to lead me to get someone to hold out this hat to me and to select this exquisite cadaver myself rather than some other, and the inscriptions of a cadaver rather than something else. I too believe as little as possible in random chance, but I would be hard put to say I don't believe in it at all, and in any case my beliefs don't interest you.

Chance would have it, then, my interests being simultaneously in politico-institutional problems and postal problems (correspondence, letters and postcards, telecommunications technology, telepathy and telematics, etc.), thus in precisely what links the institutional politics of psychoanalysis to postal technology, that the first document I should happen upon was the 144th Bulletin of the International Psycho-Analytic Association. It reports on the 31st Congress of the IPA in New York, only the second to take place outside Europe (the first to do so, the one that voted on the proposed constitution and bylaws, had been held in 1977 in Jerusalem). My attention was put on the alert first of all by the debate over voting by mail. In the passage I am going to read, the question of voting by mail and the changes of opinion that can occur between two ballots, the one *in presentia*, the other by mail *in absentia*, oddly crosses with an allusion to difficulties encountered by the Latin American Societies and a report on the next congress in Helsinki in 1981. It is at the Helsinski congress that this constitution and these bylaws will be discussed and put to the vote. For some years now, we have associated the proper name "Helsinki" with the Olympic Games and with international accords concerning human rights, at least the free circulation of ideas and persons. In Helsinki, in just under six months, the IPA will see the proposal made for a new constitu-

tion and new bylaws. Doing the symptom, I will pretend to make a brief, irresponsible, and very illegitimate contribution here to the discussion preceding this vote. But in the few lines I am going to read, what stopped me in my tracks was in truth a certain use of the word "geography" associated with the word "economy." It seemed to me that the expression "geographical and economic circumstances" was taking the place of something else that was not being said, and not said by reason of circumstances that, this time, were not geographical or economic. At the point in question, the discussion had been dragging on for some time on the matter of the vote on the constitution and how to conduct it (could one vote by mail or not, by registered mail or not, etc.). Then:

> Dr. Gemma Jape (Tübingen, W. Germany) suggested that in a situation where two votes were taken on an issue—one at the Business meeting and one some time later by mail ballot—the result might be complicated by the inevitable change of opinion that takes place over a period of time. She would like to suggest, therefore, that provision be made that if the result of the two votes is different, the issue need not be lost, but should come up again for discussion. . . . Dr. Carlos Mendilaharsu (Montevideo) spoke in favour of the mail ballot, pointing out that *geographical and economic circumstances made it difficult for the Latin American Societies* particularly to be adequately represented at the business meeting and congresses. He felt, therefore, that the mail ballot would be an important innovation for his Latin American colleagues. (my emphasis—JD)

There are to be sure "geographical and economic circumstances [that make] it difficult for the Latin American Societies particularly to be adequately represented." I do not want to minimize these, but as there must be similar difficulties for other societies, given the shape of the earth and the distances one must travel to reach the gathering place of the whole psychoanalytic tribe, I reached the conclusion—it wasn't rocket science—that the economico-geographical question, on the eve of the vote on the constitution in Helsinki, must have arisen in the place of something else that remained unnamable.

In the place of what? What was it that must not be named? Even if one had doubts on the subject, a kind of metonymic contiguity, on the facing page, was going to propose to decipher things from only a slight remove. It is a question there of a "Request from the Australian Psychoanalytical Society for Discussion of Alleged Violation of Human Rights." I quote once again the minutes of the meeting:

> Dr. Joseph [I do like the fact that all this happened under the presidency of Dr. Joseph, but one should not see any connection with the title "Geopsychoanalysis"] introduced the discussion of this item by saying that he had received a request from the Australian Society that the IPA look into rumours of alleged violations of human rights in Argentina. As the IPA did so, the issue became one of rumours and allegations and various kinds of evidence from and about many countries around the world. Accordingly, the Executive Council felt that to single out any one country could not in any way do justice to our concern. Nor, it became obvious, was it an issue which only concerned psychoanalysts, but all citizens in general. Accordingly, the Executive Council had asked him to read the following Statement to this Meeting.

I interrupt a moment my quotation before reading the official statement of the IPA on the subject of human rights violations. Let us not forget that this is happening in New York at a time when, although Ronald Reagan had not yet assumed the presidency and Alexander Haig had not yet declared that the question of human rights would no longer, even in principle, have priority, violations of human rights in Argentina and elsewhere were already more than simple rumors or allegations. In the discussion, countries have just been named, for example, Argentina; use has been made of the word "country," which designates something other and something more than a simple geographical entity, or even a simple nation, for it is also a political organization, a state, a civil society, and a psychoanalytic institution. Now in order to "do justice," in the name of justice, given the truly incontestable fact that human rights are also violated elsewhere, every reference to any country whatsoever is therefore, as you will see, going to be erased in the official statement and in the council resolution. Even the word "country" will be made to disappear, to be replaced by the politically neutral or empty notion of "certain geographical areas." To be sure, the concern for justice required that other violations of human rights not be ignored—for example, in the "geographical regions" where the psychoanalytic institution is totally absent. This concern is thus expressed in a form whose moral, juridical, universalist rigor is comparable with political neutrality and formal abstraction. The geographical, as natural place, would thereby serve to erase, on and in the earth, the properly symbolic and political inscription of the violation and, by the same token, the concrete singularity, the irreplaceable body, the unique place of the violence. In other words, also something like the earth. The geographical abstraction neutralizes the political discourse but it also erases

the earth itself, what links the country name to a land, to proper names, to a politics, and above all, here (and I will return to this later) to psychoanalysis. Here is the statement preceded by its preamble:

> Along with various other international organizations, the International Psycho-Analytic Association has, of course, become aware of the violation of human rights which has occurred in certain geographical areas.
>
> The Executive Council of the IPA has discussed these issues at length during the meetings in New York, as it did previously during the Jerusalem Congress. As a result of these discussions I have been asked to read the following official statement to this business meeting and to ask you to approve that this Statement be circulated to various concerned internal organizations, such as the World Federation for Mental Health, the World Health Organization, the International Psychiatric Association, Amnesty International, and so on, and to various national Governments, at the discretion of the President and Secretary. Members are invited to suggest to the Executive Council further appropriate recipients for this Statement, which is as follows:
>
> "The International Psycho-Analytic Association wishes to express its opposition to the use of psychiatric or psychotherapeutic methods to deprive individuals of their legitimate freedom; to an individual's receiving psychiatric or psychotherapeutic treatment based on political considerations; to the interference with professional confidentiality for political purposes. The IPA also condemns the violation of human rights of citizens in general, of scientists and of our colleagues in particular."
>
> Dr. Walter Briehl (Los Angeles) then placed before the Meeting a proposal that a statement be made by the IPA specifically taking a stand about the situation in Argentina, rather than the issuing of the more generalized statement proposed by the Executive Council. The arguments for and against both the statement proposed by the Executive Council and that proposed by Dr. Briehl [unpublished] were discussed by many Members. Finally, the Members present were asked to give an expression of their opinion by voting on the two statements proposed. The result of this show of hands indicated that nearly 85% of the members present were in favour of the Statement proposed by the Executive Council.

We do not know what was in Briehl's report, or what would have been the result of a vote in other conditions, for example, a vote by mail.

Such a position-taking is far from negligible or reprehensible. Considering all the pitfalls to be avoided, it lacks neither clarity, dignity, nor dexterity. On the part of a Western institution of the liberal stamp, concerned about human rights in the most abstract sense of the term, about political pluralism, its own formal neutrality, its own preservation, the conditions of its unity, and the degree of noncommitment it must maintain to withstand the world conflicts that might pass through it, this statement is better than nothing, and I will not insist on everything that might have motivated or justified its extreme cautiousness.

But this is where the questions begin. These precautions are legitimate only if measured by their formal abstraction, in other words by their geographical schematism. Is there any other liberal Western institution that could not have made the same statement? There is no trace of anything specifically psychoanalytic in this text, and that has to be puzzling.

I am going to anticipate two objections here. In the first place, there are, to be sure, some relatively specific marks in this protest. It is addressed, as one reads, to various worldwide health organizations; it concerns psychotherapeutic methods that deprive individuals of their "legitimate freedom," treatments "based on political considerations," or "the interference with professional confidentiality for political purposes."

But wouldn't this be valid for any association of psychotherapists or psychiatrists that has never had even the slightest contact with psychoanalysis? Everything in this resolution happens as if the violations of human and citizens' rights (about which there would be "certain rumours and allegations" in circulation) present no aspect that interests psychoanalysis today, rather than medicine or classical psychiatry, and that *interests it* no longer only as an object of theoretical or clinical study but as a *situation in which* psychoanalysis, the psychoanalytic, psychoanalysts, and their institutions are involved, implicated, on one side or the other, sometimes in active or passive complicity, sometimes in virtual or organized conflict with the forces that violate the said human rights, whether or not these be directly forces of the state, whether it is to exploit, maneuver, or persecute analysts and their analysands in a very singular manner. Others have described or will describe better than I the violent acts I am speaking of here and that, in a very singular fashion, pass by way of the psychoanalytic situation. I am thinking not only of the most spectacular forms of dishonorable compromise on the part of the psychoanalytic authorities with political or police power, or inversely, of the most terrifying form of persecution of psychoanalysts and their patients; all this follows classical and identifiable forms in the face of which positions can be taken that are clear and valid as much for every health professional as for every citizen in

general. But there are also violations that are more invisible, more difficult to detect—outside of Europe and within—more novel, perhaps. And in this respect, psychoanalysis can be as much the place of passage for these novel forms of violence as it is the irreplaceable instrument of their deciphering, and consequently, the condition of their specific denunciation, the condition of a struggle and a transformation. And if it does not analyze, does not denounce, does not struggle, does not transform (does not transform *itself* toward this end), will it not risk merely covering over a perverse and refined appropriation of violence, and in the best of cases, a new weapon in the symbolic panoply? This new weapon would be at the disposal not only of what is confusedly called power, a power *external* to the analytic institution, which it could use in thousands of ways—including even the exploitation of certain effects or certain simulacra of psychoanalytic knowledge in the technology of torture. But this new panoply does not only surprise the analytic institution from the outside; it can be unleashed inside, in the so-called analytic situation, between analyst and patient, between analysts themselves, certified or uncertified analysts, analysts in the process of certification, in control analyses, and so forth, as well as between different analytic institutions whose "foreign policy," to take up Freud's phrase again, is governed by no original law, and sometimes not even by what is called, in the legal code of war, the law of nations [*droit des gens*].

I would now like to set aside a second objection. This one attempts to justify the formal character of the statement, and therefore the erasure of any political reference, as well as the withdrawal of Latin America into the realm of the unnamed. It is consistent with the reference to human rights, one might say (and this would be the objection) that, in taking a position, the IPA makes no mention of specific countries, specific political struggles, or even specific geographic places (for not only does geography erase every other sociopolitical situation, but it itself remains indeterminate, it erases itself beneath the deliberately abstract expression "certain geographical areas"), and that this text also specifies nothing as regards psychoanalysis, in this zone where psychoanalysis can be the object or the agent, directly or indirectly, of very singular violations of human rights. The reference to human rights, according to this argument, should always remain formal, as this would be the condition of its imperative rigor, its universal and abstract purity, beyond any concrete or empirical differentiation. To save time, I will not rehearse this well-known schema. It would

justify the IPA's geographical abstraction, apoliticism, and even apsychoanalytism here in the name of a certain concept of human rights.

This is obviously a very grave question and must not be broached hurriedly, under the pressure of some more or less virtual or violent intimidation that always lies in wait for us as we approach these problems. It is self-evident that one must encourage respect for human rights, that one must oppose any violation of these rights wherever it can be shown to occur. So it is not a matter here *simply* of criticizing or regretting the position taken by the IPA. As I said, it is better than nothing, and in the present situation of the IPA (for let us not give up on anything), this statement may have some positive effects here or there. It may, in certain given situations, influence behaviors, indicate limits or points of reference, inspire resistance, mark in abstract terms the ethico-political concern of those who call themselves psychoanalysts in the world today, and so forth.

Having taken these precautions, I maintain that the question remains almost wholly untouched. Why cannot the International Psycho-Analytic Association that Freud founded seventy years ago take a position in the face of certain kinds of violence (a word I hope will later be clarified at this colloquium) except with reference to a pre-psychoanalytic and even a-psychoanalytic juridical discourse and even to the most vague and impoverished forms of this classical juridical discourse, to those forms that modern human rights jurists and advocates themselves deem most inadequate? Why can the IPA name only "the violation of human rights of citizens in general," adding merely "of scientists and of our colleagues in particular," which sounds a corporatist note that vitiates but in no way compensates for the universalist abstraction of the text? Why can it name only the "legitimate freedom" of individuals? As this is the only content that the statement gives to what is understood here by human rights, it is not even necessary to refer to all the successive elaborations of the discourse on human rights since 1776 or 1789. One need only refer to the most ancient form of the declaration of human rights, the Magna Carta of the English emigrants to France in 1215, which concerns the bare minimum of civil liberty. Even so, this Magna Carta was very precise in its reference to the concrete situation of the period. The IPA's Magna Carta is thoroughly abstract and its only allusion to politics names a "treatment based on political considerations" and "the interference with professional confidentiality for political purposes," without specifying what this

means, where it goes on and how, and while assuming that it could ever not go on. To read psychoanalysis à la carte, as we were saying.

Because I do not have time to refine the premises of the discourse, I will recall in schematic terms a few obvious facts. If they are indeed obvious facts, as I believe, and if it was not possible to take them into account, it is because there is something terrifying and obscure in the conjoined history of mankind, human rights, and what is called psychoanalysis. First obvious fact: despite all the excitement generated by questions of the "psychoanalysis-and-politics" type, despite the proliferation of discourses proffered under this heading for the past ten or twelve years at least, it must be acknowledged—and this agitation is even the sign of it—that there exists today no political problematic or no code of political discourse that has rigorously integrated the axiomatics of a possible psychoanalysis, if psychoanalysis is possible. My hypothesis, then, is that such an integration has not taken place. Just as no ethical discourse has integrated the axiomatics of psychoanalysis, likewise no political discourse has done so either. I am speaking of discourses maintained by non-analysts as well as others, those of psychoanalysts or crypto-analysts in the milieu and with the terms of psychoanalysis. I am not speaking only of theoretical discourses on the conditions of a politics or an ethics, but of discourse as ethico-political action or behavior. The integration to which I'm alluding would not be a smooth appropriation; it would not happen without deformation and transformation on both sides. That is why, paradoxically, the less integration there is between the psychoanalytic and ethico-political discourses, the easier it is for integration and appropriation to occur between the apparatuses, the easier it is for psychoanalysis to be manipulated by political and police authorities, for psychoanalytic power to be abused, and so forth.

Even though they all converge, there would be *three types* of results stemming from this massive fact.

First type: a neutralization of the ethical and the political, an absolute dissociation between the sphere of the psychoanalytic and that of the citizen or moral subject in his/her public or private life. And why not admit that the more or less visible line of this division crosses through our experience, the large and small evaluations we make every day and every instant, whether we are analysts or non-analysts concerned by psychoanalysis? This incredible dissociation is one of the most monstrous traits of Homo psychoanalyticus in our era. It shows us to be mutants, and this monstrous distortion can be as terrifying as it is comical, or both at once.

Second type, which can be superimposed on the first: the retreat toward taking ethico-political positions that are as neutral as they are apparently irreproachable, and more ethical than political (here I deliberately leave this immense problem suspended). One then makes reference to a doctrine of human rights, which is itself moreover nonspecific; one takes shelter in a language that has no psychoanalytic content and pertinence, a language that takes no psychoanalytic risks and that ought not to satisfy anyone here. What is an "individual"? What is a "legitimate freedom" in psychoanalytic terms? What is habeas corpus? What is the exclusion of every political purpose? What is a political purpose? And so on. Even if one cannot disapprove of it, because it is better than nothing, to fall back on human rights seems grossly inadequate, for at least three reasons. I pass very quickly over the first, which is the most radical and concerns legal thought, its history, the problem of its relations with ethics, politics, the ontological, the values of the person or even of the humanity of man, the possibility or not of thinking a dignity (*Würdigkeit*) that, in the Kantian sense of the term, would be beyond all value, exchange, equivalence, *Marktpreis*, and perhaps even beyond the notion of law or right, beyond juridical calculation: all of these enormous and urgent questions that the psychoanalytic problematic should no longer be able to circumvent and about which it should be debating with Plato, Kant, Hegel, Marx, Heidegger, and a few others, as well as with jurists and philosophers of law. This debate has never been more timely, and to say that psychoanalysis should no longer circumvent it also implies, in my view, that it itself cannot be circumvented in this regard.

The second reason for the inadequacy concerns the formality of the statement. I hasten to make clear that I have never *simply* endorsed the old critique of the formalism of the Declaration of the Rights of Man, as it developed early on in the Marxist milieu. Not that this critique is worthless—and the best proof of its worth is that in countries that count themselves socialist, formal constitutions in conformity with respect for human rights have never prevented, even when they were formally respected, the worst kind of violence. And it is enough to read the Declaration of 1789 carefully in order to realize that the worst tyrannies can accommodate themselves to it, since each article includes an interpreting clause that can be bent in all directions. The truth is that a certain rigid

formality is indispensable here, beyond all possible transaction. But there are several regimens of formality and they are more or less strict, more or less tightly woven. The IPA followed the loosest regimen. First of all, it dispenses with a properly psychoanalytic reflection on human rights and on what a "right" might be that is contemporary with the fact of psychoanalysis. Next, it takes no account, in its deliberations, in its reasoning, or in its statement, of this history of human rights, of this reflection, either classical or not, on human rights and on the juridical in general, which is today a very lively reflection—and one may understand why—within and especially beyond statist organizations. Reading the IPA text, one has no idea to which declaration it refers. Since the Magna Carta, since the Petition of Right, the Bill of Rights of the seventeenth century, since the Declaration of Independence in 1776 and the Declaration of the Rights of Man in 1789, there have been several others, and some postdate the birth of psychoanalysis: the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted in 1948 by the United Nations (with the USSR abstaining because it considered it too formal and still too similar to that of 1789), the European Convention for the Protection of Human and Fundamental Rights adopted in Rome in 1950, a proposed Inter-American Convention on Human Rights, and so on.

No doubt, the work and the events, the juridical acts of the classical type could be more refined in their concepts and more expeditious in their procedures; but slowly the search progresses to find ways of giving ever more specific content to the formal and problematic structures of human rights. Since the nineteenth century, it is on the side of the social and of a, let's say, "socialist" determination of the social, that people have seen a need to enrich the content. But is this not the place where psychoanalytic intervention could be essential, I mean on the side of a *socius* that would not conform only to classical, that is, socioeconomic, concepts? In addition, one of the juridical themes on which work is ongoing is precisely torture, the concept of which continues, one could say, to lag behind the thing. What is an act of violence that is called torture? Where does it begin? Where does it end? What is the suffering inflicted or undergone in that case? What is its body, its phantasm, its symbol? And so forth. Even supposing that psychoanalysis could ground a rigorous discourse of nonviolence or—and this seems to me more problematic—of non-torture, it is not here, to this audience and while barely touching on the subject, that I would venture to recall how this is the very subject of

your theory, your practice, and your institutions. On torture, you ought to have essential things to say—and to do. And in particular on a certain modernity of torture, on that of contemporary history and therefore contemporary with psychoanalysis, which synchrony remains something to be interrogated in its many ramifications. At the very least, psychoanalysis ought to participate, wherever it is at work and in particular in its official representative structure, both national and international, in all the research under way on this subject. Does it do so? To my knowledge, no, or else it does so too discreetly. If my information is incomplete on this subject, which is quite possible, I would gladly learn more. In any case, there is not a trace of this concern in the IPA's discourse. And yet, even in the most classical institutions, those that are most foreign, most blind and deaf to psychoanalysis, enough urgency is felt on these matters for the General Assembly of the United Nations, as regards "torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatments or punishments," to have demanded in 1975–76 that various agencies determine new international norms. Is it not on this point that a properly psychoanalytic intervention ought to be required, at least if there is something "properly psychoanalytic" in this domain? And if there is not, then it would be necessary to draw from this fact the very grave consequence in all its aspects. Can one say that this direct or indirect intervention is taking place? I do not believe so for the moment. Is such an intervention possible? I do not know; that is a question I put to you. Is it difficult for reasons that would be neither essential nor general but would have to do with a certain dominant state of the theory, the practice, and the institution? This must be debated, but one thing is already certain: if today the dominant and representative forces of psychoanalysis in the world have nothing specific to say or to do, nothing original to say or to bring to this reflection and to this struggle concerning the concepts and the crude or refined realities of torture, well then, psychoanalysis, *at least in the dominant forces that today appropriate its representation* (and I mean to formulate things in a differentiated and careful fashion), is nothing more, and probably still less, than the classical medical institutions of health to which the IPA sends along its principled protest, its visiting card, or its geographical chart, its *parva carta*, its little New York charter. For finally to whom was this card or map [*carte*] addressed, apart from the governmental agencies left up to the discretion of the president—Dr. Joseph—and the secretary? To the World Federation for Mental Health, the World Health Organization, the International

Psychiatric Association, and Amnesty International. But what part has the IPA taken in the work of the Human Rights Commission? Or in that of the WHO, which was invited to prepare a new code of medical ethics concerning the protection of individuals against "torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatments or punishments"? As for Amnesty International, another addressee of the little card, it has for its part and for a long time proclaimed the necessity of working out these new international norms and in 1976, for example, it published a document titled "Codes of Professional Ethics." And moreover AI limits itself, if one can decently speak of limits in this context, to problems of detention and incarceration. But torture knows no such limit. What part might psychoanalysis have had in this work and in these struggles? And what conclusion would one have to draw from the fact that this part has been meager, nil, or too virtual? I am not taking my turn dragging something like psychoanalysis or its official representation before the human rights tribunal. I am merely pointing out a fact or a possibility whose gravity has to give one to think and to act. This possibility makes a symptom, it "does symptom," it signals a state of psychoanalysis (as theory, practice, institution) that is not to be interpreted only as a delay with regard to the political reflection and struggles I have just evoked and that are occurring both nationally and internationally, as well as by means of agencies other than nation-states. The delay itself is also the price to be paid for an advance that today hinders the co-translatability of psychoanalytic concepts and politico-judirical, ethico-juridical concepts, and so on. This delay and this advance, this lag and inadequation are not only an anachronism of psychoanalysis. It is not just a matter of the relation between two mobile forms on the continuous line of an evolving history, but perhaps also of an inadequation to self as the result of some internal limitation, some occlusion or obstruction that today shapes the analytic cause, its discourse, its clinical and institutional practice. Not that this occlusion is essentially or wholly internal—and the fact that it is unanalyzed means that for the moment it is, in the current sense of psychoanalysis, unanalytic—but it must necessarily allow itself to be represented, it must leave its mark within the analytic body. Later on, I will suggest that Latin America is today the name, the place, and the body, the surface for the inscription of this marking, the most marked surface: right on the earth.

This brings me to the *third typical possibility*, which is also to be read superimposed on the other two. What looks like an advance made by

psychoanalysis, namely, its calling into question again of the founding concepts of the axiomatics of human rights or of traditional political discourse, advances by *hollowing out*; it does not replace the concepts, values, or the transcendental of values (this is what I call, for example, the "dignity" of the individual in the Kantian sense, which is not a value and does not lend itself to any discourse of values) that it submits to analysis. This third type includes the theorizations that make most clearly evident the conceptual inadequacy of the axiomatics of human rights and of Western political discourse, their roots in deconstructible philosophemes. Well, these most advanced theorizations still remain negative discourses whose effects are neutralizing; only by *hollowing out* do they mark the necessity of a new ethics, not only an ethics of psychoanalysis, which doesn't exist, but of another ethical discourse on ethics in general, of another political discourse on politics in general, a discourse that would take account of the deconstructive and psychoanalytic motive, if possible, and of what is interpreted as the truth of psychoanalysis—which is different each time according to the sites of psychoanalysis today on the earth. Because this place remains marked only by a hole, the highest demand on thinking, on ethics, and on politics coexists in the interval with laxness [*le laisser-aller*] and empirical laissez-faire, with archaism, conformism, opportunism, and so on.

Is this situation fortuitous, provisional, an empirical given? Or rather does the actual state of psychoanalysis include, in its dominant schools (and by "school" I mean both school of thought and the apparatus of training and reproduction), an element that is unanalyzed but in principle analyzable, an occlusion, as I was saying a moment ago, that prohibits the effective emergence of an ethics and a politics contemporary with psychoanalysis? To make of psychoanalysis *one's own / its own contemporary*, is such a thing thinkable? I am aware of the great variety of the discourses, also rich with contradictions, archived under the heading "psychoanalysis-and-politics." I am merely starting from the fact that they have not succeeded in hiding the hollow of the failure or, if you prefer, have succeeded only in hiding it. Even though I cannot go beyond its general form here, this question must be posed differently for each of the schools that are dominant in different "geographic areas" of the earth, as the IPA says, and as concerns Latin America, for the multiple empiricist variants of Freudian orthodoxy, as well as for Kleinism and Lacanism. This occlusion distributes forces in the following way: on one side, theoretical advances

incapable of giving rise to institutions that integrate them. These advances thereby reveal that they are inadequate, hence essentially incapable of thinking their proper limit and the interest it holds; on another side, an empirical proliferation of discourses and practices, of micro-institutional affiliations, of suffering or triumphant marginalities, an improvisation left to drift as it will according to the degree of isolation, the places of biographical, historical, political inscription, and so forth. This is more true of Latin America than anywhere else, but it is increasingly the case for the "rest of the world." Finally, an official representation, national or international, whose role is more and more important (despite the appearance that some would like to treat with derision), at a phase in history when the legitimation of psychoanalysis by a growing number of governments brings with it decisive risks that need not be underscored. The more official this representation, the more legitimized, public, formally extended, up to the summit of the IPA, the less it represents the concrete situations of psychoanalysis on earth and the less capable it is of proposing a specific discourse or specific ethico-political rules. And this by reason, not of a sort of impoverishment and abstraction that increase the higher the representation goes, but of an essential occlusion.

It is readable perhaps in the proposed constitution and bylaws drafted at the IPA's 30th Congress held in Jerusalem in 1977. This is the second document pulled from the hat held out to me. With the exception of Freud's name, there is nothing in this constitution that specifically applies to something like psychoanalysis, if that something exists, nothing that any number of other Western-style organizations could not embrace. Without going so far as to include sports clubs and clubs for stamp or postcard collectors, we can say at least that any classical institution whose object is knowledge in general, health, or humanitarian aid could subscribe to it. I repeat: with the sole exception of Freud's name, everything in it reproduces, and sometimes copies in its ready-made formulations, the most conventionally established structures of civil, administrative, and commercial law. On the basis of this reading hypothesis, I will isolate three points in this constitution. These concern: (1) dissolution (a question destined to assume an ever greater pertinence and with which one must always begin); (2) the institution proper, its performative installation (a question with which one can neither begin nor end); (3) geography and Latin America (a question with which I wanted to begin and end today).

(1) The last article, then, concerns dissolution and it interests me first

of all because of the hypothesis on which I stand and where I believe you stand as well, historically, that of a radical and ongoing transformation that should one day result in the dissolution of the IPA founded by Freud and in its replacement by something else, something altogether other, whose structure, shape, topology, and map would be essentially different. I do not know whether the idea of a charter or constitution, that is, the idea of law, international centralization on the model of the state (and a supra-state is still a state) would still hold sway there, or whether one must think of something altogether other; what is happening right here already suggests as much. The article on dissolution interests me from another point of view, that of the transference, of a certain transference in the sense of inheritance. When I say that the dissolution of the law authorizing the IPA is under way, I do not believe, and it seems to me not at all desirable, that dissolution should be followed by a wild state of simple non-law, which moreover is never possible. But there is always a phase in the transformation of the juridical code when the new law, itself destined to transformation, looks like savagery in relation to the first, and during the time of the negotiation, passage, inheritance, and transference. Article 12 of the constitution thus foresees dissolution and does so in the terms of inherited formulas for all associations of this type. It foresees the "transfer," this is the text's word [*transfert*, also, in analytic vocabulary, "the transference"], of the goods or property and thus the inheritance of the only possible, perceptible, archivable legacy of the IPA. To whom then will go this legacy of the IPA? If I wasn't worried about keeping you too long, I would have liked to devote a minute analysis to this last article on death, to this pre-testament that foresees that the IPA will be dissolved by a resolution after due notice is given—something you could prepare between now and the congress in Helsinki. It requires the vote of a three-fourths majority of the members *present* at a regularly convened business meeting. Which means that the IPA cannot be dissolved by mail or by telegram, even if there is a majority in favor of it, or by letter, postcard, telephone, satellite transmission, or telepathy, and this despite Freud's declared conversion between 1926 and 1930 to *Gedankenübertragung*, to thought-transference or telepathy. This axiomatics of presence has great power to reveal what is going on here. Not only because it testifies to the ontology inherent in this constitution but because it is a safe bet that those who today have the most to say and to do in view of the transformation of the psychoanalytic International will not be able to be present in Helsinki. Here then is the last paragraph of this document:

> If upon the dissolution of the Association there remains, after payment of all its debts and liabilities, any property whatsoever, the same shall not be paid or distributed among Members of the Association but shall be given or transferred to some other institution or institutions having objects similar to the objects of the Association. Such institution or institutions, to be determined by the Members of the Association at or before the time of dissolution, shall prohibit the distribution of its or their income and property among its or their members. If and so far as effect cannot be given to this provision, then such property shall be transferred to some charitable object.

I do not know into which languages the words "charity" and "charitable" can be translated—just barely into French, but that matters little. In any case these arrangements may give people ideas here or there. There would be too much to say about this notion of an institution with "similar objects" and the category of analogy would tell us a lot about the IPA's self-representation. That the only absolutely legitimate object of transference in the last instance should be the institution of disinterest in the Christian category of charity, of Christian love without exchange, reproduction, or investment, this fact would give us much to think about as regards what it is that thereby might *put in motion and obligate* [engager] the end of the IPA. As for the idea that there are "objects similar," analogous institutions, and so forth, this leads us to ask what is proper, unique, and incomparable about a psychoanalytic institution. It is designated in the constitution by a single word, which is a proper name, and this brings me to my second point.

(2) It concerns, precisely, article 2 of the constitution. The first article consisted in naming the organization "IPA." This performative is made explicit in article 2 under the heading "Definition of Psycho-Analysis." If you are familiar with this charter, you know that absolutely nothing is said here about the specificity of psychoanalysis, with the exception of the name of Freud. There is mention here of a specificity, but it is given no other content, since Freud, except the name of Freud. Here is the text: "Definition of Psycho-Analysis. The term *psychoanalysis* refers to a theory of personality structure and function, to the application of this theory to other branches of knowledge, and, finally to a specific psychotherapeutic technique. This body of knowledge is based on and derived from the fundamental psychological discoveries made by Sigmund Freud." This is a *hapax legomenon*. No institution of knowledge or therapeutic practice has ever been founded on a proper name, and the thing was so unheard-of but also so constitutive of psychoanalysis that one might justly expect to see all the constitution's subsequent articles shaken to the core one after the other. And yet, nothing of the kind happens and aside from the name of Freud, one seeks in vain for a single trait that might distinguish this charter from that of any other association constructed on these very problematic notions of "personality," "psychotherapy," "other branches of knowledge," and so forth.

For lack of time, let us jump straight to the most formalized consequence: whoever no longer situates himself a priori, or dogmatically, under the authority of the name of Freud would thereby relinquish his right to membership in the said association. Let us put aside for the moment the case, although it is rather serious, of those who might demand clarifications of the words "personality structure and function," "technique," "psychotherapy," "branches of knowledge," "body of knowledge," and so forth. Let's limit ourselves to those who, without even disputing every and all debts to Freud, would get around to wondering about this proper name, its relation to science, to thought, to the institution, to the inheritance, those who might be interested in the singular connection between this name and its bearer, this name and the psychoanalytic movement or cause, and so on. Since this is happening, here and there, more and more, and since it follows paths that are essential to psychoanalysis, one must conclude this: all those who wish to give themselves the right and the means to develop this type of question, all those who believe in the necessity of drawing institutional consequences must envision a new psychoanalytic *socius*—one that would not necessarily have the structure of a central, national, or international institution, and that would not remain merely a theoretical college as powerless as the League of Nations, whose impotence and whose lack of any power of its own Freud pointed out in 1932 (in a letter to Einstein, "Why War?"), without, however, asking himself whence a psychoanalytic league of nations might one day draw its own force.

Nor where on earth it could possibly take place. What about the place?

(3) I come then to my last point: geography and Latin America in the proposal for a constitution (from Jerusalem to Helsinki via New York). This proposal assigns places, and its whole topology is interesting. I pass quickly over the location of the association's office and headquarters: "the

country of the President." This arrangement was anticipated by Freud himself, as he recalls in "On the History of the Psycho-Analytic Movement," and this as early as the first congress under Jung's presidency. Let's not forget that it met with vigorous opposition. As Freud himself says, people were afraid of "censorship and restrictions on scientific freedom." And the fact that this opposition then rallied around Adler cannot suffice to validate or invalidate it unless one is a dogmatist or a true believer. The president will thus take place, his place among the psychoanalytic societies that divide up the earth. The great map of this partition appears to be purely geographical, but, if one takes account of complex historico-political motivations, whose traces should be patiently reconstituted like a differentiated network of blazed trails [*frayages*], it is a heavily invested *terra psychoanalytica* that one finds drawn up in the parenthesis I began by reading: "(The Association's main geographical areas are defined at this time as America north of the United States–Mexican border; all America south of that border; and the rest of the world.)" There are thus three areas or a triangle of three continents, but, since "the rest of the world" divides itself in two, there are in fact four of them. The rest of the world is divided in two: on one side, it covers Europe and all the places where psychoanalysis is strongly implanted (roughly speaking, the cradle of psychoanalysis in the so-called Western democracies of the Old World), and on the other side, the immense territory where, for reasons of very diverse sorts, Homo psychoanalyticus is unknown or banned. Whatever may have been the network of historical and political trails blazed or unblazed, what is striking is that this map is not a triangle but a square or rather a framing or a grid that sets out the borders of four areas and four absolutely distinct types of terrain for psychoanalysis, which are named in a geographically neutral fashion. These types overlap more or less with territorial surfaces, but they are not in essence geographical; and the fact that this geographical overlap is not exact here and there in no way limits the pertinence of the typology I am going to try to define.

There are first the human lands where psychoanalysis has not penetrated, not even sometimes via the baggage of colonization (nearly all of China, a good portion of Africa, the entire non-Judeo-Christian world, but also countless European or American enclaves). In these virgin lands of psychoanalysis, the large size of the surface area, of the demographic figures (present and to come), but also of the cultural and religious foundations make of this rest of the world an enormous problem for the future of psychoanalysis. A future structured otherwise than in the mode of a space open before oneself, a future space to come for psychoanalysis. This first area is itself divided in two: the countries whose culture is European, like those of the socialist world, where psychoanalysis is not yet able to develop, and the others. This is also a problem from the point of view of human rights. One must thus speak, as regards this rest of the world, of two typical areas and not just one.

Another area, another hemisphere: all the places where the psychoanalytic institution is heavily implanted (western Europe and North America) and where human rights are not, to be sure, respected, far from it (I refer you to Amnesty International's reports on the countries of Europe and North America, not to mention the kinds of violence outside Amnesty's purview) but where, for the moment and since World War II at least, violence, whether state-supported or not, of a kind comparable to what is seen in so many Latin American countries, to different degrees and in different forms, is not unleashed. A difference of degree, you will say perhaps, but it is such that a certain qualitative threshold is undoubtedly crossed there; moreover, a different form of cohabitation between the psychoanalytic apparatus and the deployment of political violence necessarily puts in place problems, controversies, suffering, and dramatic events there that have no true common measure. One must thus speak of a fourth area and decipher this map *beneath* the constitutional map, reading through it and beyond it. What from now on will be called the Latin America of psychoanalysis is the only area in the world where a strong psychoanalytic society coexists, whether or not in confrontation, with a civil or state society practicing large-scale torture no longer limited by its brutally classical and easily identifiable forms. As I think others will bear witness to this better than I over the coming days, this torture sometimes appropriates what we'll call psycho-symbolic techniques, in which the citizen-psychoanalyst finds himself/herself a party to the transaction, on one side, on the other, or sometimes both sides at once. In any case, the psychoanalytic medium is traversed by this violence. All intra-institutional relations, all clinical activity, all relations with the civil society and with the state are marked by it, directly or indirectly. There is no imaginable self-relation of the psychoanalytic there without these marks of internal and external violence. Which is to say there is no longer any simple interiority of the analytic medium. One must acknowledge that this configuration—a dense psychoanalytic colonization, a strong psychoanalytic culture coupled with

the maximum of modern military and police violence—has an irreplaceable and exemplary character. Irreplaceable means here that one cannot, without blindness, bad faith, or political calculation, refuse to name Latin America (in the event, Argentina), as the IPA does under the presidency of Dr. Joseph, on the pretext that human rights are also being violated elsewhere. From the point of view of the institution and the historical movement of psychoanalysis, what is happening in Latin America cannot be compared with what is happening either in all those parts of the world, "the rest of the world" where psychoanalysis has no place and does not take place, has not yet taken place, or with that "rest of the world" where psychoanalysis, having grown its roots, human rights are no longer (but only since a little while) or not yet violated in such a massive, spectacular, and persistent fashion.

But if the Latin American configuration is irreplaceable, incomparable in this respect, if one cannot pretend to play with substituting names and examples, the irreplaceable and the incomparable can still be exemplary. The without-example can have an exemplary value for the ethico-political question of psychoanalysis. What is happening on a massive scale and being written in large letters on the Latin American continent could well reveal, through projection onto a giant screen, what is written in small letters and I would say according to the circulation and the archive of small letters more difficult to decipher in the so-called liberal democracies of Europe and North America (the intervention of the latter being, moreover, one of the essential conditions of the situation in Latin America). What is written in large letters over there cannot be replaced by Chinese, Russian, Afghan, or South African examples, but could, on the other hand, help us to decipher what is happening, would happen, or will happen in the old psychoanalytic world, right here, in the relations of psychoanalysis with the rest of the political world (civil society or state), with the whole European and American continent, and above all in the *interior* of the institutional territory of psychoanalysis. It so happens—and this is not fortuitous—that the dominant schools in Latin America, other than the orthodox empiricisms to which I referred a moment ago, are radically European schools, I mean they cling to their English or French roots, for example, Kleinianism or Lacanianism. Which enlarges and sends back many small letters to be deciphered.

In certain given conditions, once a protocol has been established, *to name* can become a historical and political act whose responsibility is ines-

capable. This responsibility was evaded by the IPA at a very grave moment in history, in the history of psychoanalysis among others. Henceforth, if one wanted to take the measure of what is happening in Latin America, if one wanted to measure oneself against what is coming to light there, to respond to what threatens psychoanalysis, to what limits, defines, disfigures, or unmasks it, then it would be necessary at least to name. This is the condition of a call. It would be necessary to call for calling what calls itself by its name: by what the name "Latin America" seems to mean today for psychoanalysis. At least as a start. That is all I would have wanted to do with this appeal and this call: to name Latin America.

—Translated by Peggy Kamuf

§ 14 My Chances / *Mes chances*: A Rendezvous with Some Epicurean Stereophonies

How is one to calculate the age of psychoanalysis? Not everything in it comes down to the manifestation of its name; but under this name, it remains a rather young venture. One can ask oneself about its chances—those of yesterday or tomorrow.

You are perhaps wondering why I chose this theme, chance, luck [*la chance*], when, according to the terms of our program or contract, I am supposed to speak to you about what relates psychoanalysis to literature—that other thing of an incalculable, immemorial age and yet altogether recent. Did I choose this theme randomly or by chance, or, as is more likely, was this choice imposed on me, did it let itself be chosen as if I had fallen upon it while letting me keep the illusion of free will? All of this going back to a very old story that I shall not endeavor to recount here.

For the moment let us treat "Psychoanalysis" and "Literature" as if they were presumed proper names. They point to events or series of events concerning which we can rightfully suppose the *singularity* of an irreversible process and of a historical existence. On the basis, already, of this singularity, their dealings with chance give us something to think about.

Playing now with the apostrophe, I prefer to tell you right away: I do not know to whom I am speaking. To whom is this discourse or lecture addressed here and now? It is indeed to you that I am delivering it, but that doesn't change the situation much. You understand quite well why I say this. And since you find this intelligible, it becomes at least possible

The Edith Weigert Lecture, delivered at the Washington School of Psychiatry in October 1982, sponsored by the Forum on Psychiatry and the Humanities. First version published in *Confrontation*, Cahiers 19, Spring 1988.

to demonstrate that, beginning with the first sentence, my lecture has not purely and simply missed its destination.

Yes, you understand very well why I am asking myself these questions: to whom, in the end, will this lecture have been destined, and can one speak here of destination or aim? What are my chances of reaching my addressees if, on the one hand, I calculate and prepare a place of *encounter* (and I underscore the word) or if, on the other hand, I hope, as we say in French, to *fall* upon them by accident?

I do not know, so to speak, those to whom I am speaking at present. You yourselves who are hearing me, I do not know you. I do not even know if, by reasons of your declared interests or professional affiliations, the majority among you belong to the "world" of psychiatry, as the title of this school might suggest, to the "world" of psychoanalysis—this one and that one, this one or that one—to the "world" of science, literature, the arts, or the humanities. It is not certain that such "worlds" exist. Their frontiers are those of "contexts" and procedures of legitimation currently undergoing rapid transformation. Even if I had some knowledge on this subject, it would be vague and too general; I would have to make rough calculations and spread the net of a loosely woven discourse; I would have to count on luck, not unlike when one goes fishing or hunting. How indeed could I adjust my argument to some singular destination, to one or another among you, for example, whose proper name I might know? Moreover, to know a proper name, is that to know someone?

There, I have just *enumerated* the themes of my lecture. They were all presented in what I have just said, including the theme of numbers, which has been added just now to the enumeration. It's about all this that I would like to talk to you, but I must do so in the dim light of a certain indetermination. I deliver my words a bit at random; I try my luck with you and a few others, even if what I say at this moment about chance has more chance of reaching you than if I had delivered it over to chance without speaking about it. Why? Well, at least because these effects of chance appear to be at once produced, multiplied, *and* limited by language.

Language, however, is but one among those systems of *marks* that all have as a proper feature this curious tendency: to increase *simultaneously* the reserves of random indetermination *and* the powers of coding or overcoding, in other words, of control and self-regulation. This competition between randomness and code disturbs the very systematicity of the system, even though it regulates that system's play in its instability. Whatever

its singularity in this respect, the linguistic system of these traces or marks are, it seems to me, just one example of this law of destabilization.

Right here, among us, the effects of destabilization are at once multiplied and limited (relatively cushioned or neutralized) by the multiplicity of languages and codes that are intersecting with each other at every instant in an intense activity of translation. This activity transforms not only words, a lexicon, or a syntax (for example, between French and English) but also nonlinguistic marks. It mobilizes the quasi-totality of the present context and even what already exceeds it. It was in fact required that the text I am now reading be publishable; I was aware of this when writing it this summer. It is destined in advance to addressees [*destinataires*] who are not easily determinable or who in any case, as far as any possible calculation is concerned, command a great reserve of indetermination. And this arises, as I shall try to show later, from the most general structure of the mark. To try my chances over your heads, I therefore address myself to addressees unknown to you or me. But while waiting and in passing, it falls, as the French saying goes, upon you.

What do I and what can I mean to say by declaring these "addressees" unknown to you and me? To which criteria can one refer in order to decide this? They are not necessarily the criteria of knowledge conscious of itself. For I could be addressing myself to an unconscious and absolutely determined addressee, one rigorously localized in "my" unconscious, in yours, or in the machinery programming the partition of this event. And, moreover, everything that comes to mind under the headings "consciousness" and "unconscious" already supposes the possibility of these marks and all those possible disturbances to dispatches to be sent [*envois à destiner*]. In any case, the fact that we are ignorant of the proper name or the idiom of the other does not mean that we know nothing about her or him. Although I do not know you or can barely see you while I am addressing myself to you, and although you know me very little, regardless of the trajectories and translations of signs that we address to each other in this twilight, what I have been saying, as of a moment ago, arrives at you. It comes to meet you and reaches you. Up to a certain point it becomes intelligible to you. The "things" I throw, project, or cast in your direction, toward your encounter, fall often and well enough upon you, at least upon certain of those among you. The things with which I am bombarding you are linguistic or nonlinguistic signs: words, sentences, auditory and visual images, gestures, intonations, and hand signals. In our calculation, we can count on certain probabilities. On the basis of

numerous indices, we form, you and I, a certain schematic idea of each other and of where to reach the other. Above all, we take account of the calculating capacity of language, of its code and its play, of whatever rules its play and plays with its rules. We take into account what destines to random chance [*destine au hasard*] and at the same time reduces chance. In French, *destiner au hasard* can even have two syntaxes and therefore two meanings. It is thus both sufficiently determined *and* indetermined to leave room for the chances of which it speaks in its trajectory, in its very "jectory." This depends, as one says, on the context, but a context is never sufficiently determined to prohibit all random deviation. To speak in the manner of Epicurus or Lucretius, there is always a chance open there for some *parenklisis* or some *clinamen*. *Destiner au hasard* means to devote, abandon, or deliver over to chance itself. But it can also mean to destine something unwittingly, in a haphazard manner, *at random* [in English in the text]. In the first case, one destines to chance not by chance, whereas in the second, one does not destine to chance but chance intervenes and diverts the destination. The same can be said of the expression *croire au hasard* [to believe in chance or to believe randomly], which can mean that one believes in the existence of chance, but just as well that one does *not*, above all, believe in chance, since one looks for and finds a hidden meaning there at all cost.

For a while now, I have been speaking to you about chance [*du hasard*], but I do not speak at random [*au hasard*]. Estimating my chances of reaching you with my speech, I have above all spoken to you of speech. I thought that speaking to you about chance and language would give me the greatest chances of being *pertinent*, that is, of touching on my subject by touching you. This supposes that between us there are many contracts and conventions, what Lucretius would call explicit or implicit "federations." For example, it is prescribed that the dominant language here be English and that everything I say must relate to something like chance, between psychoanalysis and literature, taking into account earlier works—among others, my own. And I must speak for not much longer than an hour.

From within these designated limits, I will throw out *two questions*. These questions having been cast, imagine that, in one blow, it is a single throw of two dice [*d'un seul coup deux dés*]. After the fact, after the blow [*après coup*], once they have fallen, we will try to see (if indeed something still remains to be seen), what sum they form between them: in other

words, what their constellation signifies. And whether one can read in them my chances, or yours.

I. To usher in the fall

The first and preliminary question, as if thrown down on the threshold: why this downward movement? When one speaks of chance or luck, why do the words and concepts impose in the first place this signification, this direction, this sense, this downward movement regardless of whether we are dealing with a throw or a fall? Why does this sense and this direction have a privileged relation to the non-sense or insignificance that we frequently associate with chance? What does the movement of descent have to do with luck or chance? As one says in French, *qu'est-ce qu'il aurait à voir*, what does it have *to see* with them? (And we will see how precisely, in this place, vision goes missing). Is it a matter of the ground or the abyss? As you know, the words "chance" and "case" descend, as it were, according to the same Latin filiation, from *cadere*, which can still be heard indicating the sense of the fall in "cadence," *choir* [to fall], *échoir* [to fall due], *écheance* [expiry date], as well as in "accident" and "incident." But it is also the case, outside this linguistic family, of the *Zufall* or the *Zufälligkeit*, which in German means "chance," of *zufallen* (to fall due), of *zufällig*, the accidental, fortuitous, contingent, occasional—and the word "occasion" belongs to the same Latin descent. *Fall* is the case; *Einfall*, an idea that suddenly comes to mind in an apparently unforeseeable manner. Now, I would say that the unforeseeable is precisely the case: what falls is not seen in advance. Is not what befalls us or descends upon us—coming from above, like destiny or lightning, taking our faces and hands by surprise—exactly what thwarts or undoes our *anticipation*? Anticipation (*anticipare*, *ante-capere*) apprehends and comprehends in advance, does not let itself be taken by surprise; there is no chance for it. It sees coming the *ob-ject* in front of it, the object or the *Gegenstand* that, in philosophical German, was preceded by the *Gegenwurf* in which one recognizes once again the movement of the throw (*werfen*). The ob-ject is kept in view or in hand, within sight or *intuitus*, giving purchase to the hand or the *conceptus*, to the *Begreifen* or to the *Begriff*.

And when something does not befall us "by accident" [*par hasard*], as the saying or belief goes, then one can also fall oneself. One can fall well or badly, have a lucky or unlucky break, but always by dint of not having foreseen, of not having seen in advance and ahead of oneself. In that case, when it is man or the subject who falls, the fall comes to affect the upright stance. It imprints on the vertical position the deviation of a *clinamen*, whose effects are sometimes irresistible.[1]

For the moment, let us do no more than take note of this law or coincidence that in an odd way associates chance and luck with the downward movement, the finite throw (which must therefore end up by falling back down), the fall, the incident, the accident, or precisely the coincidence. To attempt to think chance would be in the first place to interest oneself in the *experience* (I emphasize this word) of what happens unforeseeably. And there are those who would be inclined to think that unforeseeability conditions the very structure of the event. An event that can be anticipated and therefore apprehended or comprehended, an event without absolute encounter, is that an event in the full sense of the word? Some would be inclined to say that an event worthy of this name does not announce itself in advance. One must not see it coming. If one anticipates what is coming, which is then outlined horizontally on a horizon, there is no pure event. So, one might say: no horizon for the event or the encounter, only the unforeseeable and on a vertical axis. The alterity of the other—which does not reduce itself to the economy of our horizon—always comes to us from on high; it is indeed the very high [*le très haut*].

This singular experience, then, puts us in relation with what *falls* well or ill (*ce qui* tombe *bien ou mal*, as one says in French), and therefore constitutes a chance, a piece of luck. Depending on the context and in many cases, this chance is a lucky chance. This amounts to a pleonastic expression: *avoir de la chance*, to have luck, is to have good luck, *bonne chance*. In other cases, the unfortunate ones, luck is *bad luck* [une malchance]. What are the chances that I'll lose at a game or that the neutron bomb will be used? *Malchance* is when one is out of luck, when one has *no luck*, *quand on n'a pas de chance*, but it is also a phenomenon of luck or chance—an "infelicity" as is said sometimes, in a very significant way, in the Austinian theory of speech acts, to designate accidental or parasitical deviations in the production of performatives, promises, orders, or oaths—and, precisely, contracts.

Malchance, bad luck, is *méchance*. One might say that the spiteful or nasty person, *le méchant*, plays on *malchance*, on *méschéance*, an old French word that associates spite and meanness, *méchanceté*, with what falls out badly. The mean, spiteful person falls badly, *le méchant méchoit*, which is another way of saying that he is demeaned, brought low, *il déchoit*, first in

the sense of accidental misfortune and then, if we shift the sense a bit and allow it in turn to deviate, in the sense of what leads him to do wrong.

If I stress the multiplicity of languages and if I play on it, do not take this for a mere exercise or a gratuitous and fortuitous display. I intend to show thereby, in a practical fashion and along the way, from digression to deviation, a certain interlacing of necessity and chance, of significant and insignificant chance: the marriage, as one would say in Greek, of *Ananke*, *Tiukhē*, and *Automatia*.

In any case, one may remark in the system the incidence of a *coincidence*, the very thing that falls, well or badly, *with* something else, at the same time or in the same place as something else. This is also the sense that the Greek gives to *symptōma*, a word that means, first of all, a sinking or depression, collapse, secondly, coincidence, fortuitous event, encounter, next, unfortunate event, and finally, the symptom as sign, for example a clinical sign. The clinic, let it be said in passing, names the whole space of the lying-down or bedridden position, the position of illness par excellence.

To the same semantic register belongs the idea of whatever *has fallen* to someone's lot, the share, the lottery, of what is said to be attributed, distributed, dispensed, and sent (*geschickt*) by the gods or destiny (*moira*, *nemein*, *nomos*, *Schicksal*), the fatal or fabulating word, the chance of heredity, the play of chromosomes, as if this gift and these givens obeyed, for better or worse, the order of a throw coming down from above. We are still dealing with a logic and a topos of the dispatch [*envoi*]. Destiny, destination: dispatches whose descending projection or trajectory can be disturbed, which in this case means interrupted or deviated. Within the same register we find (but can we speak in this case of a lucky find or a chance encounter?) the unforeseeable and inexplicable fall into original sin or, according to a certain reported mythology of Plato's *Phaedrus*, the disseminating fall of the soul into a body, as well as the *lapsus* (which, as you know, means fall) that produces a symptom for psychoanalytic interpretation when it reveals its unconscious destination and thus manifests its truth.

Here we fall back necessarily upon Democritus, Epicurus, and Lucretius. In the course of their fall in the void, atoms are pulled along by a supplementary deviation, by the *parenklisis* or *clinamen* that exacerbates an initial gap and produces the concentration of material (*systrophē*) that gives birth to the worlds and the things they contain. The *clinamen* diverges from simple verticality, doing so, according to Lucretius, "at times quite uncertain" and in "uncertain places."[2]

Without this declension, "nature would have never produced anything" (113). Only this deviation can change the course of an imperturbable destination and an inflexible order. Such erring (I have called it elsewhere "destinerring") can contravene the laws of destiny, conventions or contracts, agreements of *fatum* (*fati foedera* [2.254]). I emphasize the word "contract" for reasons that will become clear later. Allow me here a brief digression toward a classical philological problem concerning the indeterminate reading of the word *voluptas* or *voluntas* (2.257). The mere difference of a letter introduces a *clinamen* precisely at the point where Lucretius is explaining why the *clinamen is* the condition of freedom, of the will (*voluntas*) or the voluptuous pleasure (*voluptas*) wrested away from destiny (*fatis avolsa*). But in any case, the context leaves no doubt as to the link between *clinamen*, freedom, and pleasure. The *clinamen* of the elementary principle—that is, the atom, the law of the atom—would be the pleasure principle. The *clinamen* introduces the play of necessity and chance into what might anachronistically be called the determinism of the universe. Nonetheless, it does not imply a conscious will, even if this principle of indeterminism makes conceivable for some the conscious freedom of man.

When I bring up the names of Epicurus and Lucretius here, a kind of *systrophē* takes place in my discourse. For Epicurus, condensation or density, the systrophic relief, is first of all the twisted entanglement and concentrated turn of atoms (mass, swarm, turbulence, downpour, herd) that produces the seed of things, the *spermata*, the seminal multiplicity (inseminal or disseminal). A number of elements come to be gathered in a turbulent whirl in the *systrophē* I am bringing to you. They do so in their turn and according to several turns. Which ones? What are the various and intersecting reasons for which I have provoked this Epicurean downpour? I do so for at least three reasons:

1. The atomic elements, the bodies that fall in the void, are often defined, notably by Lucretius, as letters (*littera*). And within their *systrophē* they are seeds (*spermata*, *semina*). The indivisible element, the *atomos* of this literal dissemination produced by the supplement of deviation, is the *stoikheion*, a word designating the graphic thing as well as the mark, the letter, the trait, or the point. This theory of literal dissemination is also

a discourse on incidents and accidents *as* symptoms and even, among others, as "symptoms of the soul." It is possible to speak of these psychic symptoms (*peri tēn psuchēn ta sumptōmata*), and it is in order to account for this possibility that Epicurus rejects the theories of the "incorporeal" soul (*Letter to Herodotus*).

2. Within the principal movement of the literal seeds, should one interpret verticality as a fall, as the downward displacement with regard to man or a finite being, with regard, precisely, to his regard or gaze and within his horizon? Epicurus seems to answer no, according to Diogenes Laertius: "In the infinite," he says, "one should not speak of up and down: we know that if what is above our heads were resituated in the infinite, it would never appear to us in the same way"; "Now, the universe is infinite from two points of view; first, through the number of bodies it contains and then through the immensity of the void that it encompasses." Let us retain from this at least the following: the sense of the fall in general (symptom, lapsus, incident, accidentality, cadence, coincidence, expiration date, luck, good luck, bad luck or *méchance*) is thinkable solely in the situation, the places, or space of finitude, within the multiple relation to the multiplicity of elements, letters, or seeds.

A very violent condensation could precipitate this Epicurean interpretation of the disseminating dispersion toward the Heideggerian analytic of *Dasein*. This apparently fortuitous connection, this systrophic precipitation would, however, be that much more necessary given that *Dasein*, as such, is not reducible to the common and metaphysical characters of *human existence* or *experience* (that of man as subject, soul or body, ego, consciousness or unconscious). In the case of *Dasein*, Heidegger analyzes the finitude of being-thrown (*Geworfenheit*, thrownness into existence, into the "there," into a world, into uncanniness, into the possibility of death, into the "nothing," the thrown being-with-one-another). This *Geworfenheit* or being-thrown is not an empirical character among others, and it has an essential relation to dispersion and dissemination (*Zerstreuung*) as structure of *Dasein*. Originarily thrown (*geworfene*), *Dasein is* not only a finite being (Kant's *intuitus derivativus*) that, as *subject*, would be passively subjected to the *objects* that it does not create and that are as if *thrown* before it and come to meet it. Neither *subjectum* nor *objectum*, *Dasein* is *itself thrown*, originarily abandoned to fall and decline or, we could say, to chance (*Verfallen*). *Dasein*'s chances are first of all and also its falls. And they are always mine, *mes chances*, each time brought back to a self-relation, to a *Jemeinigkeit*, a mineness ("in each case mine") that is not a relation to an ego or to an I (*Ich*). Heidegger no doubt specifies this (*Sein und Zeit*, § 38): the decline (*Verfallenheit*) of *Dasein* should not be interpreted as the "fall" (*Fall*) outside an original, purer, and more elevated state. It is no doubt not a matter of some "corruption of human nature." But one is therefore all the more struck by certain analogies with this discourse. All the more so in that Heidegger remains altogether silent regarding Democritus: he makes only a brief allusion to the Galileo/Democritus relation in *Die Frage nach dem Ding* (1935/1962, pp. 61–62), and another, which is more interesting for us, to "Democritus and Plato" (p. 162) and to *rhuthmos* in "Vom Wesen and Begriff der Physis" (*Wegmarken*, 338). To my knowledge, he cites Epicurus only once, his *lathē biōsas*, "life in hiding," which Heidegger interprets in "Aletheia" (1943). We will limit ourselves here to this reference. Even if these affinities are purely lexical and apparently fortuitous, should they be considered insignificant, accidental, or, for that very reason, symptoms? Is it insignificant that, when discussing the decline into inauthenticity (*Uneigentlichkeit*), Heidegger isolates three structures or three types of movement? These are: the suspension in the void ("den Modus eines bodenlosen Schwebens"), the fall as a catastrophe (*Absturz:* "Wir nennen diese 'Bewegtheit' des Daseins in seinem eigenen Sein den Absturz"; translated in English as "downward plunge"), and the whirlpool or vortex ("die Bewegtheit des Verfallens als Wirbel," translated as "turbulence"[§ 38, "Falling and Thrownness"]).

That was one reason for situating here, to be sure in a far too schematic fashion, Heidegger's analytic. The other reason concerns the place that one must recognize for Heidegger in Lacanian theory. This point was also important to me in my interpretation of Lacan's Seminar on Poe's "Purloined Letter." All this belongs to the account and contract of our encounter; the deviation of another *systrophē* will no doubt lead us back here again.

3. Despite the difference or the displacement of the context, the indivisibility of letters plays a decisive role in the debate in which are gathered, it seems to me, the most serious stakes for a psychoanalytic problematic of determinism, necessity or chance, writing, the signifier and the letter, the simulacrum, fiction or literature. Here I must refer you to "The Purveyor of Truth" and to what I called there, but in order to call it into question, the "*atomystique* of the letter": this atomystique supports Lacan's entire interpretation of "The Purloined Letter," and of its circular, ineluctable, and

predetermined return to the point of departure, despite all the apparently random incidents. The letter, Lacan claims, does not tolerate partition. I tried to demonstrate that this axiom was dogmatic and inseparable from a whole philosophy of psychoanalysis. It is what finally makes possible all analytical interpretation but also what assures it of its hermeneutic power over so-called literary writing. Now, this power is also an un-power [*impouvoir*] and a miscognition [*méconnaissance*]. Without going back over a published debate, I will quickly say in which direction my present remarks are inclined: it is not to the indivisibility but the divisibility or internal difference of the so-called ultimate element (*stoikheion*, trait, letter, seminal mark) that we are led by the phenomenon of chance, as well as by that of literary fiction, to say nothing of what I call writing or the trace in general. For reasons that I have explained elsewhere, and to which I will return again, I prefer to call this element—which is precisely no longer elementary and indivisible—*mark*.

It is a matter, then, of a diversion of atomism, if not one of an anti-atomism. Why would the Epicurean doctrine not be subject to the *clinamen*? To this *clinamen* whose—properly Epicurean—doctrine would have caused, according to Marx, a detour in the tradition of Democritus? Why would one not subject the name of Epicurus to the *clinamen*, in his name itself?

If I have titled this lecture *Mes chances*, it is in order to talk to you about them. My chances are well known; they sum up the experience of "my" work, "my" teaching and "my" texts. To have (good) luck [*avoir de la chance*] is, according to the French idiom, often to fall upon what is needed or as needed, to "fall well," to find something by chance, to chance upon the right encounter, according to the irresponsibility of the good find [*la trouvaille*]. "The Purveyor of Truth," for instance, begins by repeating the expression "si ça se trouve," if it is found, at least three times. In common French, this means, "if by chance . . . " Well, the moment has come to present to you, with my chances, as it happens, what I have just fallen or lucked upon.

First chance: "The Murders in the Rue Morgue," which can also be read as a preface to "The Purloined Letter." When Dupin is being presented by the narrator, it doesn't take long before the reference to the name of Epicurus and his theories comes up. Is this pure chance? Is it insignificant? Dupin reminds the narrator how he had been *thrust*, the word is his, upon a pile of street stones ("a fruiterer . . . thrust you"), and how he had

"stepped upon one of the loose fragments, slipped, slightly strained [his] ankle." Dupin then adds:

> You kept your eyes upon the ground—glancing, with a petulant expression, at the holes and ruts in the pavement (so that I saw you were still thinking of the stones), until we reached the little alley . . . which has been paved, by way of experiment, with the overlapping and riveted blocks. Here your countenance brightened up, and, perceiving your lips move, I could not doubt that you murmured the word "stereotomy," a term very affectedly applied to this species of pavement. I knew that you could not say to yourself "stereotomy" without being brought to think of atomies, and thus of the theories of Epicurus; and since, when we discussed this subject not very long ago, I mentioned to you how singularly yet with how little notice, the vague guesses of that noble Greek had met with confirmation. . . . [3]

I cut here in order to suggest that the latest confirmations to which the old science gives rise could well be, besides "the late nebular cosmogony" and the physical sciences to which Dupin refers, genetics, psychoanalysis, the thinking of writing or literature. Without being able to undertake a reading of Poe's text here, I stress an element of structure that is important for me. The reference to atomism and to the name of Epicurus is itself only a minuscule atom, a detail of the text, an incident, a literal trait in the series that it nevertheless gives to be read. But this incident is inscribed there in a most significant manner. The narrator himself recounts how Dupin, creator and analyst, "a Bi-Part Soul," "a double Dupin—the creative and the resolvent," *divines* the narrator's own thoughts. And how, although the narrator believes Dupin divines his soul, he is in truth merely analyzing symptoms and saying *peri tēn psuchēn ta sumptōmata*, to quote once again Epicurus's letter to Herodotus. Instead of divining—by luck, intuition, or chance—he calculates based on the accidents in a story of a fall, and he turns contingency into symptom. You will remember that Dupin and the narrator are wandering aimlessly, strolling randomly. Then, all of a sudden, Dupin makes a remark that links up with the narrator's inner and silent reverie, as if some thought transmission or telepathy had taken place. In the manner of an analyst, Dupin explains that instead of divining he had calculated. To be sure, but he calculated based on apparently random incidents that are very small, minuscule, quasi-atomic particles and that, curiously, have an essential relation to the movement of throwing and the trajectory of the fall. These

are *cases* that Dupin interprets as symptoms. The narrator asks: "'How was it possible you should know I was thinking of——?' Here I paused, to ascertain beyond a doubt whether he really knew of whom I thought." Baudelaire translates "to know" each time, rightly and wrongly, as *deviner*, to divine, to guess. A little later, the narrator asks: "'Tell me, for Heaven's sake,' I exclaimed, 'the method—if method there is—by which you have been enabled to fathom my soul in this matter,'" (which Baudelaire translates as "dans le cas actuel," in the present case) (180). If we had time to reconstitute the most minuscule grains of the systrophic and analytic calculation that Dupin then lays out in response, we would find once again the "little," the "throw," the "fall." It's a matter of a boy's "diminutive figure" that made him "unfitted for tragedy," and of a man who had thrown himself against the narrator ("the man who ran up against you"), and who in turn throws him on that pile of paving stones that bring stereotomy to mind. "The larger links of the chain run thus—Chantilly, Orion, Dr. Nichols, Epicurus, Stereotomy, the street stones, the fruiterer" (181). The name of Epicurus forms just one link in the chain, even as his theory seems secretly to command in its entirety the deployment of the symptomal analysis. I say "analysis" deliberately: the solution or resolution that, by following a regressive path toward the elementary particles, unties the isolated details or incidents. Dupin is presented not only as a "resolvent" analyst but as that type of analyst for whom, according to Baudelaire's slightly deviant yet faithful translation, "tout est symptôme, diagnostic," all is symptom, diagnostics. That is how Baudelaire translates "all afford, to his apparently intuitive perception, indications of the true state of affairs" (178). The analyst exercises his "analytical power" and "calculating power" par excellence in gamelike situations, for "it is in matters beyond the limits of mere rule that the skill of the analyst is evinced." In such cases, his lucidity is not simply of a mathematical kind, but shows itself capable of unmasking the thoughts of the other. The narrator notes as much when his focus shifts to a visibly transferential situation (unless it is countertransferential): the analyst "examines the countenance of his partner . . . counting trump by trump, and honor by honor, through the glances bestowed by their holders upon each. He notes every variation of face as the play progresses, gathering a fund of thought from the differences in the expression. . . . He recognizes what is played through feint, by the manner with which it is *thrown* upon the table" (my emphasis—JD). He is, then, an expert in the very game that consists in throwing or

falling: "A casual or inadvertent word; the accidental dropping or turning of a card, with the accompanying anxiety or carelessness in regard to its concealment, the counting of the tricks, with the order of their arrangement . . . all afford, to his apparently intuitive perception, indications of the true state of affairs." "Tout est pour lui symptôme, diagnostique," all is symptom, diagnostics for him, Baudelaire translates. And this does not prevent the narrator from saying of Dupin-the-atomist: "There was not a particle of *charlatanism* about Dupin," which Baudelaire translates: "Il n'y avait pas un atome de charlatanerie dans mon ami Dupin," there was not an atom of charlatanism in my friend Dupin. A moment later, this atomist devoid of the smallest atom of charlatanism will say to the narrator subject: "I knew that you could not say to yourself 'stereotomy' without being brought to think of atomies, and thus of the theories of Epicurus."

Second chance: I will not have the time to display all my chances. No such luck [*pas de chance*], but it is also the calculation of a certain *pas de chance* [no chance, no luck, and the step of chance] that makes me fall upon the providentially necessary passages of Poe or Baudelaire. *Méchance*, that is, no luck, out of luck, *pas de chance.* All Baudelaire's notes on Poe's life and works open with a meditation on the writing of the *pas de chance*, the being-out-of-luck, the step of chance:

> There exist fatal destinies; there are in the literature of each country men who carry the words *rotten luck* [or jinxed: *guignon*] written in mysterious characters in the sinuous folds of their foreheads. Some time ago, an unfortunate man was brought before the court. On his forehead he had a singular tattoo: *pas de chance*, bad luck. In this way, everywhere he went he carried with him his life's label, as does a book its title, and his interrogation proved that his existence had been in conformity with this sign. In literary history, there are analogous fortunes. . . . Is there then a diabolical Providence that prepares misfortune from the cradle? A man, whose somber and desolate talent frightens us, was *thrown* with premeditation into a milieu that was hostile to him (my emphasis—JD).[4]

Four years later, Baudelaire writes another introduction to Poe. Here we find the same tattoo—"Pas de chance!"—and Providence that "throws" angelic natures downward. They try in vain to protect themselves, for instance, by closing all the exits, by "padding the windows against the projectiles of chance"! But "the Devil will enter through a keyhole."[5] Projectiles of chance: it is not only the projection, the throw, and the launch,

but the missive or dispatch [*l'envoi*] as well, all the missives in the world. And with the *envoi*, the *renvoi* [sending back or away, also reference] and the *relance* [revival, boost, relaunch]. In poker, *relancer* means to raise the stakes, to make a higher bid. One raises, *relance*, when one knows how to play with what falls so as to make it take off again upward, to defer its fall, and, in the course of its ups and downs, to meet up with the incidence of other bodies: art of the coincidence and simulacra of atoms, art of the juggler. Poe's art, according to Baudelaire. Poe would go even beyond juggling, but Baudelaire also uses the term in order "to apply it," he says, "to the noble poet almost as a word of praise." His "almost" is very subtle, but necessary: juggling by itself would imply too much mastery in the art of coincidence, which must remain *unheimlich*, uncanny. About this noble poet who *lance* and *relance*, Baudelaire frequently says that he "throws himself" (for example, into the grotesque or the horrible), that he "hurls a challenge at difficulties," or, above all, that "as a young child he is thrown to the chances [*hasards*] of a free life."

I have just quoted my chances with regard to Poe's *pas de chance* because what we have here is a preface or postface to "The Purveyor of Truth," to the thought of sending [*la pensée de l'envoi*] that gets relaunched there, to the randomness of missives and to the sendings of chance. Perhaps you will think that I am juggling. When chances multiply in a regular fashion, if too many throws of the dice turn out well, fall well, doesn't that abolish chance? It would be possible to demonstrate that there is nothing random in the links formed by my lucky finds. An implacable program is imposed by the contextual necessity that requires one to isolate [*découper*] solid sequences (stereotomy), cross and adjust subsets, mingle voices and proper names, and accelerate a rhythm, which merely gives the *feeling* of randomness to whoever does not know the prescription, and that is my case as well.

II. On "literary" ascendancy

If, along with Democritus, *qui genuit* Epicurus (via his disciple Nausiphanes) *qui genuit* Lucretius, literature is also at the place of rendezvous, is that by chance? This is the *second question* that, as I said a moment ago, I wanted to throw out. It leads us back to Freud, assuming we ever left him. His texts, when they pose the question of chance, always revolve around the proper name, the number, and the letter. And almost inevitably they encounter literature, a certain type of literature that each time raises their stakes and marks their limit. Why?

One could initially ask oneself what there is in common among these elements, these *stoikheia* that are the letter or the trait, the number, and the proper name such that they find themselves associated like this in a same series and such that they would have an analogous relation to chance. I will say that what they have in common is their *marking insignificance* [insignifiance marquante]. It marks, it is the insignificance of the mark; it is marked but above all remarkable. This remarkable insignificance destines them, makes them enter into the play of destination, and imprints them with the possible deviation of a *clinamen*. What I am calling here insignificance is this structure whereby a mark by itself is not necessarily linked, not even in the form of the reference [*renvoi*], to a meaning or a thing. This is the case, for example, of the proper name. It has no meaning by itself, at least as a proper name. It does not refer to anyone; it designates someone only in a given context, for example (and for example only), by reason of an arbitrary convention. The French name "Pierre" has no meaning by itself. It is untranslatable, and if in my language it is the homonym of a common noun, which has not only a possible referent but also a stable signification (the *pierre* or stone that one can cut to make paving stones), this can give rise to confusion, contamination, lapsus, or symptom; this can cause a fall even as it leaves the two "normal" functions of the mark without any contact between them. The proper name "Pierre" is insignificant because it does not name by means of a concept. It is valid each time for only one person, and the multiplicity of Pierres in the world bears no relation to the multiplicity of *pierres* that form a class and possess enough common traits to give rise to a conceptual significance or a semantic generality. This is just as obvious for the relation between a numeral and a number but also for that between a number and a numbered thing. Between the meaning of the number 7 and the numerals 7 (Arabic or Roman numerals, the words *sept*, seven, *sieben*), there is no natural, necessary, or intrinsic affiliation. No natural bond, to use Saussurian terminology, between the signified and the signifier. Nor is there any between the signified (the general meaning of 7, the number 7) and all things (stones, horses, apples, stars or souls, men or women, for instance) that can find themselves linked together in groups of 7. One can say as much, mutatis mutandis, of all graphic marks, of all traits in general, phonic or not, linguistic or not. Now, here is the paradox, which

I must state in its broadest generality: in order to be a mark and to mark its marking effect, a mark must be able to be *identified*, recognized as the same, be precisely *remarkable* from one context to another. It must be able to be repeated, remarked in its essential trait as the same: hence the apparent solidity of its structure, of its type, of its *stereotypy*. This is what leads us here to speak of the atom, since one associates indestructibility with indivisibility. But precisely, it is not simple since the identity of a mark is also its difference and its relation, each time differential and according to context, to the network of other marks. The ideal iterability that forms the structure of every mark is doubtless what allows it to withdraw from a context, to free itself from any determined bond to its origin, its meaning, or its referent, to emigrate in order to play elsewhere, in whole or in part, another role. I say "in whole or in part" because by reason of this essential insignificance, the ideality or ideal identity of each mark (which is only a differential function without an ontological basis) can continue to divide itself and give rise to a proliferation of other ideal identities. This iterability is thus what causes a mark to be valid more than once. It is more than one. It multiplies and divides itself internally. This imprints a power of diversion on its very movement. It is, in the destination (*Bestimmung*), a principle of indetermination, chance, randomness, or destinerring. No destination is assured precisely because there is mark and proper name, in other words, insignificance.

If I say mark or trace rather than signifier, letter, or word, and if I refer these to the Democritian or Epicurian *stoikheion* in its greatest generality, it is for two reasons. First of all, this generality extends the mark beyond the verbal sign and even beyond human language. That is why I hesitate to speak of the "arbitrariness of the sign" in the manner of Hegel and Saussure. Next, I wanted to distance myself in turn, within this very frame of reference, from strict atomism and the atomistic interpretation of the *stoikheion*. My *clinamen*, my luck, or my chances [*mes chances*] incline me to think the *clinamen* beginning with the divisibility of the mark.

I come back to literature, to the work of art, *l'œuvre d'art*, to the oeuvre in general, to what is so named in the tradition of our culture. No oeuvre without mark, of course. Yet each oeuvre, each work being absolutely singular in some way, it can bear and contain [*porter et comporter*] only proper names. And this in its very iterability. Whence, perhaps, the general form of the privilege that it retains for us, in our experience, as the place of chance and luck. The work provokes us to think the event.

It challenges us to *understand* chance and luck, to take sight of them or take them in hand, to inscribe them within a horizon of anticipation. It is at least in this way that they are works, oeuvres, and, in defiance of any program of reception, they make for an event. Works befall us; they say or unveil what befalls us *by* befalling us. They overpower us inasmuch as they sort things out with what falls from above. The work is vertical and slightly leaning. Freud often said about poets and artists—even as he attempted to include their lives and works within the horizon of psychoanalytic knowledge and make them lie down in the clinically horizontal position—that they had always anticipated and exceeded the discourse of psychoanalysis. In terms of filiation as well as of authority, there would be something like an ascendancy of literature, a literary ancestor [*un ascendant de la littérature*]. Somewhat as in a household, family, or lineage. What exactly is at issue in this play of titles?

I am now going to take my chances in Freud's text. As you rightly suspect, I am going to proceed somewhat randomly, without horizon, as if with my eyes closed.

Third chance: Randomly, I fall first of all upon an example. By definition, there are only examples in this domain. Freud tries to *understand* the forgetting of a proper name. He wants, therefore, by understanding, to erase the appearance of chance in the relation between a certain proper name and its forgetting. Which proper name? As if by chance, that of a disciple of Epicurus. It's a passage in the third chapter of *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*, "The Forgetting of Names and Sets of Words," which begins: "Here is an example of name-forgetting with yet another and a very subtle motivation." The preceding example, by the way, concerned the substitution of the name Nietzsche and Wilde, among others, for that of Jung, which a lady kept forgetting, associating Wilde and Nietzsche with the idea of "mental illness": "You Freudians will go on looking for the causes of insanity till you're insane (*geisteskrank*) yourselves." Then: "I cannot bear Wilde and Nietzsche; I don't understand them. I hear that they were both homosexuals." Nietzsche is also a name that Freud would have liked to forget. Sometimes he managed to do so and confessed it. As regards chance and chaos, there would be much to say in Nietzsche's name. To continue, however, with Freud's next example of name-forgetting, one "with yet another and a very subtle motivation, which the subject of it has explained himself:

"When I was examined in philosophy as a subsidiary subject I was questioned by the examiner about the teachings of Epicurus, and after that I was asked if I knew who had taken up his theories in later centuries. I answered with the name of Pierre Gassendi, whom I had heard described as a disciple of Epicurus while I was sitting in a cafe only a couple of days before. To the surprised question how I knew that, I boldly answered that I had long been interested in Gassendi. The result of this was a certificate *magna cum laude*, but also unfortunately a subsequent obstinate tendency to forget the name Gassendi. My guilty conscience is, I think, to blame for my inability to remember the name in spite of all my efforts; for I really ought not to have known it on that occasion either."

Now, Freud continues, to understand this, one should know that this subject attached great value to the title of doctor (Freud does not add: just as I do to the title of professor) "and for how many other things it has to serve as a substitute."[6]

The person who has forgotten the proper name of the disciple of Epicurus is someone who casts his mind back to the time when he himself was a disciple, a student appearing before his masters at the moment of an examination. Without taking the slightest initiative in interpretation, Freud has only to cite, to reproduce the interpretation of this disciple forgetting the name of a disciple, by identifying himself purely and simply with this disciple who explains why he does not by chance forget the name of a disciple of Epicurus. By exaggerating only slightly, one could say that Freud simultaneously identifies and transfers a symptom that could be called: the disciple of Epicurus and the forgetting of his name. I leave it to you to pursue this further. But never forget this: the Democritian tradition, in which the names of Epicurus and his disciples are inscribed, has been subjected since its origin, and first of all under the violent authority of Plato, to a powerful repression throughout the history of Western culture. One can now follow its symptomatology, which begins with the erasure of the name of Democritus in the writings of Plato, even though Plato was familiar with his doctrine. He probably feared that one might draw some conclusion as to the proximity, or even the filiation, of some of his philosophemes. I leave it to you to pursue this path as well.

I have just named Democritus, after speaking of only his disciples and of the disciples of his disciples: Epicurus, Lucretius, Gassendi. Now, *fourth chance*, here is the master in person in Freud's text, Democritus the father, Democritus as analyst and decipherer of symptoms. This is not the only

reason that I will cite the passage at the end of chapter 9 of *Psychopathology* ("Symptomatic and Chance Actions"). In the same passage (is this by chance?), Freud also recalls the privilege of literature and the priority of the poet, who has already said everything that the psychoanalyst would like to say. The latter therefore can only repeat and indebt himself within a filiation; he does so, in particular, on the subject of the symptomal deciphering of seemingly insignificant accidents. The absolute precursor, the grandfather here is the author of *Tristram Shandy*. I therefore quote Freud quoting someone else quoting Laurence Sterne (a paragraph and quotation that Freud added later as if to make amends for something previously forgotten in the edition of 1920):

> In the field of symptomatic acts, too, psycho-analytic observation must concede priority to imaginative writers [*Dichter*]. It can only repeat what they have said long ago. Wilhelm Stross has drawn my attention to the following passage in Laurence Sterne's celebrated humorous novel, *Tristram Shandy* (Volume VI, Chapter V): " . . . And I am not at all surprised that *Gregory* of *Nazianzum*, upon observing the hasty and untoward gestures *Julian*, should foretell he would one day become an apostate;—or that St. *Ambrose* should turn his *Amanuensis* out of doors, because of an indecent motion of his head, which bent backwards and forwards like a flail;—or that *Democritus* should conceive *Protagoras* to be a scholar, from seeing him bind up a faggot, and thrusting, as he did it, the small twigs inwards.—There are a thousand unnoticed openings, continued my father, which let a penetrating eye at once into a man's soul; and I maintain it, added he, that a man of sense does not lay down his hat in coming into a room,—or take it up in going out of it, but something escapes, which discovers him." (213)

In this linked chain of quotations going back to Democritus, the *descendance* will not have escaped you. Freud acknowledges the debt of the psychoanalyst, which is also a filiation. This filiation is exemplary: it commits Freud with respect to Sterne quoted by Stross who in turn quotes, from *Tristram Shandy*, the speech of a father. It is a father who speaks and whom he makes speak, via the mouth of his son, about the thousand unnoticed openings or orifices ("a thousand unnoticed openings, continued my father, which let a penetrating eye [*ein scharfes Auge*] at once into a man's soul"). By the mouth of his son, and by that of the poet, this father will have cited in turn the ancestor of ancestors in this matter, namely, Democritus, the prototype of the analyst who knew how to diagnose science itself, that is, "scholarship," the *Gelehrtheit* of Protagoras,

beginning with nothing, with mere twigs. Democritus did not identify just any symptom. In interpreting an operation that consisted of *binding up* in a certain way insignificant things, elementary twigs, of binding them in a regular and not a haphazard fashion, by turning them inward, Democritus deciphers a symptom that is quite simply the symptom of knowledge, of the desire for knowledge, the *libido sciendi*, scholarship, the *skholē*: both what tends toward laborious study and what suspends ordinary activity, the everyday relation to praxis, for this end. Protagoras is a kind of analyst: a man of linking and unlinking, of the re-solution (*analuein*). There you have the diagnosis that the analyst Dupin-Democritus pronounces on this subject upon looking at the symptom. In this textual abyss, there are thus only analysts, that is, analysands, all of them more engendered, generated, indebted, affiliated, subjected, than the others, all descended or fallen from a series of proto-analysts in an eminently divisible chain of proper names and singularities: Freud, Stross, Sterne, the son and the father in *Tristram Shandy*, Protagoras, Democritus, and so on. Each of them has interpreted and reduced, with the same blow, a random series. Each of them has given it to be read by the other—before the other. This chain is heterogeneous: there are only proper names, the texts and situations being different each time, yet all the subjects are inscribed and implicated in the scene that they claim to interpret. And the general mise-en-scène certainly seems to be literary more than anything else. In Freud's own words, it is *Tristram Shandy*. The great rendezvous would be the performative of the work. One should moreover follow the theme of the rendezvous (*Zusammentreffen, Zusammenkunft*) in the *Psychopathology*, notably in the last chapter.

Science and chance: this is the question that has just been raised for us. It is also the question of determinism and randomness (the title of the last chapter of *Psychopathology* is "Determinism, Belief in Chance and Superstition"). What happens to an interpretive science when its object is psychical and implicates there in some way the subject itself of that science? In this form, the question is rather classical. What happens when the scientist acknowledges his debt or dependence with regard to apparently nonscientific statements such as, for example, poetic or literary ones? And when an analytic attitude becomes a symptom? When a tendency to interpret what falls—well or ill—that is, incidents or accidents, in a manner that reintroduces there determinism, necessity, or signification, signifies in turn an abnormal or pathological relation to the real? For example, what

is the difference between superstition or paranoia on the one hand, and science on the other, if they all mark a compulsive propensity to interpret random signs so as to restore to them a meaning, necessity, destination?

Freud asks himself this question in the same chapter. And he must do so in a quasi-autobiographical manner. Implicating himself in the scene, he tells us in sum (and here we could parody a Nietzschean title, a type of Freudian *Ecce Homo*): *Why I am a good analyst* or *Why I am above all not superstitious—and even less paranoid*, why I find just the right measure in my desire to interpret, why this desire is simply normal. In other words, why I have a very good relation to chance and am lucky in my dealings with luck. That, Freud is going to tell us, is what my chances are. What are his chances? He has to tell us a story, whether true or false, it little matters. Remember that in 1897 he confided to Fliess his conviction that no "indications of reality" of any sort exist in the unconscious and that it is impossible to distinguish between truth and "fiction that has been cathected with affect."[7] But we are going to see that Freud will not have been able to claim that his work is scientific—in a classical sense—except by reintroducing this limit between, if you will, *Wahrheit* and *Dichtung*.

Here is the exemplary story. It is not a story about vacations, like the one about the *fort/da* with the mother; and yet it is the same story, this time upon returning from vacation, between two types of *skholē*: leisure and study. Coming home from vacation, Freud is thinking of the patients he is going to see again and, to begin with, of an elderly, ninety-year-old woman about whom he has already spoken and on whom for several years he has practiced various medical manipulations. Each year he wonders how much time the old woman has left. This particular day, Freud is in a hurry, so he has himself driven by a coachman who, like all those in the neighborhood, knows the patient's address. He knows the destination: all the problems we're talking about fall under the general category of the address, routing, the destination, and hence the throw [*jet*] or the project of a dispatch [*projet d'un envoi*]. The fall, the accident, the case always comes to affect the dispatch with some interruption or detour that creates a symptom. (This is why I permit myself to inscribe these modest reflections following on more patiently elaborated work concerned with the relation between psychoanalysis, literature, and philosophy, on the one hand, and the question of the dispatch [*envoi*] and destination, on the other.) The coachman who knows the address, the correct address, nevertheless stops in front of another house that has the same number

(always this question of number) on a parallel street. Freud reproaches the man for this, who excuses himself. Is this error concerning the address an accident or else does it mean something? Freud's answer is clear and firm, at least in appearance: "Certainly not to me, but if I were *superstitious* [abergläubisch], I should see an omen [*Vorzeichen*] in the incident, the finger of fate [*Fingerzeig des Schicksals*] announcing that this year would be the old lady's last" (257).

Along the way, two values of destination superimpose themselves upon each other: that of the address or place of destination and that of destiny (*Schicksal*), the dimension and direction of that which is dispatched, sent, *geschickt*. (One of the meanings of *adresse* in French—skillfulness [*habilité*]—also translates the word *Geschick*.)

One wonders, then, if the false address (and the coachman's apparent *maladresse* or blunder) do not in advance point toward the true and correct destination—namely, the coming death of the old woman. Did not the coachman finally go to the right address, the one that falls as needed [*celle où ça tombe bien*] to speak of the accident that will not be long in coming? The sign of bad luck [*malchance ou méchance*] would be inverted; it would be the chance for truth to reveal itself. A lapsus is revealing in the sense that it gives another truth its chance. The limit between consciousness and the unconscious, or even between the unconscious "I" and the other of consciousness, is perhaps this possibility for my fortune [*mes chances*] to be misfortune [*malchance*] and for my *méchance* to be in truth a chance.

Freud declares that he does not stop, in this case, at the revelation of *Schicksal* by the "Address" since he knows that he is not superstitious. He considers the incident (*Vorfall*) to be an accident or a contingency without further meaning (*eine Zufälligkeit ohne weiteren Sinn*). It would have been different, he continues, if he *himself* had been the origin—of the error and if, by distraction and on foot, he had stopped at the wrong address. In that case, there would have been *Vergehen*—misconduct and mistaken path—unconscious intention calling for interpretation (*Deutung*). All of this without the least chance (*Zufall*). But that is not the case. It's the coachman who made the mistake and Freud, as he insists, is not superstitious. Otherwise, he would have stopped at this interpretation. But he did not stop there. Or at least not for very long, since it was necessary for the question to arise for him and for the hypothesis to have crossed his mind. He distinguishes himself from a superstitious person only when concluding, at the instant of judgment, and not at all during the interpretation. But Freud does not recognize this at any point in the following paragraph, while explaining to us everything that distinguishes him from a superstitious person. He will merely end up admitting that he has in common with a superstitious person the tendency, the "compulsion" (*Zwang*) to interpret: "not to let chance count as chance but to interpret it." The hermeneutic compulsion: that is what superstition and "normal" psychoanalysis have in common, and Freud says so very plainly [*en toutes lettres*]. He does not believe in chance, any more than a superstitious man does, which means that they both believe in chance, if to believe in chance means that one believes that all chance means something—and therefore that there is no chance. Hence the identity of non-chance and chance, of *mé-chance* and *chance*, of bad luck and good.

Before examining the criterion proposed by Freud to distinguish between these two hermeneutic compulsions, we'll make a brief detour in the vicinity of all these chances, concerning which I am less and less sure whether they are *méchance*, my chances [*mes chances*], or those of Freud. I have reread as if for the first time the story of the address and the coachman. Notice that the latter seems to have had neither of the two compulsions and appears not to have asked himself any questions; and Freud seems to exclude very quickly all communication between his driver's unconscious and his own. Following my own compulsion, then, I suddenly said to myself: "and what if the old woman were Freud's mother?" You know how much he feared the death of his mother, to be sure, but he was also afraid of dying before her—a double bind. For all kinds of reasons, which become obvious upon reading, this patient could not simply be his mother. She could nevertheless represent his mother and occupy her place. Now here is my chance, the fourth, I believe:[8] Freud had already spoken of this old woman in a passage that I find again right away, and in his phantasm, as he exhibits and interprets it himself, it is indeed his mother. It is a matter, he tells us, of the sole case of medical error in his experience as a doctor. Instead of administering two drops of eye lotion in the woman's eyes and giving her an injection of morphine, as usual, Freud does the opposite: the morphine in her eyes. It is not a dream of injection, as in the case of Irma, but the reality of an instillation and of a liquid that he should have injected. Freud gets frightened although there is no real danger. A few drops of 2 percent morphine in the conjunctival sac can cause no great harm. But in analyzing this disproportionate fear,

which is a symptom, he falls upon the common expression "sich an der Alten vergreifen" (to do violence to the old woman), *vergreifen* meaning both "to make a blunder" and "to commit an assault" (cf. Strachey). This puts him on the trail of Oedipus and Jocasta. He devotes a long development to all this in a passage to which I refer you ("Bungled Actions," ch. 8 in the *Standard Edition*; "Méprises et maladresses" in the French translation; "Das Vergreifen" in German). Most of the symptoms in this chapter happen to be falls.

Let us return to the insurmountable frontiers that Freud wants to justify at any cost between a superstitious person and himself. He does not propose a general distinction. Speaking in the first person, he deploys all his eloquence to convince us of the fact that he is above all not superstitious: "I am therefore different from a superstitious person in the following . . . " [*Ich unterscheide mich also von einem Abergläubischen in folgendem* . . .]. All of his declarations are in the explicit mode of the: "I believe," "I do not believe," "I am not superstitious because," "Ich glaube dass" or "Ich glaube nicht dass." What does he not believe? That an event that takes place without his psychic life having any part in it (the coachman's error, for example) could teach him anything about a reality to come. But he believes that an apparently nonintentional manifestation of his psychic life unveils something hidden that belongs only to his psychic life. He summarizes this as follows: "I believe in external (real) chance, it is true, but not in internal (psychical) accidental events. With the superstitious person it is the other way round." A rather abrupt way of gathering things up and marking limits. Freud forgets to formalize what he has just stated: the relation to the future. I must leave this point aside. It communicates with the laborious distinction that Freud attempts elsewhere between telepathy and thought-transference. Permit me to refer here once again to the fragment detached from *La carte postale* that I titled "Telepathy" (191 above).

"I believe [*Ich glaube*] in external (real) chance, it is true, but not in internal (psychical) accidental events. With the superstitious person, it is the other way round [*Der Abergläubische umgekehrt*]." One must read this vocabulary of belief very carefully. Even as he uses the word "belief," Freud seems in effect to oppose a normal attitude, that of scientific objectivity, to superstitious belief, that of the *Abergläubische*, which he claims not to be. He opposes one belief to another, a belief to a credulity. He believes in determinism in the internal and psychical domain. This does

not mean—and it is here that one must be careful, I believe—that he does not believe there is determinism in the external world, or that he would accept to think that the world is doomed to chance or to chaos. One could find a thousand declarations by Freud attesting to a thorough determinist conviction in the style of the positivism of his day. He even hoped one day to see the science of the psyche welded in a certain way to the biophysical sciences. And in the precise context we are analyzing right now, he is interested only in the type of *belief*, attitude, or subjective experience appropriate for founding a scientific objectivity in a delimited domain, that of psychical events. One must not confuse the domains, that is what he tells us, or the causalities proper to each of the domains. For example, one must not confuse what refers to the biophysical and organic in the drive with what is represented of it in the world of the psyche. These are the limits that the superstitious person does not recognize in his or her disbelief in psychical determinism. Freud does believe in it: and he affirms here his project of founding psychoanalysis as a positive science. This tradition has continued. For example, Lacan follows Freud to the letter on this point, when he says that a letter always arrives at its destination. There is no random chance in the unconscious. The apparent effects of randomness must be placed in the service of an ineluctable necessity that in truth they never contradict.

Since we are speaking of chance, we could try to calculate the probabilities of the appearance, at a given historico-theoretical juncture, of an event named "psychoanalysis" as a project of positive science. This is not my subject, however.

I do not believe, then, that Freud believes in *real* chance in external things. For him, the *believing experience* that *finite* beings have of this external world, once the two series, worlds, or contexts are dissociated (inside/outside), is, *normally* and *legitimately*, the one that accepts chance, a margin of random probability that it would not be normal or serious to want to reduce or exclude. One would say thus, as in a classical determinist conception, that *effects* of randomness (empirically observed) arise in the interference of relatively independent series, of "little worlds" that are not closed. The implicit question to which Freud responds is not, then, the larger one of random chance (objective or subjective, in things or in us, mathematical or empirical). It is not this question in its modern or classical form. It is only the question of the *believing attitude* in the face of random effects, given the two series of causality: psychical/physical, inter-

nal/external. Of course these two series or two contextual worlds are only distinguishable from within a culture (or a "world") that forms their most general context. It is for us, Westerners, the culture of common sense, marked by a powerful scientifico-philosophic tradition, metaphysics, technics, the opposition of subject/object, and precisely a certain organization of the throw [*jet*]. Through many differentiated relays, this culture goes back at least to Plato, and the repression of Democritus perhaps leaves the trace there of a large symptom. Without being able to follow this path today, I merely situate what I have called above a *mark*: in the construction of their concept, none of the limits or oppositions I have just invoked is considered, from the point of view of the mark, absolutely pertinent or decisive, but rather as a presupposition to be deconstructed.

We also know that in other passages, in other problematic contexts, Freud carefully avoids ontologizing or substantializing the limit between outside and inside, between the biophysical and the psychical. But in *Psychopathology* and elsewhere, he needs this limit: not only in order to protect the fragile, enigmatic, threatened, defensive state called "normality" but also in order to isolate a solid context (once again stereotomy), the unity of a field of coherent and determinist interpretation, what we so blithely call, in the singular, psychoanalysis [la *psychanalyse*]. But he already had great difficulties with this, as he did in those other places where he broaches such formidable problems as those of the drive ("a concept . . . on the frontier between the mental and the physical"),[9] telepathy, or thought-transference. At least to the extent that he isolates psychoanalysis, the science of the psychical, and that he means to cut if off from the other sciences, Freud provisionally suspends all epistemological relations to the sciences or to the modern problems concerning chance. He wants, in short, to constitute a science of *experience* (conscious or unconscious) as the relation of a finite being thrown into the world. And this thrown-being *projects* [*Cet être-jeté* projette].

Right here, it is all the more difficult for Freud to maintain this limit, the one that separates him from the superstitious person, inasmuch as they have in common the hermeneutic compulsion. If the superstitious person projects (*projiziert*), if he casts outward and before himself the "motivations" that Freud, for his part, says he seeks on the inside, if he interprets chance from the standpoint of an external "event" where Freud reduces it or brings it back to a "thought," it is because at bottom the superstitious person does not believe, any more than Freud does, in the solidity of the spaces isolated by our Western stereotomy. He does not believe in the contextualizing and framing, but not real, limits between the psychical and the physical, inside and outside, not to mention all of the other adjoining oppositions. More so than Freud, more so than this Freud here, the superstitious person is sensitive to the precariousness of the contextual isolations, of the epistemological frames, the *constructa* and the *artifacta* that allow us, for the convenience of life and in order to master the limited networks of knowledge and technics, to separate the psychical from the physical or inside from outside. The superstitious person simply has a different experience of this same finitude.

But let us not make the superstitious person into a thinker capable of deconstructing the limits that Freud, for his part, would maintain here dogmatically in order to isolate the field of a scientific psychoanalysis. Inversely, if I may be permitted to suggest this, some sensitivity to superstition is perhaps not a useless goad for deconstructive desire. But in fact, in Freud's eyes, the superstitious person, no more than the man of religion, no more than the metaphysician, is not the one who questions limits in the name of science or of Enlightenment, or even of deconstruction. It is someone who, maintaining these limits, projects toward the outside what is inside and what he lives in himself. Through this concept of *projection*, the schema of the *jet* or the throw furnishes once more the essential mediation. In the next paragraph, Freud again describes superstition, modern religion, metaphysics itself as "nothing but psychology projected [*projizierte*] into the external world" (257). (These projections evidently have a structure of fiction. And, as in the unconscious, one does not distinguish here between reality and "emotionally charged fiction.") This paragraph multiplies the analogies, and Freud gets tangled up in them. Such is always the case when he is forced to cross over the limits or the "frames of reference" that are at once convenient and without solidity. Lacking the time for a more extensive development, I quote and emphasize the terms that pinpoint the difficulty:

> The obscure recognition (the endopsychic perception, *as it were*) of psychical factors and relations in the unconscious is *mirrored—it is difficult to express it in other terms* [spiegelt sich—es ist schwer, es anders zu sagen], *and here the analogy with paranoia must come to our aid*—in the construction of a supernatural reality, which is destined to be changed back once more by science into the psychology of the unconscious. One could venture to explain in this way the myths of paradise and the *fall* of man, of God, of good and evil, of

> immortality and so on, and *to transform metaphysics into metapsychology.* The gap between the paranoiac's displacement and that of the superstitious person is less wide than it appears at first sight. . . . They [primitive human beings] behaved, therefore, just like paranoiacs, who draw conclusions from insignificant signs given them by other people, and just like all normal people, who quite rightly base their estimate of their neighbours' characters on their chance and unintentional actions. (258–59)

This discourse is constructed on an impressive series of approximations and declared analogies. It does not only interpret the motif of the fall or the decline [*déchéance*], of man's *méchance* as a superstitious or even paranoid projection, in any case, a psychological one. It does not only suggest, as in *Totem and Taboo*, that there is a certain analogy between paranoid mania and a (deformed) philosophical system. It also projects the reconversion into science or into metapsychology of the metaphysical discourse *from which it nonetheless obtains the very concepts for this project and this operation*, notably the oppositional limits between the psychical and the physical, inside and outside, not to mention all the oppositions that depend on them. Playing fiction against fiction, projection against projection, this gesture could appear, depending on the case, naïve or audacious, dogmatic or hypercritical. I will not choose between them, and I wonder if there really is a choice.

Freud works by playing with the topologies and the conceptual limits of inherited discourses, be they philosophical or scientific. The provisional isolation of an explanatory context—one could say of a field of knowledge—supposes each time something like the performative of a convention and a fiction, as well as the contract that guarantees new performatives. Freud acknowledges that he does not believe in the substantial value of these limits or in the definitive character of these isolations. Given a certain state of the discourse, of discourses and of several sciences at the same time, given the necessity of constituting a theory and a practice, the assignment of these limits imposes itself. But it imposes itself on someone—on him, for example—at a particular moment in a particular situation. There is nothing relativist or empiricist in this remark. Elsewhere, I have tried to show how the inscription of the proper name, of a certain autobiography, and of a fictional projection had to be constitutive for psychoanalytic discourse, in the very structure of its event. This event thus poses within itself the questions of chance and literature. Not that all fiction and all inscriptions of proper names have a literary dimension

or a relation to the work of art as such. But they arise in that place where, between the movement of science—notably when it concerns random structures—that of philosophy, that of the arts—literary or not—the limits cannot be real and immobile, cannot be *solid*, but only the effects of contextual isolation. Neither linear nor indivisible, they would pertain rather to an analysis that I will call (with some circumspection) *pragrammatological*, at the intersection of a pragmatics and a grammatology. Open to another thinking of the dispatch [*envoi*], of dispatches, this pragrammatology must each time take into account the situation of the *marks*, in particular of the utterances, the place of senders and addressees, the framing, the sociohistorical outline [*découpage*], and so forth. It should therefore take account of the problematics of randomness in all fields where it evolves: physics, biology, game theory, and so forth. In this respect, the advent of psychoanalysis is not just a complex event in terms of its historical probability. It is the advent of a discourse that is still open and that attempts at each instant to model itself—while affirming its originality—on a scientific and artistic treatment of randomness, which has not ceased transforming itself throughout the century. One finds here overdetermined comings and goings, a play of advances and delays that I have to renounce specifying, but that I wish to illustrate, in conclusion, with a quotation. If I conclude with the conclusion of "Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of His Childhood," it is for three reasons. These do not exclude the randomness of the moment in which, as my exposé appears far too long, *la chute* (in French one says *la chute* or the *envoi* for the end of a speech) leads me to fall on this text rather than another. This will be *my last chance.* It is the moment when, in one blow, two dice come to a standstill and then one counts up the results. One then touches upon the incalculable or the innumerable.

Freud concludes, as you will see, with an allusion to the incalculable and the innumerable, which is the first reason to cite this text. But it is a question, precisely, of the incalculable and the innumerable reasons or causes (*ragioni, causes, Ursachen*) that are in nature and that "never enter experience." Second reason: this allusion to nature as "full of countless causes that never enter experience" is a quasi-citation and from an artist. Once again indebtedness and filiation. Freud cites Leonardo da Vinci, concerning whom he has just acknowledged that a certain random enigma puts him out of reach of analytical science. But he cites da Vinci foreshadowing Shakespeare, or rather the son, Hamlet: "La natura è piena

d'infinite ragioni che non furono mai in insperienza," instead of "There are more things in heaven and earth Horatio / Than are dreamt of in your philosophy." Through numerous mediators, the debt is once again acknowledged with respect to the poet or even to a dramatic character that so many have wanted to lay down [*incliner*] on the couch. Perhaps literature need not resist this clinic. To stay with our present subject, let us say that art, in particular the art of discourse and literature, represents only a certain power of indeterminacy that stems from the capacity of isolating *performatively* its own context for its own event, that of the "oeuvre." It is perhaps a certain freedom, a large margin in the play of this isolation. This stereotomic margin is very large and perhaps even the largest of all at a certain period in history, but it is not infinite. The appearance of arbitrariness or chance (literature as the place of proper names, if you will) has to do with this margin. But it is also the place of the greatest symptomatology. Giving the greatest chance to chance, it reappropriates chance as necessity or inevitableness. This margin plays nature for fortune—and art: "Nature's above art in that respect" (Lear). The third reason, then, for this quotation: it appeases the sense of remorse or misfortune ("How malicious is my fortune," says the bastard Edmund in *King Lear*), my regret at not having attempted with you, as I initially projected, an analysis of *King Lear*, going beyond what Freud says of it in *The Theme of the Three Caskets* (1913). I would have followed the play of Nature and Fortune there, of the words "Nature" and "Fortune," and also of the very numerous "letters" (for example, "a thrown letter"), of the "wisdom of nature," of prediction ("there's son against father: the king falls from bias of nature"), of "planetary influence" for "a sectary astronomical," of "epicurism," of "posts," letters and lips to unseal, of the "gentle wax" and of the "reason in madness" of Lear ("I am even / The natural fool of fortune"). And at another tempo, but this will be for another time, I would have tried to read together, between Shakespeare's lines, what both Freud and Heidegger say about *Moira* (in *The Theme of the Three Caskets* and in *Moira*). As in a compromise solution between what I retain and what I renounce here, I take my chances with this quotation of a quotation of a quotation. I quote Freud quoting da Vinci announcing Shakespeare. Notice the admirable play of limits and self-limitations, which I underscore in passing. These are the throws [*coups*] and the chances of psychoanalysis. I will do no more than propose a title in English for this quotation:

III. Subliming dissemination

> Instincts and their transformations [*Die Triebe und ihre Umwandlungen*] are at the limit of what is discernible by psycho-analysis. From that point it gives place to biological research. We are obliged to look for the source of the tendency to repression and the capacity for sublimation in the organic foundations of character on which the mental structure is only afterwards erected. Since artistic talent and capacity are intimately connected with sublimation we must admit that the nature of artistic function is also inaccessible to us along psychoanalytic lines. The tendency of biological research to-day is to explain the chief features in a person's organic constitution as being the result of the blending of male and female dispositions, based on [chemical] substances. Leonardo's physical beauty and his lefthandedness might be quoted in support of this view. *We will not, however, leave the ground of purely psychological research.* (my emphasis—JD)

Once again deliberate self-limitation gives psychoanalysis its only chance as a science. It isolates a context into which external randomness no longer penetrates. Biogenetics is not devoid of randomness and neither is the psyche, but the orders or the random sequences must not communicate or cross over within the same set, at least if one wants to distinguish between orders of calculable necessity. There must be no bastardizing or hybridization, no accidental grafts between these two generalities, genres, or genealogies. But, one might ask the author of "Leonardo," how is one to eliminate the dice throws of bastardy? Is not the concept of sublimation, like that of the drive, precisely the concept of bastardy?

> Our aim remains that of demonstrating the connection along the path of instinctual activity between a person's external experiences and his reactions. Even if psycho-analysis does not throw light on the fact of Leonardo's artistic power, it at least renders its manifestations and its limitations intelligible to us. It seems at any rate as if only a man who had had Leonardo's childhood experiences could have painted the *Mona Lisa* and the *St. Anne*, have secured so melancholy a fate for his works, and have embarked on such an astonishing career as a natural scientist, as if the key to all his achievements and *misfortunes* lay hidden in the childhood phantasy of the vulture.
>
> But may one not take objection to the findings of an inquiry which ascribes to accidental circumstances [*Zufälligkeiten*] of his parental constellation so decisive an influence on a person's fate [*Schicksal*]—which, for example, makes Leonardo's fate depend on his illegitimate birth and on the barrenness of his first stepmother Donna Albiera? I think one has no right to do so. If one considers chance [*Zufall*] to be unworthy of determining our fate, it is

simply a relapse into the pious view of the Universe which Leonardo himself was on the way of overcoming when he wrote that the sun does not move. We naturally feel hurt that a just God and a kindly providence do not protect us better from such influences during the most defenceless period of our lives. At the same time we are all too ready to forget that in fact everything to do with our life is chance [*Zufall*], from our origin out of the meeting of spermatozoon and ovum onwards [this is *also* what I call, in my language, dissemination]—chance which nevertheless has a share in the law and necessity of nature, and which merely lacks any connection with our wishes and illusions. The apportioning of the determining factors of our life between the "necessities" of our constitution and the "chances" [*Zufälligkeiten*] of our childhood may still be uncertain in detail; but in general it is no longer possible to doubt the importance precisely of the first years of our childhood. We all still show too little respect for Nature, which (in the obscure words of Leonardo which recall Hamlet's lines) "is full of countless causes [*ragioni*] that never enter experience."

Every one of us human beings corresponds to one of the countless experiments in which these *"ragioni"* of nature force their way into experience.[10]

Freud loves nature and takes good care of it.

Among the paths through which Nature erupts into our experience, a mistake is always possible, a *Vergreifen* or bastardy.

On his way to take care of Nature, Freud can still be mistaken about the address or the *pharmakon*, he can replace the eye drops with morphine, the old woman could be his mother or his mother-in-law, and the "I" of the coachman is perhaps not an other. He is perhaps not good. Perhaps he is a bastard, perhaps it is I rereading, under the influence of some drug, the myth of the harnessing and fall of souls in the *Phaedrus*. But Plato too, already, explains there that coachmen are always "good" and composed of "good elements" (*ex agathōn* [274a]), whereas for other beings there is a mixture. It is true that Plato makes Socrates speak, who cites Stesichorus, and that prior to the myth, he reminds us that "there is no true language if . . . " (*ouk est etumos logos os an* . . . [244a]). I leave you to pick things up from here.

—Translated by Irene Harvey and Avital Ronell

§ 15 Racism's Last Word

APARTHEID—may that remain the name from now on, the unique appellation for the ultimate racism in the world, the last of many. May it thus remain, but may a day come when it will be only for human memory.

A memory in advance: that, perhaps, is the time given for this Exhibition. At once urgent and untimely, it exposes itself to and takes a chance with time, it wagers and affirms beyond the wager. Without counting on any present moment, it offers only a foresight in painting, very close to silence, and the rearview vision of a future for which APARTHEID will be the name of something finally abolished. Confined and abandoned then to this silence of memory, the name will resonate all by itself, reduced to the state of a term in disuse. The thing it names today will be no longer.

But hasn't APARTHEID always been the archival record of the unnamable?

The exhibition, therefore, is not a presentation. Nothing is delivered here in the present, nothing that would be presentable—only, in tomorrow's rearview mirror, the late, ultimate racism, the last of many.

Text published in 1983 at the opening of an exhibition destined to become a museum against Apartheid. It brought together a hundred or so works that have since constituted a traveling exhibition. The association of Artists of the World Against Apartheid, made up of painters, sculptors, and writers, promised to give this museum "to the first free and democratic South African government, elected by universal suffrage."

1

THE LAST: *le dernier* as one sometimes says in French in order to signify "the worst." One is thereby situating the extreme of baseness, just as, in English, one might say "the lowest of the. . . . " It is to the lowest degree, the last of a series, but also what comes along at the end of a history or in the last analysis to fulfill the law of some process and reveal the thing's truth, here finishing off the essence of evil, the worst, the superlative evil of the essence—as if there were something like a racism par excellence, the most racist of racisms.

THE LAST as one says also of the most recent, the last to date of all the world's racisms, the oldest and the youngest. For one must recall that, although racial segregation didn't wait for it to come along, the name "apartheid" became order's *watchword* and won its title in the political code of South Africa only at the end of World War II. At a time when *all* racisms on the face of the earth were condemned, it was in the world's face that the National Party dared to campaign "for the separate development of each race in the geographic zone assigned to it."

Since then, no tongue has ever translated this name—as if all the parlances of the world were defending themselves, shutting their mouths against a sinister incorporation of the thing by means of the word, as if all tongues were refusing to give an equivalent, refusing to let themselves be contaminated through the contagious hospitality of the word-for-word. Here, then, is an immediate response to the obsessiveness of this racism, to the compulsive terror that above all forbids contact. White must not let itself be touched by black, be it even at the remove of language or symbol. Blacks do not have the right to touch the flag of the Republic. In 1964, South Africa's Ministry of Public Works sought to assure the cleanliness of national emblems by means of a regulation stipulating that it is "forbidden for non-Europeans to handle them."

Apartheid: by itself the word occupies the terrain like a concentration camp. System of partition, barbed wire, crowds of squared-off solitudes. Within the limits of this untranslatable idiom, a violent arrest of the mark, the glaring harshness of abstract essence (*heid*) seems to speculate on another regime of abstraction, that of confined separation. The word concentrates separation, raises it to another power, and sets separation itself *apart*: apartitionality, something like that. By isolating being-apart in some sort of essence or hypostasis, the word corrupts it into a quasi-ontological segregation. In any case, like all racisms, it tends to pass segregation off as natural—and as the very law of the origin. Monstrosity of this political idiom. To be sure, an idiom should never incline toward racism. It often does, however, and this is not altogether fortuitous. No racism without a language. The point is not that acts of racial violence are only words but rather that they have to have a word. Even though it alleges blood, color, birth or, rather, *because* it uses this naturalist and sometimes creationist discourse, racism always betrays the perversion of a human "talking animal." It institutes, declares, writes, inscribes, prescribes. A system of marks, it designs places in order to assign forced residence or to close off borders. It does not discern, it discriminates.

THE LAST, finally, since this last-born of many racisms is also the only one surviving in the world, at least the only one still exhibiting itself in a political constitution. It remains the only one on the scene that dares to say its name and to present itself for what it is: a legal defiance assumed by Homo politicus, a juridical racism and a state racism. Such is the ultimate imposture of a so-called state of law that doesn't hesitate to base itself on a would-be original hierarchy—of natural right or divine right, the two are never mutually exclusive.

The sinister renown of this name apart will, then, be unique. *Apartheid* is renowned, in sum, for manifesting the last extremity of racism, its end and the narrow-minded self-sufficiency of its intention, its eschatology, the death rattle of what is already an interminable agony, something like the setting in the West of racism—but also, and this will have to be specified below, racism as a Western thing.

2

In order to respond to this singularity or, better yet, to answer it back, the singularity right here of another event takes its measure. Painters from all over the world are preparing to launch a new satellite, a vehicle whose dimensions can hardly be determined except as a satellite of humanity. In truth, it measures itself against *apartheid* only so as to remain in no measure comparable with its system, its power, its fantastic riches, its excessive armament, the worldwide network of its openly declared or shamefaced accomplices. The force of this unarmed exhibition will be altogether other, and its trajectory will be without example.

For its movement does not yet belong to any time or space that might be measured today. Its course rushes headlong, it commemorates in anticipation: not the event that is but the one it calls forth. Its course, in sum,

is as much that of a planet as of a satellite. A planet, as its name indicates, is first of all a body destined to wander, to a migration that, in this case, has no certain end.

In all the world's capitals whose momentary guest it will be, the Exhibition will not, so to speak, take place, not yet, not *its* place. It will remain in exile in sight of its proper residence, its place of destination to come—and to create. For such is here the *invention* and the oeuvre of which it is fitting to speak: South Africa beyond *apartheid*, South Africa in memory of *apartheid*.

Such would be the heading and the cape to be rounded, yet everything will have begun with exile. Born in exile, the Exhibition already bears witness against the forced assignment to the "natural" territory, to the geography of birth. And if, condemned to an endless course or immobilized far from an unshakable South Africa, it never reaches its destination, it will not only keep the archival record of a failure or a despair but continue to *say* something, something that can be heard today, in the present.

This new satellite of humanity, then, will move from place to place, it too, like a mobile and stable habitat, "mobile" and "stabile," a place of observation, information, and witness. A satellite is a guard, it keeps watch and gives warning: Do not forget *apartheid*, save humanity from this evil, an evil that cannot be summed up in the principial and abstract iniquity of a system. It is also daily suffering, oppression, poverty, violence, torture inflicted by an arrogant white minority (16 percent of the population, controlling 60 to 65 percent of the national revenue) on the mass of the black population. The information compiled by Amnesty International in *Political Imprisonment in South Africa* and on the whole of the judicial and penal reality is appalling.[1]

Yet, what can be done so that this witness-satellite, in the truth it exposes, is not taken over and controlled, so that it does not become another technical device, the antenna of some new politico-military strategy, useful machinery for the exploitation of new resources, or the calculation in view of better understood interests?

So as better to pose this question, which awaits an answer only from the future inasmuch as it remains inconceivable, let us return to immediate appearances. Here is an Exhibition—as one continues to say in the old language of the West: "works of art," signed "creations," in the present case "pictures" or "paintings." In this collective and international Exhibition (and there's nothing new about that either), pictural idioms will be crossing, but they will be attempting to speak the other's language without renouncing their own. And, starting now, in order to effect this translation, their common reference makes an appeal to a language that cannot be found, a language at once very old, older than Europe, but for that very reason still to be invented.

3

Why mention the European age in this fashion? Why this reminder of such a trivial fact—that all these words are part of the old language of the West?

Because, it seems to me, the aforementioned Exhibition exposes and commemorates the whole of a Western history. That a certain white community of European descent imposes *apartheid* on four-fifths of South Africa's population and maintains (up until 1980!) the *official* lie of a white migration that preceded black migration is not the only reason to say that *apartheid* was a European "creation." Nor for any other such reason: the name of *apartheid* has managed to become a sinister swelling on the body of the world only in that place where Homo politicus europaeus first signed its tattoo. The primary reason, however, is that it is a question of state racism. While all racisms arise from culture and institutions, not all of them put in place state structures. The judicial simulacrum and the political theater of this state racism have no meaning and would have had no chance outside a European "discourse" on the concept of race. That discourse belongs to a whole system of "phantasms," to a certain representation of nature, life, history, religion, and law, to the very culture that succeeded in giving rise to this state takeover. No doubt there is also here—and it bears repeating—a contradiction internal to the West and to the assertion of its rights. No doubt *apartheid* was instituted and maintained against the British Commonwealth, following a long adventure that began with England's abolition of slavery in 1834, at which time the impoverished Boers undertook the Great Trek toward the Orange Free State and the Transvaal. But this contradiction only confirms the Western essence of the historical process—in its incoherences, its compromises, and its stabilization. Since World War II, at least if one accepts the givens of a certain kind of calculation, the stability of the Pretoria regime has been prerequisite to the political, economic, and strategic equilibrium of Europe. The survival of western Europe depends on it. Whether one is talking about gold or what are called strategic ores, it is well known that at least three fourths of the world's share of them is divided between the

USSR and South Africa. Even if it were indirect, Soviet control over this region of the world would provoke, or so think certain Western heads of state, a catastrophe beyond all comparison with the malediction (or the "bad image") of *apartheid*. And then there's the necessity of controlling the route around the Cape, and then there's also the need for resources or jobs that can be provided by the exportation of arms and technological infrastructures—nuclear power plants, for example, even as Pretoria rejects international control and has not signed the nuclear nonproliferation treaty.

Apartheid constitutes, therefore, the *first* "arms shipment," the first product of European exportation. Some might say that this is a diversion and a perversion, and no doubt it is. Yet the thing had to be possible and, what is more, durable. Symbolic condemnations, even when they have been official, have never disrupted diplomatic, economic, or cultural exchanges, the arms shipments, and geopolitical solidarity. Since 1973, *apartheid* has been declared a "crime against humanity" by the General Assembly of the United Nations. Yet, many member countries, including some of the most powerful, are not doing what's required (that's the least one can say) to make things harder for the Pretoria regime or to obligate it to abolish *apartheid*. This contradiction is sharpest no doubt today in France, which has supported more than anywhere else this Exhibition slated to open in Paris.

Supplementary contradictions for the whole of Europe: Certain Eastern European countries—Czechoslovakia and the USSR, for example—maintain their economic trade with South Africa (in phosphoric acids, arms, machine tools, gold). As for the pressures applied to Pretoria to relax certain forms of *apartheid*, in particular those that are called petty and that forbid, for instance, access to public buildings, one should know that these pressures are not always inspired by respect for human rights. The fact is *apartheid also* increases nonproductive expenditures (for example, each "homeland" must have its own policing and administrative machinery); segregation hurts the market economy, limits free enterprise, domestic consumption, and the mobility and training of labor. In a time of unprecedented economic crisis, South Africa has to reckon, both internally and externally, with the forces of a liberal current according to which "*apartheid* is notoriously inefficient from the point of view of economic rationality."[2] This too will have to remain in memory: if one day *apartheid* is abolished, its demise will not be credited only to the account of morality —because morality should not count or keep accounts, to be sure, but because the law of the marketplace will have imposed another standard of calculation, on the scale of a worldwide computer.

4

The theologico-political discourse of *apartheid* has difficulty keeping up sometimes, but it illustrates the same economy, the same intra-European contradiction.

It is not enough to invent the prohibition and to enrich every day the most repressive legal apparatus in the world: in a breathless frenzy of obsessive juridical activity, two hundred laws and amendments were enacted in twenty years (Prohibition of Mixed Marriage Act, 1949; Immorality Amendment Act [against interracial sexual relations]; Group Areas Act, Population Registration Act, 1950; Reservation of Separate Amenities [segregation in movie houses, post offices, swimming pools, on beaches, and so forth]; Motor Carrier Transportation Amendment Act, Extension of University Education Act [separate universities], 1955; segregation in athletic competition has already been widely publicized).

This law is also founded in a theology and these Acts in Scripture. For political power proceeds from God. It therefore remains indivisible. To accord individual rights "to immature social communities" and to those who "openly rebel against God, that is, the communists" would be a "revolt against God." This Calvinist reading of Scripture condemns democracy, the universalism "which seeks the root of humanity in a set of worldwide sovereign relations that includes humanity in a whole." It points out that "Scripture and History each demonstrate that God requires Christian States."[3]

The charter of the Institute for National Christian Education (1948) sets out the only regulations possible for a government of South Africa. It prescribes an education

> in the light of God's word . . . on the basis of the applicable principles of Scripture.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> For each people and each nation is attached to its own native soil which has been allotted to it by the Creator. . . . God wanted nations and peoples to be

separate, and he gave separately to each nation and to each people its particular vocation, its task and its gifts. . . .

. . . . . .

Christian doctrine and philosophy must be practiced. But we desire even more than this: the secular sciences should be taught from the Christian-National perspective on life. . . . Consequently, it is important that teaching personnel be made up of scholars with Christian-National convictions. . . . Unless [the teacher] is Christian, he poses a danger to everyone. . . . This guardianship imposes on the Afrikaner the duty of assuring that the colored peoples are educated in accordance with Christian-National principles. . . . We believe that the well-being and happiness of the colored man resides in his recognition of the fact that he belongs to a separate racial group.

It sometimes happens that this political theology inspires its militants with an original form of antisemitism; thus the National Party excluded Jews up until 1951. This is because the "Hebrewistic" mythology of the Boer people, coming out of its nomadic origins and the Great Trek, excludes any other "Chosen People." None of which prevents (see above) all sorts of worthwhile exchanges with Israel.

But let us never simplify matters. Among all the domestic contradictions thus exported, maintained, and capitalized upon by Europe, there remains one that is not just any one among others: *apartheid* is upheld, to be sure, but also condemned in the name of Christ. There are many signs of this obvious fact. The white resistance movement in South Africa should be saluted. The Christian Institute, created after the Sharpeville massacre in 1961, considers *apartheid* incompatible with the evangelical message, and it publicly supports the banned black political movements. But one should also be aware that it is this same Christian Institute that was, in turn, banned in 1977, not the Institute for National Christian Education.

All of this, of course, in a regime whose formal structures are those of a Western democracy, in the British style, with "universal suffrage" (except for the 72 percent of blacks "foreign" to the Republic and citizens of "Bantustans" that are being pushed "democratically" into the trap of formal independence), a relative freedom of the press, the guarantee of individual rights and of the judicial system.

5

What is South Africa? We have perhaps defined whatever it is that is concentrated in that enigma, but the outline of such analyses has neither dissolved nor dissipated it in the least. Precisely because of this concentration of world history, what resists analysis also calls for thinking otherwise. If it were possible to forget the suffering, the humiliation, the torture, and the deaths, one would be tempted to look at this region of the world as a giant tableau or painting, the screen for some geopolitical computer. Europe, in the enigmatic process of its globalization or becoming-worldwide [*mondialisation*] and of its paradoxical disappearance, seems to project onto this screen, point by point, the silhouette of its internal war, the bottom line of its profits and losses, the double-bind logic of its national and multinational interests. Their dialectical evaluation secures only a provisional stasis in a precarious equilibrium, one whose price today is *apartheid.* All states and all societies are still willing to pay this price, first of all by making someone else pay. At stake, advises the computer, are world peace, the general economy, the marketplace for European labor, and so on. Without minimizing the alleged "reasons of state," we must nevertheless say very loudly and in a single breath: If that's the way it is, then the declarations of the Western states denouncing *apartheid* from the height of international podiums and elsewhere are dialectics of denial. With great fanfare, they try to make the world forget the 1973 verdict: "crime against humanity." If this verdict remains without effect, it is because the customary discourse on humanity, humanism, and human rights has encountered its effective and as yet unthought limit, the limit of the whole system from which it takes meaning. Amnesty International: "As long as *apartheid* lasts, there can be no structure conforming to the generally recognized norms of human rights and able to guarantee their application."

Beyond the worldwide computer and the dialectic of strategic or economic calculations, beyond state-controlled, national, or international agencies, beyond the juridico-political or theologico-political discourse, which henceforth serves only to maintain good conscience or denial, it was, it will have to be, it is necessary to appeal unconditionally to the future of another law and another force beyond the totality of this present.

Here then, it seems to me, is what this Exhibition affirms or summons forth. What it signs with a single stroke. What it must give one to read and to think, and thus to do, and to give yet again, beyond the present of the institutions supporting it or of the foundation that, in turn, it will itself become.

Will it succeed? Will it make of this very thing a work, an oeuvre? Nothing can be guaranteed here, by definition.

But if one day the exhibition wins, yes, *wins* (its place in) South Africa, it will keep the memory of what will never have been, at the moment of these projected, painted, assembled works, the presentation of some present. Even the future perfect can no longer translate the tense, the time of what is being written in this way—and what is doubtless no longer part of the everyday current, of the cursory sense of history.

Isn't this true of any "work"? True of that truth about which it is so difficult to speak? Perhaps.

The exemplary history of "Guernica"—name of the town, name of a hell, name of the work—is not without analogy to the history of this Exhibition, to be sure; it may even have inspired the idea. The painting *Guernica* denounces civilized barbarism, and from out of its exile, in its dead silence, one hears the cry of moaning or accusation. Brought forward by the painting, the cry joins with the children's screams and the bombers' din, until the last day of dictatorship when the work is repatriated to places where it has never dwelled.

To be sure: still it was the work, if one may say so, of a single individual, and also Picasso was addressing—not only but also and first of all—his own country. As for the rule of law recently reestablished in Spain, it continues to participate, as in so many countries, in the system that presently assures, as we have been saying, the survival of *apartheid.*

Things are no longer the same with this Exhibition.

Here the single work is multiple; it crosses all national, cultural, and political frontiers. It neither commemorates nor represents an event. Rather, it casts a continuous gaze, for paintings are always gazing, at what I propose to name a continent. One may do whatever one wishes with all the senses of that word.

Beyond a continent whose limits they point to and accuse, the limits surrounding it or crossing through it, the paintings gaze and call out in silence.

And their silence is just. A discourse would once again oblige us to reckon with the present state of force and law. It would draw up contracts, dialecticize itself, let itself be reappropriated again.

This silence calls out unconditionally; it keeps watch on what is not, on what is not yet, and on the chance some faithful day of still remembering.

—Translated by Peggy Kamuf

§ 16 No Apocalypse, Not Now

Full Speed Ahead, Seven Missiles, Seven Missives

First missile, first missive

In the beginning there will have been speed. The stakes are apparently limitless for what still now and then calls itself humanity. People find it easy to say that in a nuclear war, "humanity" runs the risk of its self-destruction with nothing left over, no remainder. There is a lot that could be said about this rumor. But whatever credence we give it, we have to recognize that these stakes appear in the experience of a race, or more precisely of a *competition*, a rivalry between two rates of speed. It's what we call in French a *course de vitesse*, a *speed race.* Whether it is the arms race or orders given to start a war that is itself dominated by this economy of speed through all the relays of its technology, a gap of a few seconds may decide, irreversibly, the fate of what still now and then calls itself humanity—and to which the occasion demands that we add a few other species.

As we all know, there is not an instant, an atom of our life, a sign of our relation to the world and to being that is not marked today, directly or indirectly, by this speed race. And by the whole strategic debate about "no use," "no first use," or "first use" of nuclear weaponry.[1] Is this new? Is it the first time "in history"? Is it an invention? Can it still be

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Lecture delivered in April 1984 at a colloquium titled "Nuclear Criticism," organized at Cornell University by the journal *Diacritics* and the Department of Romance Studies. The original version of this text appeared in *Diacritics* 14, 2 (Summer 1984), an issue devoted to the conference. [The title "No Apocalypse, Not Now" is in English in the original.—Trans.]

situated "in history"? The most classical wars were also speed races, in their preparation and in the actual pursuit of hostilities. Are we having today *another* experience of speed? Is our relation to time and to motion becoming qualitatively different? Or, on the contrary, can we not speak of an extraordinary, although qualitatively homogeneous, acceleration of the same experience? And on what temporality are we relying when we put the question that way? It goes without saying that we can't take the question seriously without reelaborating all the problematics of time and motion, from Aristotle to Heidegger by way of Augustine, Kant, Husserl, Einstein, and Bergson. So my first formulation remained simplistic. It opposed quantity and quality *as if* a quantitative transformation, once certain thresholds of acceleration had been crossed, could not induce qualitative mutations within the general machinery of a culture, with all its techniques for handling, recording, and storing information, *as if every invention* were not the invention of a process of acceleration or, at the very least, a new experience of speed. Or *as if* the concept of speed, linked to some quantification of objective time, remained within a homogeneous relation to every experience of time for the human subject or for a mode of temporalization that the human subject, as such, had encompassed.

Why have I slowed down my introduction this way by dragging in such a naïve question?

No doubt for several reasons.

First reason

Let us consider the form of the question itself: is the war of speed, with all that it entails, an irreducibly new phenomenon, an invention linked to a set of inventions of the so-called nuclear age, or is it rather the brutal acceleration of a movement that has *always and forever* been at work? Not just *always already*, as one says, and as if the phrase "always already" described this structure in the same way it characterizes others. It is a matter here, on the contrary, of a structure of getting absolutely carried away, a quasi-infinite acceleration [*un "gagner de vitesse"*] that makes possible the "always already" *in general*. This form of question constitutes perhaps the most indispensable formal matrix, the central or, if you will, nuclear component for any problematics of the "nuclear criticism" type, in *all* its aspects.

Naturally, we have to go quickly and will not have time to demonstrate this. I am putting forward this proposal—concerning a form of the question—as a hasty conclusion, a precipitous assertion, a belief, a *doxic* argument, or a *dogmatic* weapon. *In the beginning, doxa.* But I wanted to begin there and in this manner. I wanted to begin as quickly as possible with a warning, in other words with a dissuasive gesture: watch out, don't go too fast; there is perhaps no invention, no radically new predicate in the situation known as "the nuclear age." Of all the dimensions of such an "age," one can always say: it is neither the first time nor will it be the last. The historian's critical vigilance can always help us verify that repetitiveness; and that historian's patience, that lucidity of memory must always shed their light on "nuclear criticism," oblige it to decelerate, dissuade it from rushing to a conclusion on the subject of speed itself. But the dissuasive application of the brakes carries its own risks: the critical zeal that urges us to recognize precedents, continuities, and repetitions at every turn can make us, like suicidal sleepwalkers, blind or deaf, pass right by the unheard-of, right by what is absolutely unique, despite the assimilating resemblance of discourses (for example, of the apocalyptic or bimillenarist type), the analogy of techno-military situations, strategic arrangements, with all their wagers, their last-resort, on-the-brink calculations, their chance and risk factors, their mimetic bidding wars, and so on. This critical zeal would seek in the stockpile of history (in short, in history itself, which in this case would have this blinding search as its very function) the wherewithal to neutralize invention, to translate the unknown into a known, to metaphorize, allegorize, domesticate the terror, to circumvent, with the help of circumlocutions, turns of phrase, tropes and strophes, the inescapable catastrophe, the undeviating precipitation toward a remainderless cataclysm. The unheard-of here would be the abyss, and, for the sleepwalker I'm talking about, "to pass by" the abyss would also amount to falling into it without seeing and without knowing. But how else is one supposed to die? The critical and dissuasive slowdown can thus be as critical as the critical acceleration. One can still die after having spent one's life as a lucid historian recognizing to what extent all this was not new, telling oneself that the inventors of the nuclear age or of nuclear criticism did not, as we say in French, "invent gunpowder." One always dies in this dark light of memory, moreover, and the death of what still now and then calls itself humanity might well not escape the rule.

Second reason

What then is the *right speed* [*la* bonne vitesse]? Given our incapacity to provide a good answer, an answer that would not be untimely to that question, we have at least to recognize, by which I mean acknowledge gratefully, that the nuclear age *gives us to think* this aporia of speed starting from the limit of absolute acceleration at which the temporalities called subjective and objective, phenomenological and intraworldly, authentic and inauthentic, and so on, would end up merging in the uniqueness of an ultimate event, of a final collision or collusion. But in addressing these questions to the participants of a colloquium on "nuclear criticism," I am also wondering at what speed we should treat these aporias: with which rhetoric, which economy or strategy of implicit connection, which ruses of potentialization, which capitalization of ellipsis, which weapons of irony? The "nuclear age" determines a certain type of colloquium, its technology of information, diffusion and storage, its rhythm of speech, its demonstration procedures, and thus its arguments and its armaments, its modes of persuasion or intimidation.

Third reason

Having raised, very rapidly, this question on the subject of speed, I am unilaterally disarming, I am putting my cards on the table. I am announcing that, for want of time—time for preparation and time for the speech act—I shall not give a real "lecture." In return for this, you will say, I am nevertheless taking more time than all my other partners. I am thus choosing, as you have already observed, the genre or rhetorical form of tiny atomic nuclei (in the process of fission, fusion, or division in an uninterruptable chain) that I will arrange or rather that I will project toward you, like tiny inoffensive missiles, in a discontinuous, more or less haphazard fashion. This will be my little strategic and capitalistic calculation, in order to say, potentially, while taking as much pleasure as possible, as many things as possible. Capitalization—and capitalism—always has the structure of a certain potentialization of speed. This then was, in three points, my *first missile*, or my first nuclear aphorism: *in the beginning there will have been speed*, which is always already *gaining speed*, in other words, overtaking—or, as we say in French, *prend ou gagne de vitesse*, *double*, doubles, passes—both the act and the speech.

Second missile, second missive

For such a performance, we may consider ourselves competent. And for the reason I have just stated very quickly: because of speed.

Indeed: never, nowhere, has the dissociation between the place of the competence and the place of the risk *seemed* more rigorous and more dangerous, more catastrophic. I indeed say that it has not *seemed* to be such. Is it not *apparently the first time* that this dissociation, more unbridgeable than ever for *ordinary mortals*, throws in the balance the fate of what still now and then calls itself *the entirety* of humanity, or even of the whole earth, at the very moment when your president even imagines carrying on a war beyond the earth? Doesn't this dissociation (which is dissociation itself, the division and the dislocation of the *socius*, of sociality itself) give us to think the essence of knowledge and *tekhnē* itself, as socialization and desocialization, as the constitution and the deconstruction of the *socius*?

Must we then take this dissociation seriously? And what is seriousness, in this instance? That is the first question, and thus the *first reason* for which it is not totally irrelevant, inconsistent, to open a colloquium on the nuclear in a space, our own, essentially occupied by non-experts, by questioners who doubtless don't know very well who they are, who certainly don't know what justifies or legitimates their community but who know at least that they are not professionals of the military, strategy, diplomacy, or nuclear technoscience.

Second reason

So we are not experts in strategy, in diplomacy, or in the technoscience known as nuclear science. We are oriented rather toward what is called, not humanity, but the humanities, history, literature, languages, philology, the social sciences, in short, everything that the Kantian university assigned to the so-called lower class of the faculty of philosophy, foreign to any exercise of power.[2] We are specialists in discourse and in texts, all sorts of texts.

Now I will venture to say that, despite appearances, this specialty is what entitles us, and doubly so, to concern ourselves seriously with the nuclear thing. And if we have not done so before, this responsibility that we would thus have neglected until now prescribes that we concern our-

selves with the said thing. First of all, that we do so as representatives of humanity or of the incompetent humanities that have to think the problem of competence as rigorously as possible, given that the stakes are those of humanity, of the humanities. How, in the face of nuclear terror, is one to make speech circulate not only among the self-styled competent parties and those who are alleged to be incompetent, but among the competent parties themselves? For we don't just suspect, we are certain that, in this area in particular, there is a multiplicity of dissociated, heterogeneous competencies. Knowledge in this domain is neither coherent nor totalizable. Moreover, between those whose competence is technoscientific (the inventors, those who are committed to invention in the sense of unveiling or of "constative" discovery, as well as in the sense of production of new technical or "performing" mechanisms) and those whose competence is politico-military, those who are entitled to make decisions, who are delegated to performance or to the performative, the frontier is more undecidable than ever, as it is between the good and evil of all nuclear technology. If, on the one hand, it is apparently the first time that these competencies are so dangerously and effectively dissociated, on the other hand, and from another point of view, they have never been so terrifyingly accumulated, concentrated, entrusted like a dice game to so few hands: the military men are also scientists, and they find themselves inevitably in the position of participating in the final decision, whatever precautions may be taken in this regard. They are *all*, that is, very few, in the position of inventing, inaugurating, improvising procedures and giving orders where no model—we will talk about this later on—can help them at all. Among the acts of observing, revealing, knowing, promising, taking action, simulating, giving orders, and so on, the limits have never been so precarious, so undecidable. Such is the situation today: a limit situation in which the limit itself is suspended, in which therefore the *krinein*, the *crisis*, even decision, and choice are being subtracted from us, are abandoning us like the remainder of that subtraction that we are. It is on the basis of this situation that *we* have to rethink the relations between knowing and acting, between constative speech acts and performative speech acts, between the invention that finds what was already there and the one that produces new mechanisms or new spaces. In the undecidable and at the moment of a decision that has no common ground with any other, we have to reinvent invention and think another "pragmatics."

Third reason

In our techno-scientifico-militaro-diplomatic incompetence, we may consider ourselves, however, just as competent as others to deal with a phenomenon whose essential feature is that it is *fabulously textual*, through and through. Nuclear weaponry depends, more than any weaponry in the past, it seems, upon structures of information and communication, of language, including unvocalizable language, of codes and graphic decoding. But the phenomenon is fabulously textual also to the extent that, for the moment, a nuclear war has not taken place: one can only talk and write about it. Perhaps you will say: but this is not the first time; the other wars, too, so long as they hadn't taken place, were only talked and written about. And as to the fright of imaginary anticipation, who could prove that a European in the period following the war of 1870 might not have been more terrified by the "technological" image of the bombings and exterminations of World War II (even supposing he or she had been able to form such an image) than we are by the image we can construct for ourselves of a nuclear war? The logic of this argument has some validity, especially if one is thinking about a limited and "clean" nuclear war. But it loses that validity in the face of the hypothesis of a total nuclear war, which, as a hypothesis, or, if you prefer, as a phantasm, conditions every discourse and all strategies. Unlike other wars, which have all been preceded by wars of more or less the same type in human memory (and gunpowder did not mark a radical break in this respect), nuclear war has no precedent. It has never occurred, itself; it is a non-event. The explosion of atomic bombs in 1945 ended a "classical," conventional war; it did not set off a nuclear war. The terrifying "reality" of nuclear conflict can only be the signified referent, never the real referent (present or past) of a discourse or a text. At least today. And that gives us to think the *today*, the presence of this present in and through this fabulous textuality. Better than ever and more than ever. The growing proliferation of the discourses—indeed, of the literature—on this subject constitutes perhaps a process of fearful domestication, the anticipatory assimilation of that unanticipatable wholly other. For the moment, today, one may say that a nonlocalizable nuclear war has not occurred; it has existence only by means of what is said of it and only where it is talked about. Some might call it a fable, then, a pure invention: in the sense in which it is said that a myth, image, fiction, utopia, rhetorical figure, or phantasm are inven-

tions. It may also be called a speculation, even a fabulous speculation. The breaking of the mirror would be, finally, through an act of language, the very occurrence of nuclear war.[3] Who can swear that our unconscious is not expecting this? Dreaming of it? Desiring it?

You will perhaps find it shocking to see the nuclear thing reduced to a fable. But then I haven't said simply that. I have recalled that a nuclear war is for the time being a fable; that is, something one can only talk about. But who can fail to recognize the massive "reality" of nuclear weaponry and of the terrifying forces of destruction that are being stockpiled and capitalized everywhere, that constitute the very movement of capitalization? One has to distinguish this "reality" of the nuclear age; and one has to distinguish the fiction of war. But, and this is perhaps the imperative of a nuclear criticism, one must also be careful to interpret this critical or diacritical distinction critically. For the "reality" of the nuclear age and the fable of nuclear war are perhaps distinct, but they are not two separate things. It is the war (in other words, for the moment, the fable) that triggers this fabulous war effort, this senseless capitalization of sophisticated weaponry, this speed race in search of speed, this panic-stricken precipitation that, through technoscience, through all the technoscientific inventiveness that it motivates, structures not only the army, diplomacy, and politics, but the whole of the human *socius* today, everything that is named by the old words "culture," "civilization," *Bildung, skholē, paideia.* "Reality," let's say the general institution of the nuclear age, is constructed by the fable, on the basis of an event that has never happened (except phantasmatically, and that is not nothing),[4] an event of which one can only speak, an event whose advent remains an invention of men (in all the senses of the word "invention"), or which, more precisely, remains to be invented. An invention because it depends upon new technical mechanisms, to be sure, but an invention also because it does not exist and especially because, at whatever point it should come into existence, it would be a very great first.

Fourth reason

Since we are speaking of fables, of language, of fiction and phantasm, writing and rhetoric, let us go even further. Nuclear war does not depend on language just because we can do nothing but speak of it—and as something that has never occurred. It does not depend on language just

because the "incompetents" on all sides can speak of it only in the mode of gossip or of *doxa* (opinion)—and the dividing line between *doxa* and *epistemē* starts to blur as soon as there is no longer any such thing as an absolutely legitimizable competence for a phenomenon that is no longer strictly technoscientific but techno-militaro-politico-diplomatic through and through and that brings into play *doxa* or incompetence even in its calculations. Here, for once, there is only *doxa*, opinion, belief. One can no longer oppose belief and science, *doxa* and *epistemē* once one has reached the decisive place of the nuclear age, in other words, once one has arrived at the critical place of the nuclear age. In this critical place, there is no more room for a distinction between belief and science, thus no more space for a "nuclear criticism" strictly speaking. Or even for a truth in that sense. No truth, no apocalypse. No, nuclear war is not *only* fabulous because one can *only* talk about it, but because the extraordinary *sophistication* of its technologies—which are also technologies of delivery, sending, dispatching, of the missile in general, of mission, missive, emission, and transmission, like all *tekhnē*—coexists, cooperates in an essential way with sophistry, psycho-rhetoric, and the most cursory, the most archaic, the most crudely opinionated, the most vulgar psychagogy.

Third missile, third missive

We can believe ourselves to be competent because the sophistication of the nuclear strategy is always accompanied by a sophistication of belief and the rhetorical simulation of a text.

First reason

The worldwide organization of the human *socius* today hangs by the thread of nuclear rhetoric. This is immediately readable in the fact that the whole of the official logic of nuclear politics is called "strategy of deterrence," or, as we say in French, "strategy of dissuasion." Dissuasion, or deterrence, means "persuasion." Dissuasion is a negative mode or effect of persuasion. The art of persuasion is, as you know, one of the axes of what has been called rhetoric since classical times. To dissuade is certainly a form of persuasion, but it involves not only persuading someone to think or believe this or that, which may be a state of fact or an interpretation,

but persuading someone that something *must not be done*. We dissuade when we persuade someone that it is dangerous, inopportune, or wrong to decide *to do* something. The rhetoric of dissuasion is a performative apparatus that aims to produce other performatives. The anticipation of nuclear war (dreaded as the phantasm of a remainderless destruction) installs humanity—and even defines, through all sorts of relays, the essence of modern humanity—in its rhetorical condition. To recall this is not to paint with verbose vanity the horror of the nuclear catastrophe that, according to some, is already degrading our world in its totality, or improving it by the same token, according to others; it is not to say of this absolute *pharmakon* that it is woven with words, as if we were saying "all this horror is nothing but rhetoric." On the contrary, it gives us to think today, retrospectively, the power and the essence of rhetoric; and even of sophistry, which has always been connected, at least since the Trojan War, with rhetoric (to limit ourselves to the Greek determination of what we are destined here to name, Greek style, sophistry and rhetoric).

Second reason

Beyond this essential rhetoricity, we have to situate the contemporaneity between the hyperbolic refinement, the technological sophistication of missility or missivity, and the coarseness of the sophistic ruses elaborated in politico-military headquarters. Between the Trojan War and nuclear war, technical preparation has progressed prodigiously, but the psychagogic and discursive schemas, the mental structures and the structures of intersubjective calculus in game theory have not budged. In the face of the technological leap, a man of the World War I era might gasp with amazement, but Homer, Quintilian, or Cicero would not have been astonished if they had read what I read in the *New York Times* a few days ago while I was preparing this "paper" (for what I want to say about the *doxa*, newspapers have to be considered a good reference source). The article is by Leslie H. Gelb, the *Times*'s national security correspondent in Washington.[5] Gelb is visibly unfavorable to the Reagan administration. His article takes sides, it expresses what can be called an "opinion," a *belief*. I will highlight only one point in an article that is full of information. One of the subheads of the newspaper repeats the words of the text as follows: "Reagan stretches the meaning of deterrence, says the author. Gaining superiority translates into diplomatic power." And indeed, Gelb's discourse analyzes at one point the presumed beliefs of the Reagan administration. Gelb thus ends up talking about opinions, about the *doxa*, beliefs (old words, old things: how to integrate them into the world of nuclear technology?) not of an individual or even of a group of individuals but of that entity called the "administration." Where does the "belief" of an administration reside? The whole theory of strategic games that Gelb analyzes, then, integrates, on the one hand, beliefs that are advertised or presumed, and, on the other hand, beliefs or opinions that are inferred. Further on, Gelb takes into account the evaluation by the Soviets of (thus their belief about) not only American nuclear power but also the Americans' resolve—translation: their belief in themselves. Now, what is happening with American belief under Reagan? We are witnessing, on the one hand, an evolution of belief, and, on the other, an apparent rhetorical innovation, the choice of a new word, all of a sudden accompanied by a double hermeneutics, a private exegesis and a public one; it is a question of a single little word, "to prevail," whose weight, investment, and presumed effects have at least as much importance as a given set of technological mutations that would, on both sides, be of such a nature as to displace the strategic givens of an eventual armed confrontation. You are better acquainted with the episode than I: I am referring to the policy defined in the document entitled "Fiscal Year 1984–1988 Defense Guidance" (Spring 1982), according to which, in the course of a nuclear war of any length, the United States "must prevail." This policy, adopted officially and secretly, was then publicly disavowed by Secretary of Defense Weinberger in two letters (August 1982; July 1983).[6]

Everything gets concentrated in the public or secret exegesis of a single word. What does to "prevail" mean? What can it mean to say or what must it imply? Let us now follow the word "belief" in the interpretation Gelb proposes:

> In the Reagan Administration's *apparent belief* in being able to actually control a nuclear war once begun and to fight it over a period of perhaps months, doctrine has been carried beyond well-established bounds. Such a *belief* could induce some leader some day *to think* he could risk starting a nuclear war because he would be able to stop short of a complete catastrophe. But the Reagan Administration went further still by reintroducing the 1950's idea of actually seeking to win a nuclear war. For the last 20 years, Administrations have used words like "preventing defeat" or "avoiding an unfavorable outcome" to describe their *belief* that there could be no winners in a nuclear war. Follow-

ing the uproar caused by the secret use of the word "prevail," Mr. Weinberger stated that "nowhere in all this do we mean to imply that nuclear war is winnable. This notion has no place in our strategy. We see nuclear weapons only as a way of discouraging the Soviets from *thinking* they could ever resort to them." (my emphases—JD)

Like the play between the public and the secret, the multiplicity of rhetorics is adjusted to the multiplicity of *supposed* addressees: American or non-American public opinion, American or Soviet decision makers, as if the adversary was not capable, moreover, of immediately integrating all these variables into its own calculus. It is clearly a question of rhetoric and that's even what they are talking about! Chernenko has just denounced Reagan's "rhetoric," which is his term. And Gelb, too, uses the word: "The Reagan declaratory policy is quite consistent with past official *rhetoric*" (29; my emphasis—JD). But let us continue reading Gelb:

Mr. Reagan also issued denials. Nonetheless, the suspicion lingers that the leaders of the Administration had something *in mind* in choosing that word. There are officials in this Administration who have written and spoken of the likelihood of nuclear war, and the need for the United States to prepare to fight, survive and win it. How widely this view is shared in the Administration is not clear. The more charitable explanation, and the one that *squares most with my own experience* with Reagan officials, is that prevailing to them really translates into the goal of gaining strategic nuclear superiority over the Soviet Union. Many of these officials helped to draft the 1980 Republican Party Platform, which calls for achieving overall military and technological superiority over the Soviet Union. To many on the Reagan team, nuclear superiority is important not because they are sanguine about fighting and winning a nuclear war, but because they *believe* that this kind of superiority is translatable into diplomatic power and, in the event of a crisis, into coercing the other side to back down. This idea is highly debatable, and, *I believe*, not supported by evidence. (my emphases—JD)

Gelb believes, then ("I believe," he says), that there is no "evidence," no proof. He believes that there are only beliefs. The "Reagan" belief is not based on any proof. But by definition, it could not be, for there are no proofs in this area. "Nuclear" superiority is never absolute and absolutely proved; one has never been able to count on it, in an *absolutely demonstrative* fashion, so as to intimidate an adversary during a crisis. There is only one imaginable proof, war, which finally proves nothing. The only thing

the adverse discourse can oppose to the "Reagan" belief is another belief, its own hermeneutics and its own rhetoric. Gelb repeatedly invokes his "belief" and first of all his "experience" (of the psychology of the men at the Pentagon or the White House).

As for the translation "into diplomatic power" of a new word, "prevailing," we might think at first that as used here the word "translation" has only a broad, vague, and metaphorical meaning: it would be a matter, indeed, of translating and of transporting a word (to prevail) but also a reality (nuclear superiority and one's possible awareness of it) into another realm, "into diplomatic power," in the course of what is in sum a nonlinguistic transference. That much is indisputable, but the thing gets complicated as soon as one takes the following fact into account: "diplomatic power" is never deployed outside a text [*hors texte*]; it never happens without discourse, message, dispatch. It has the structure of a text in the unlimited sense that I give the word, as well as in the most strictly traditional sense of the term. There is only text in tests of strength, no less than in the strictly diplomatic moment, that is, the sophistico-rhetorical moment of diplomacy.

Fourth missile, fourth missive

As for the aporias of the nuclear referent, we don't believe in them.

Under the heading of "nuclear criticism," in a colloquium organized by *Diacritics*, we have to talk about literature, about the literature that I will distinguish here from poetry, from the epic, and from belles-lettres in general.

Now, it seems that literature—in the modernity of its meaning—has been able to constitute itself as an institution only on two conditions: (1) a project of archivization, the accumulation of a kind of objective memory over and above any traditional oral base; (2) the development of a positive law concerned with authors' rights, the identification of the signatory, of the corpus, names, and titles, the distinction between the original and the copy, originality and plagiarism, and so forth. Literature is not reduced to this form of archivizing and this form of law, but it could not survive them as the institution it is and as what is called literature. Now, what the uniqueness of nuclear war, its being-for-the-first-time-and-perhaps-for-the-last-time, its absolute inventiveness gives us to think, even if it

remains a decoy, a belief, a phantasmatic projection, is obviously the possibility of an irreversible destruction, leaving no traces, of the juridico-literary archive and therefore of the basis of literature and criticism. Not necessarily the destruction of humanity, of the human habitat, or even of other discourses (arts or sciences), or even indeed of poetry or the epic; these latter might reconstitute their living process and their archive, at least to the extent that the structure of this archive (that of a nonliterary memory) structurally implies reference to a real referent external to the archive itself. I am taking care to say: to that extent and on that hypothesis. It is not certain that all the other archives, whatever their material basis may be, have such a referent absolutely outside themselves, outside their own possibility. If they do have one, then they can rightfully reconstitute themselves and thus, in some other fashion, survive. But if they do not have one, or to the extent that they do not have one outside themselves, they find themselves in the situation of literature. One might say that they participate in literature inasmuch as literature produces its referent as a fictive or fabulous referent that in itself depends on the possibility of archivization and that in itself is constituted by the act of archivization. This would lead to a considerable extension—some would say an abusive one—of the field of literature. But who has proven that literature is a field with indivisible and simply assignable limits? The events known *under the name of literature* are delimitable. There is in principle a possible history of this name and of the conventions attached to this naming. But the same cannot be said of the structural possibilities of what is thus named, which is not limited to the events already known under this name.

The hypothesis we are considering here is that of a total and remainderless destruction of the archive. This destruction would take place for the first time, and it would lack any common proportion with, for example, the burning of a library, even that of Alexandria, which occasioned so many written accounts and nourished so many literatures. The hypothesis of this total destruction watches over deconstruction, it guides its footsteps, allowing one to recognize, in the light, so to speak, of that hypothesis or of that phantasm, the characteristic structures and historicity of the discourses, strategies, texts, or institutions to be deconstructed. That is why deconstruction, at least what is being advanced today under that name, belongs to the nuclear age. And to the age of literature. If "literature" is the name we give to the body of texts whose existence, possibility, and significance are the most radically threatened, for the first and

last time, by the nuclear catastrophe, this gives one to think the essence of literature, its radical precariousness and the radical form of its historicity; but by the same token, through literature, what gives itself to thinking is the *totality* of that which, like literature and henceforth in it, is exposed to the same threat, constituted by the same structure of historical fictionality, producing and then harboring its own referent. We may thus assert that the historicity of literature is thoroughly contemporaneous with, or rather structurally indissociable from, something like a nuclear epoch (by nuclear "epoch," I also mean something like the *epochē* suspending judgment before the absolute decision). The nuclear age is not an epoch, it is the absolute *epochē*; it is not absolute knowledge and the end of history, it is the epoch of absolute knowledge. Literature belongs to this nuclear epoch, that of the crisis and of nuclear criticism, at least if we mean by this the historical and ahistorical horizon of an absolute self-destructibility without apocalypse, without revelation of its own truth, without absolute knowledge.

This statement is not abstract. It does not concern general and formal structures, some equation between a literarity extended to any possible archive and a self-destructibility in general. No, according to my hypothesis it would rather be a question of the sudden "synchronous" appearance, of a *co-belonging* [co-appartenance]: on the one hand, of the principle of reason (interpreted since the seventeenth century according to the order of representation, the domination of the subject/object structure, the metaphysics of will, modern technoscience, and so on [I refer here in passing to Heidegger who, in *Der Satz vom Grund*, is moreover less interested in nuclear *war* than in the atomic age as an age of in-formation that forms and in-forms a new figure of man]) *and*, on the other hand, of the project of literature in the strict sense, the project that cannot be shown to antedate the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. To advance this hypothesis, it is not necessary to follow Heidegger in his interpretation of the principle of reason and in his evaluation of literature (as distinguished from poetry), as it appears for example in *Was heisst Denken?* But I have discussed this elsewhere and I cannot pursue this direction here.[7]

In what I am calling in another sense an absolute epoch, literature is born and can only live its own precariousness, its death menace and its essential finitude. The movement of its inscription is the very possibility of its effacement. Thus one cannot be satisfied with saying that, in order to be serious and interesting today, a literature and a literary criticism must

refer to the nuclear issue, must even be obsessed by it. To be sure, this should be said, and it is true. But I believe also that, at least indirectly, literature has always done this. It has always belonged to the nuclear epoch, even if it does not talk "seriously" about it. And in truth I believe that the nuclear epoch is dealt with more "seriously" in the writings of Mallarmé, of Kafka, or Joyce, for example, than in present-day novels that would describe a "true" nuclear catastrophe directly and in a "realistic" fashion.

Such would be the *first version of a paradox of the referent.* In two points. 1. Literature belongs to the nuclear age by virtue of the performative character of its relation to the referent. 2. Nuclear war has not taken place; it is a speculation, an invention in the sense of a fable or an invention to be invented: to make it take place or to prevent it from taking place (as much invention is needed for the one as for the other), and for the moment all this is *only* literature. Some might conclude that it is therefore not real, because it remains entirely suspended in its fabulous and literary *epochē.*

Fifth missile, fifth missive

But we do not believe—and this is the other version or the reverse side of the same paradox—in anything except the nuclear referent.

If we wish absolutely to speak in terms of reference, nuclear war is the only possible referent of any discourse and any experience that would share their condition with that of literature. If, according to a structuring fable or hypothesis, nuclear war is equivalent to the total destruction of the archive, if not of the human habitat, it becomes the absolute referent, the horizon and the condition of all the others. An individual death, a destruction affecting only a part of society, tradition, or culture can always give rise to a symbolic work of mourning, with memory, compensation, internalization, idealization, displacement, and so on. In that case there is monumentalization, archivization, and *work on the remainder, work of the remainder.* Similarly, my own death, so to speak, as an individual can always be anticipated phantasmatically, symbolically too, as a negativity at work—a dialectic of the work, of signature, name, heritage. Images, grief, all the resources of memory and tradition, can cushion the reality of that death, whose anticipation remains therefore interwoven with fictionality, symbolicity, or, if you prefer, literature; and this is so even if I live this

anticipation in anguish, terror, despair, as a catastrophe that I have no reason not to equate with the annihilation of humanity as a whole: this catastrophe takes place with each individual death. There is no common measure able to persuade me that a personal mourning is less grave than a nuclear war. But the burden of every death can be assumed symbolically by a social memory, that is even their essential function and their justification, their raison d'être. They limit the "reality" of individual death to this extent, they soften or deaden it in the realm of the "symbolic." The only absolutely real referent is thus of the scope of an absolute nuclear catastrophe that would irreversibly destroy the entire archive and all symbolic capacity, the very *survivance*, as I call it, at the heart of life. This absolute referent of all possible literature is on a par with the absolute effacement of any possible trace. It is thus the only ineffaceable trace, as trace of the wholly other. The only "subject" of all possible literature, of all possible criticism, its only ultimate and a-symbolic referent, unsymbolizable, even unsignifiable, this is, if not the nuclear age, if not the nuclear catastrophe, at least that toward which nuclear discourse and the nuclear symbolic are *still beckoning*: the remainderless and a-symbolic destruction of literature. Literature and literary criticism cannot, *finally*, speak of anything else. They can have no other ultimate reference; they can only multiply their strategic maneuvers in order to assimilate this unassimilable wholly other. They are nothing but these maneuvers and this diplomatic strategy, with the "double talk" that can never be eliminated there. For simultaneously, this "subject" cannot be a nameable "subject," nor this "referent" a nameable referent. Capable of speaking only of that, literature cannot help but speak of something else, and invent strategies for speaking of something else, for deferring the encounter with the wholly other, an encounter with which, however, this relationless relation, this relation of incommensurability cannot be wholly suspended, even while being precisely its epochal suspension. The invention of the wholly other is the only invention possible. This can be transposed into a discourse of diplomatic or military strategy in its current model. In an article entitled "How Not to Think about Nuclear War," Theodore Draper criticizes the strategy of "no first use," which would amount to "no use," and directs his irony at the "realm of utopian obscurantism" of Jonathan Schell who, in *The Fate of the Earth*, speaks of "reinventing politics" and "reinventing the world," of "a global disarmament, both nuclear and conventional, and the invention of political means by which the world can peacefully settle the issues that

throughout history it has settled by war."[8] Draper then falls back upon what may appear to be wisdom or an economy of deferral: gain as much time as possible while taking into account the unmovable constraints; return, if possible (as if it were possible) to the original meaning of deterrence or dissuasion, which would seem by and large to have been lost or perverted in recent times. To quote Draper: "Deterrence is all we have. Like many such terms that are abused and misused, it is best to get back to its original meaning."[9]

This discourse would warrant a meticulous and vigilant analysis. Referring to *Nuclear Illusion and Reality* by Solly Zuckerman,[10] Draper imputes, for example, to scientists a greater responsibility than that of the military and political authorities. He recalls that in a chapter on "the advice of scientists," Zuckerman "shows how they have been pushing the politicians and the military around; the arms race, he warns, can be brought to an end only if the politicians 'take charge of the technical men.' This reversal of the commonly understood roles may come as a surprise to most readers."

Sixth missile
sixth missive

An absolute missile does not abolish chance. There is nothing serious to be said against this "rational" and "realistic" wisdom of dissuasion, against this economy of deferral or deterrence. The only possible reservation, beyond objection, is that, if there are nuclear wars and a nuclear threat, deterrence has neither "original meaning" nor measure. Its "logic" is that of deviation and transgression, it is rhetorical-strategic escalation or it is nothing at all. It gives itself over, by calculation, to the incalculable, to chance and luck. Let us start again from that thought of sending or "missivity" on the basis of which Heidegger finally relaunches and raises the stakes for the thinking of Being as the thinking of a gift, and of what gives impetus to thought, of the "es gibt Sein," of the dispensation or the sending [*envoi*] of Being (*Geschick des Seins*). This sending of Being is not the emission of a missile or of a missive, but I do not believe it is possible, in the last analysis, *to think* the one without the other. Here I can do no more than designate titles of possible discourses. I have often tried, elsewhere, to stress the divisibility and the irreducible dissemination of the plurality of *envois*. What I have called "destinerring" [*destinerrance*] no longer gives us even the assurance of *a sending* of Being, of a gathered-up sending of Being. If the ontico-ontological difference ensures the gathering-up of that sending, the dissemination and the destinerring I am talking about go so far as to suspend that ontico-ontological difference itself. Dissemination epochalizes difference in its turn, suspends even the concept and the thinking of the epochality of Being. The destinerring of the *envois* is linked to a structure in which randomness and incalculability are irreducible. I am not speaking here of an undecidability or incalculability that can be factored into a calculable decision. I am not speaking of the margin of indeterminacy that is still homogeneous to the order of the decidable and the calculable. As in the lecture "Psyche: Invention of the Other," it would be a question here of an aleatory dimension that is heterogeneous to every possible calculation and every possible decision. This unthinkable gives itself to (be) thought in the age when a nuclear war is possible: a, or rather, from the outset, *some* sendings, many sendings, missiles whose destinerring and randomness may, in the very process of calculation and the games that simulate the process, escape all control, all reassimilation or self-regulation by a system that they will have *precipitously* (too rapidly, in order to avert the worst) but irreversibly destroyed.

Just as all language, all writing, every poetico-performative or theoretico-informative text dispatches, sends itself, allows itself to be sent, so today's missiles, whatever their support structure may be, allow themselves to be described more readily than ever as dispatches in writing (code, inscription, trace, and so on). This does not reduce them to the dull inoffensiveness that some would naïvely attribute to books. It recalls, exposes, explodes that which, in writing, always includes the power of a death machine.

The aleatory destinerring of the *envoi* allows us to think, if we may say so, the age of nuclear war. But this thought could become a radical one, as a remaining thought of the "remainderless," only in the nuclear age. This contemporaneity is not historical in the trivial sense of the term. It is not even temporal. It is not strictly contemporary. It does not stand in the gathering-up of a simultaneity, it accompanies otherwise. And remains ageless. Just as the wholly other can accompany, by dislocating the synthesis and the proportion. One could almost say: by ceasing to accompany [*en faussant compagnie*, literally, "by falsifying company," figuratively, "by giving someone the slip"], standing everyone up [*faisant faux bond*, literally, "making a false leap"], at the very moment of solicitude, assistance, care.

This ageless quasi-"contemporaneity" had to have given signs of itself, then, before nuclear technoscience reached the point where it is now with its inventions: in Democritean physics as well as in Nietzsche or Mallarmé, among so many others. But all the same, let us not erase the remarkable scansion of this "history," even if it has constructed a concept of history lacking any proportion with it: the moment when Leibniz's formulation of the Principle of Reason (the send-off of modern technoscience, if we're to believe Heidegger) comes to resonate with the *nuclear question* of Metaphysics.[11] It is the question that Leibniz himself formulates and around which Heidegger organizes the very repetition of the essence of metaphysics in 1929 (between the first and the last "world wars") in *What Is Metaphysics?*: "Why is there something rather than nothing?" A nuclear question in that it seems ultimate, at the edge of the abyss—and destined to be better than ever heard and understood in the age called nuclear. A nuclear question in that it seems, at least in its content, to resist analysis, decomposition, or division: can one go any further? Can one go any further without overcoming the resistance of being (i.e., "something"), or even of the ontological difference, or even of the question itself, the ultimate dignity of the question as first or last resource of thinking?[12]

Seventh missile, seventh missive

The name of nuclear war is the name of the first war that can be fought in the name of the name alone, that is, of everything and of nothing. Let us start again, for this last dispatch, from the homonymy between Kantian criticism and "nuclear criticism." First, on the topic of this name, "nuclear criticism," one can predict that soon after this colloquium, programs and departments in universities may be created under this title, just as one did well, even with all the ambiguity it entailed, to create programs or departments of "women's studies" or "black studies" and more recently of "peace studies"—things that, no matter how quickly they are reappropriated by the university institution, should be nonetheless, in principle and conceptually, irreducible to the model of the *universitas*. "Nuclear criticism," like Kantian criticism, is a thinking about the limits of experience as a thinking of finitude. The *intuitus derivativus* of the receptive (that is, perceiving) being, of which the human subject is only one example, cuts its figure out on the (back)ground of the possibility of an *intuitus originarius*,

of an infinite intellect that creates rather than invents its own objects. As for the history of humanity, that example of finite rationality, it presupposes the possibility of an infinite progress regulated on an idea of reason, in Kant's sense, and the possibility of a treaty of perpetual peace.

Such a criticism forecloses a finitude so radical that it would annul the ground of the opposition and make it possible to think the very limit of criticism. This limit comes into view in the groundlessness of a remainderless auto-destruction of the *autos* itself. Whereupon is shattered the nucleus of criticism itself.

And what does Hegel do here? What does he do when, on the one hand, he draws out the implicit consequence of Kantian criticism and recalls or postulates that one must start out *explicitly* from a thinking of the infinite from which Kantian criticism *had* indeed to start out *implicitly*? What is he doing, *on the other hand*, when he defines access to the life of the mind and to consciousness by the passage through death, or, rather through the risk of biological death, through war and the struggle for recognition? Through, in other words, *by crossing through* [*À travers, c'est-à-dire* en traversant]. He has still to maintain that remainder of natural life that makes it possible, in symbolization (where nature is joined to spirit), to capitalize (on) what is gained from the risk, from war and from death itself. As individual or community, the master has to survive in some way in order to enjoy [*jouir de*] in spirit and consciousness the profit of the death risked or endured: something he can then do *in advance, by contemplating his death, by calling himself and recalling himself in advance—and this is the madness of the name.* He takes risks or he dies in the name of something that is worth more than life, but something that will still be able to *bear the name* in life, in a residue [*reste*] of living support. That is what made Bataille laugh: the master has to keep living in order to cash in on and enjoy the benefits of death endured (suffered, risked, "lived," but not crossed through, or else crossed through in the sense of to escape, slip through, or get away with something [*passer au travers; passer à travers*]. Bataille was laughing, in sum, at the name. The proper name and the insurance it institutes—that institutes it—against death. The proper name is an insurance policy against death, but nothing is therefore more clearly written there, more legible, than the death of the insured.

Today, in the perspective of a remainderless destruction, without symbolicity, without memory and without mourning, those who contemplate setting off such a catastrophe do so no doubt *in the name* of what

is worth more in their eyes than life ("Better dead than red"). Those who on the contrary want nothing to do with that catastrophe ("Better red than dead") say they are ready to prefer any sort of life at all, life above all, there is only one, as the only thing *worthy* of affirmation—and moreover *capable* of affirmation. But nuclear war, at least as a hypothesis, a phantasm, of total self-destruction, can only be waged in the name of what is worth more than life. What gives life its worth is worth more than life. Such a war would indeed be waged *in the name of*. That in any case is the story that the hostile parties always tell (themselves). But this war would be waged in the name of something whose name, in this logic of total destruction, could no longer be borne, transmitted, inherited by anything living. Thus this name in the name of which war would take place would be the name of nothing: pure name, "naked name." We now think the nakedness of the name. It would be the first and the last war in the name of the name, of the sole name of the name. But for that very reason, it would be a nameless war, for it would no longer share even the name of war with other events of the same kind, of the same family, those little finite wars whose memory and monuments we keep up. *Now:* End and Revelation of the Name. *That is* the Apocalypse: Name. *That is*: a strange present, *maintenant*, maintaining, now. We are there. In a certain way we have always been, and we think it, even if we don't know it. We're not there yet, *pas maintenant*, not now.

You will say: but all wars have been declared in the name of the name, beginning with the war between God and the sons of Shem who wanted to "make a name for themselves" and transmit it by constructing the tower of Babel. This is true, this is the truth of the name, but deterrence had come into play between God and the Shemites, the warring adversaries, and the conflict was temporarily interrupted. Once the name had been thought, tradition, translation, transference had a long respite. Absolute knowledge as well. Neither God nor the sons of Shem (who bore so to speak the name of the name—Shem) knew absolutely that they were confronting each other in the name of the name, and of nothing else, thus of nothing. That is why they stopped and adopted a long compromise. We have absolute knowledge and we run the risk, for that very reason, of not stopping. We, the "we" today, here and now, is identified on the basis of the situation of this site. That is the place for us. It is there, finally, that there is reason and a place, the only and ultimate place, to say "we."

Unless it is the other way around: God and the sons of Shem stopped

because they knew they were acting in the name of the name, namely, of this nothing that is beyond being. The alliance, the covenant, the promise, religion, everything that prolongs life, everything that endures and causes to endure, these are names for that immense compromise in the face of the nothing of the name. God and the sons of Shem, the father and the sons in general—men—having finally understood that a name wasn't worth it, and this would be the absolute of absolute knowledge finally absolved of the name—they preferred to spend a little more time together, the time of religion and its renunciation, which is the same time, the time of a long colloquy with strategists in love with life and busy writing in all languages in order to make the conversation last, even if they don't understand each other very well.

One day, a man came, he sent missives to the seven churches. People call this the Apocalypse. "Seized by the spirit," the man had received the order: "What you see, write in a book and send it to the seven churches." When the man turned around so as to know which voice was giving him this order, he saw in the middle of seven golden candlesticks, with seven stars in his right hand, someone from whose mouth emerged "a sharp double-edged sword," and who told him, among other things: "I am the first and the last," "I was dead and here I am alive."

The name of the man to whom this "last" dedicated these words, the name of the envoy charged with the mission and henceforth responsible for the seven messages, is John.

—Translated by Catherine Porter and Philip Lewis

Notes

Author's Preface

1. I have excluded only a set of essays devoted to the university institution and to the teaching of philosophy, which will appear in a separate volume, *Du droit à la philosophie* (Paris: Galilée, 1990); subsequently translated by Jan Plug and others in two volumes, edited by Plug, *Who's Afraid of Philosophy? Right to Philosophy 1* and *Eyes of the University: Right to Philosophy 2* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002, 2004).

2. When they are not simply unpublished, like the longest and the most recent among them, or unpublished in French, like a large number of them, these texts never conform exactly to their first versions, whose place of publication is noted each time.

1. Psyche: Invention of the Other

1. Cicero *De partitione oratoria* 1.3 and *De inventione* 1.7.

2. Paul de Man, "Pascal's Allegory of Persuasion," in *Allegory and Representation*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981), 1–25.

3. Jacques Derrida, "The Principle of Reason: The University in the Eyes of Its Pupils," trans. Catherine Porter and Edward P. Morris, *Diacritics*, Fall 1983, 3–20.

4. Rodolphe Gasché, "Deconstruction and Criticism," *Glyph* 6 (1979), and "Setzung und Übersetzung: Notes on Paul de Man," *Diacritics*, Winter 1981; Suzanne Gearhart, "Philosophy *Before* Literature: Deconstruction, Historicity, and the Work of Paul de Man," *Diacritics*, Winter 1983.

5. We may also recall Clément Jannequin's *Inventions musicales* (ca. 1545). Bach's inventions were not merely didactic, even though they were also intended to teach counterpoint technique. They may be (and often are) treated as composition exercises (exposition of the theme in its principal key, reexposition in the dominant, new developments, supplementary or final exposition in the key indicated in the signature). There are inventions in A major, in F minor, in G minor, and so on. And as soon as one gives the title "inventions" in the plural,

as I am doing here, one invites thoughts of technical virtuosity, didactic exercise, instrumental variations. But is one obliged to accept the invitation to think what one is thus invited to think?

6. "Fable," in Francis Ponge, *Proêmes*, pt. 1, *Natare piscem doces* (Paris: Gallimard, 1948), 45. The term *proême*, in the didactic sense that is emphasized by the learned *doces*, says something about invention, about the inventive moment of a discourse: beginning, inauguration, incipit, introduction. Cf. the second edition of "Fable," with roman and italic type reversed, in Ponge's *Œuvres*, vol. 1 (Paris: Gallimard, 1965), 114.

"Fable" finds and states the truth that it finds in finding it, that is, in stating it. Philosopheme, theorem, poem. A very sober Eureka, reduced to the greatest possible economy in its operation. In Poe's fictive preface to *Eureka*, we read: "I offer this book of Truths, not in its character of Truth-Teller, but for the Beauty that abounds in its Truth, constituting it true. To these I present the composition as an Art-Product alone,—let us say as a Romance; or if I be not urging too lofty a claim, as a Poem. What I here propound is true:—therefore it cannot die" (*The Works of Edgar Allan Poe*, vol. 9, *Eureka and Miscellanies* [Chicago: Stone & Kimball, 1895], 4). "Fable" may be called a spongism, for here truth signs its own name (signsPonge), if *Eureka* is a poem.

This is perhaps the place to ask, since we are speaking of *Eureka*, what happens when one translates *eurēma* as *inventio*, *euretēs* as "inventor," and *euriskō* as "I encounter, I find by looking or by chance, upon reflection or by accident, I discover or obtain it."

7. At the moment of undertaking this reading of "Fable," I must mention a coincidence, which is at once strange and uncanny (*unheimlich*), too pressing on the memory of a friendship for me to be able to silence it. On the same date, a certain "Remark to follow" seals both the promise and the interruption. From 1975 to 1978, at Paul de Man's invitation, I gave a seminar at Yale on "The Thing." Each year, I conducted two parallel courses, one devoted to "the thing" according to Heidegger and the other to "the thing" according to Ponge (1975), Blanchot (1976), and Freud (1977). The reading of Ponge closely followed a lecture delivered at Cerisy-la-Salle the previous summer. Well, precisely on the subject of "Fable," it marked a sort of suspension, as a sign of waiting, concerning which I could not then have known what it was thus holding in reserve. A line of suspension points, a very uncommon thing, will simultaneously have recorded both its memory and its program. First, in the initial partial publication of this text ("Signéponge," *Digraphe* 8 [1976]: 26), then under the same title in the bilingual volume *Signsponge* (trans. Richard Rand [New York: Columbia University Press, 1984], 102), which was dedicated to Paul de Man but only appeared a few days after his death. The first copy was delivered to me at Yale, another coincidence, at the end of the memorial ceremony for Paul de Man. Astonished, I rediscovered, that very day, these lines written almost ten years earlier:

> this story remains a story without event in the traditional sense of the word, the story of language and writing as the inscription of the thing itself as other, of the sponge-towel, the paradigm of the thing itself as other thing, the other inaccessible thing, the impossible subject. The story of the sponge-towel, at least as I tell it from my point of view, is indeed a fable, a story with the name of fiction, a simulacrum and effect of language (*fabula*), but such that only by means of it can the thing as other and as other thing come to pass with the allure of an inappropriable event (*Ereignis en abîme*). The fable of an allure (I give the name "allure" to the action of something that comes without coming, the thing that concerns us in this strange event) where nothing takes place except as it does in this little text (as you see, I am merely commenting at this moment on a small, very singular poem, a very brief one, but one that is fit to blow up everything, discreetly, irreplaceably) entitled "Fable," which begins "With the word *with* begins then this text / Whose first line states the truth." (Remark to follow.)
>
> .....

The sponge-towel, emblematic story of my name as the story of the other, beloved blazon of the "impossible subject" (as you know, the expression *mise en abyme* pertains originally to the code of heraldic blazonry), a fable and another way of making history.

8. Paul de Man, "Sign and Symbol in Hegel's Aesthetics," *Critical Inquiry* 8 (1982): 761–75.

9. "Allegory is sequential and narrative" ("Pascal's Allegory of Persuasion," 1). And again: "Allegory appears as a successive mode" ("The Rhetoric of Temporality," in Paul de Man, *Blindness and Insight*, 2nd ed. [Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983], 226).

10. Cf. "Autobiography as De-facement," *MLN* 94 (1979): 921.

11. De Man, "Rhetoric of Temporality," 225–26.

12. Ibid.

13. Ibid., 152–53. There is a note appended to this sentence, which I quote for the reference to the psyche and the Narcissus that are of interest to us here. It begins as follows: "The implication that the self-reflective moment of the *cogito*, the self-reflection of what Rilke calls 'le Narcisse exhaucé' [*sic*], is not an original event but itself an allegorical (or metaphorical) version of an intralinguistic structure, with all the negative epistemological consequences it entails." The equation between allegory and metaphor, in this context, poses problems, to which I will return elsewhere.

14. "The first passage (section 516) on identity showed that constative language is in fact performative, but the second passage (section 477) asserts that the possibility for language to perform is just as fictional as the possibility for

language to assert. . . . The differentiation between performative and constative language (which Nietzsche anticipates) is undecidable; the deconstruction leading from the one model to the other is irreversible but it always remains suspended, regardless of how often it is repeated" (Paul de Man, *Allegories of Reading: Figural Language in Rousseau, Nietzsche, Rilke, and Proust* [New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1979], 129–30).

15. The original text here reads "inversion" although the context clearly seems to call for "invention."—Ed.

16. Why have we seen such titles proliferate in recent years? *L'Invention du social* by Jacques Donzelot, *L'Invention de la démocratie* by Claude Lefort, *L'Invention d'Athènes* by Nicole Loraux, *L'Invention de la politique* by Moses Finley (a title all the more significant because it was invented for the French translation of an original titled *Politics in the Ancient World*), *L'Invention de l'Amérique* by Pierre-Yves Petillon. Within a few weeks of each other there appeared Gerald Holton's *L'Invention scientifique* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1982), Judith Schlanger's *L'Invention intellectuelle* (Paris: Fayard, 1983), and Christian Delacampagne's *L'Invention du racisme* (Paris: Fayard, 1983). Delacampagne's book reminds us that the invention of evil remains, like all inventions, a matter of culture, language, institutions, history, and technology. In the case of racism in the strict sense, it is doubtless a very recent invention in spite of its ancient roots. Delacampagne connects the signifier at least to *reason* and *razza*. Racism is also an invention of the other, but in order to exclude it and tighten the circle of the same. A logic of the psyche, the topic of its identifications and projections warrants a lengthy discussion. Such is the aim of this book, in all the texts that follow, I believe, without exception. As for its "political" exemplification, see, in particular, "Racism's Last Word" and "Geopsychoanalysis" in this volume and "The Laws of Reflection: Nelson Mandela, in Admiration" in *Psyche* 2.

17. Find *or* invent, find *and* invent. Man can invent by finding, by finding the invention, or he can invent beyond what he finds and what is already to be found there. Two examples: from Bossuet, "Les sourds et les muets trouvent l'invention de se parler avec les doigts" ("the deaf and the dumb find the invention of communicating with their fingers"); from Fénelon: "Les hommes trouvant le monde tel qu'il est, ont eu l'invention de le tourner à leurs usages" ("Finding the world as it is, men have had the inventiveness to adapt it to their own uses"). "Human" intervention often has the negative meaning of the imagination, delirium, arbitrary or deceptive fiction. Spinoza privileges this meaning in his *Tractatus Theologico-politicus*, notably in chapter 7, "Of the Interpretation of Scripture": "We see that all men parade their own ideas [*commenta*] as God's word," "We see, I say, that the chief concern of theologians on the whole has been to extort from Holy Scripture their own arbitrarily invented ideas [*figmenta*]," "But ambition and iniquity have reached such a pitch that religion takes the form not so much of obedience to the teachings of the Holy Spirit as of defending what men have invented [*commentis*]," "They ascribe to the Holy Spirit whatever their wild fancies have invented [*delirando fingunt*]," "to avoid the hasty acceptance of human fabrications [*hominum figmenta*] as divine teachings" (Baruch Spinoza, *Tractatus Theologico-politicus*, trans. Samuel Shirley as *Theological-Political Treatise*, 2nd ed. [Indianapolis: Hackett, 2001], 86–87)

18. Here we ought to study all of part 1, "Anthropological Didactics," and especially paragraphs 56 and 57, in Kant's *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* (trans. Mary J. Gregor [The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1974]). We will simply quote a fragment:

> *Invention* [erfinden] is quite different from *discovery* [entdecken]. When we say that someone *discovered* a thing, we mean that it already existed beforehand: it was just not well-known—for example, America before Columbus. But when someone *invents* a thing—gunpowder, for example—that thing was not known at all before the artist who made it. Both of these can be meritorious. But we can find something we were not looking for (as the alchemist discovered phosphor), and there is no merit at all in such a discovery. Talent for inventing things is called *genius*. But we apply this term only *to artists* [Künstler], and so to people who know how to make things, not to those who merely have experiential and scientific knowledge of many things. Moreover, we do not apply it to mere imitators: we reserve it for artists who are disposed to produce their works originally, and finally, for them only when their work is *exemplary*—that is, when it serves as a model [*Beispiel*] (*exemplar*) to be imitated. So a man's genius is "the exemplary originality of his talent [*die musterhafte Originalität seines Talents*]" (with respect to this or that kind of artistic work [*Kunstproducten*]). We also call a mind with this ability a genius, in which case the term refers not merely to a person's natural talent [*Naturgabe*] but also to the person himself. A man who is a genius in many fields is a vast genius (like Leonardo de Vinci). (92–93)

I have included the German words in order to emphasize in the original language the oppositions that are important for our argument, and in particular to make it clear that the word "creator" here does not designate someone who produces an existence ex nihilo; it is not the inventor who can do this, as we have stressed, but rather the artist (*Künstler*). We shall look at the remainder of this passage later on. It deals with the relation between genius and truth, the productive imagination and exemplarity.

19. It is not merely difficult to translate the entire configuration that is clustered around the word *trouver*. It is virtually impossible to reconstitute in a few words all the uses of the French *se trouver* in a non-Latin language ("il se trouve que . . . ," "je me trouve bien ici," "la lettre se trouve entre les jambes de la cheminée," and so on). No solution of translation will be completely adequate. Is translation invention? And the purloined letter, wherever it is found, and if one finds it right there where it is found: will one have discovered, unveiled, or invented it? Invented like Christ's cross, there where it *was* already (to be) found, or as a fable? As a meaning or as an existence? As a truth or as a simulacrum?

In its place or as a place? From its very incipit, "Le facteur de la vérité" (in *La carte postale* [Paris: Aubier-Flammarion, 1980]) is linked in an irreducible, thus an untranslatable, manner with the French idiom *se trouver* and with the *si ça se trouve* in all states of its syntax (441; 448). The question of whether the purloined letter is an invention (and then in what sense?) does not entirely cover, or at least does not completely exhaust, the question of whether "The Purloined Letter" is an invention.

20. The invention of language and of writing—of the mark—is always, for fundamental reasons, the very paradigm of invention, as if one were witnessing the invention of invention. Countless examples come to mind, but let's prolong the visit to Port-Royal: "Grammar is the art of speaking. To speak is to explain one's thoughts by signs that men have invented to this end. It has been found that the most useful of these signs are sounds and voices. But because these sounds fade away, other signs have been invented to make sounds durable and visible: these are the characters of writing, which the Greeks call *grammata*, from which the word 'Grammar' has come" (Arnauld and Lancelot, *Grammaire générale et raisonnée* [1660]). As always, invention is at the junction of nature and institutions: "The various sounds used for speaking, called *letters*, have been found in a perfectly natural way, which it is useful to note." If I prefer to say "invention of the mark or trace," rather than of language or writing, to designate the paradigm of all invention, it is in order to situate it at the junction of nature and culture, as any presumed originarity would have it, as well as to stop accrediting a priori the opposition between animals and men that serves as the basis for the construction of the current values of invention. If every invention, as invention of the trace, then becomes a movement of differance or sending, *envoi*, as I have attempted to show elsewhere, the postal framework is thereby privileged, as I should like simply to stress here once again. And to illustrate according to Montaigne, from whose writings I shall quote here, as a detached supplement to *La carte postale*, the following fragment from *Des postes* (2.22), which names "invention" and situates it between the animal *socius* and the human *socius*:

> In the war of the Romans against King Antiochus, T. Sempronius Gracchus, says Livy, "by relays of horses, with almost incredible speed, reached Pella from Amphissa on the third day"; and it appears, when you look at the location, that they were established posts, not freshly ordered for this ride.
>
> Cecinna's invention for sending back news to his household was much swifter; he took swallows along with him, and released them toward their nests when he wanted to send back news of himself, marking them with some color to signify his meaning, according as he had prearranged with his people. At the theater in Rome the heads of families kept pigeons in their bosoms, to which they attached letters when they wanted to send instructions to their people at home, and these were trained to bring back an answer. (*The Complete Essays of Montaigne*, trans. Donald Frame [Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1948], 516; trans. modified)

21. René Descartes, *Œuvres et lettres* (Paris: Gallimard, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1953), 914–15.

22. Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *Opuscules et fragments inédits*, ed. Louis Couturat (Paris: Alcan, 1903), 27–28.

23. The remainder of this text must be quoted in order to situate what might be a Leibnizian theory of *aphorism*, to be sure, but also of teaching and of a genre that might be called "an inventor's autobiographical memoirs," the workshop, the manufacture, the genesis or the history of invention:

> I find that in *encounters* of importance authors would have rendered the public a service if they had been willing to mark sincerely in their writings the traces of their attempts; but if *the system of science has to be constructed* on that basis, it would be as if in a completed house one wanted to keep all the scaffolding the architect needed in order to build it. The good *teaching methods* are all such that science ought to have been found surely by their path; and then if they are not empirical, that is if truths are taught by reasons or proofs drawn from ideas, it will always be through axioms, theorems, canons and other general propositions. It is something else again when truths are *aphorisms*, like those of Hippocrates, that is general or experiential truths, or at least most often true, learned through observation or based on experiences, and for which one does not have entirely convincing reasons. But that is not what is involved here, for these truths are not known through the connecting of ideas. (Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *New Essays Concerning Human Understanding*, trans. Alfred G. Langley [New York: Macmillan, 1896], 476–77; trans. modified. Leibniz stresses only the word "aphorisms.")

"General or experiential truths," in this context, are obviously opposed to "necessary truths," truths that are universal and known a priori.) On aphorism, see in volume 2, "Fifty-two Aphorisms for a Foreword," and "Aphorism Countertime."

I regret that, when I wrote this lecture in 1983, I had not yet been able to read the admirable text by Geoffrey Bennington, *Sententiousness and the Novel: Laying Down the Law in Eighteenth-Century Fiction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985). Among all the riches in this book, I am thinking in particular of its concern with fable, truth, and fiction in the chapter titled "*Feinte, Fable, Faute*: The Reading-Machine."

24. Leibniz, *Opuscules et fragments inédits*, 98–99.

25. See the remainder of the passage from Kant's *Anthropology from the Pragmatic Point of View* quoted earlier (n. 18 above):

> The realm of imagination is the proper domain of genius because imagination is creative [*schöpferisch*] and, being less subject than other powers to the constraint of rules, more apt for originality. Since the mechanism of teaching always forces the pupil to imitate, it undoubtedly interferes with the budding of a genius—that is, as far as his

originality is concerned. Yet every art [*Kunst*] needs certain mechanical basic rules—rules, namely, for making the work suit the Idea underlying it, for portraying *truthfully* the object that the artist has in mind. This must be studied in strict academic fashion, and is certainly an imitative process. To free imagination from even this constraint and let individual talent carry on without rules and revel in itself, even against nature, might produce original folly. But this would not be exemplary [*musterhaft*] and so could not be considered genius.

Spirit [*Geist*] is the *animating* principle [*das belebende Princip*] in man. In the French language, spirit and wit have the same name, esprit. It is different in the German language. We say that a speech, a text, a lady at a social gathering, etc., is beautiful but without spirit [*aber ohne Geist*]. Their stock of wit [*Witz*] makes no difference here: it can even repel us, because its action leaves nothing permanent behind [*nichts Bleibendes*]. (93)

26. F. W. J. Schelling, *Studium Generale: Vorlesungen über die Methode des akademischen Studiums* (Stuttgart: Alfred Kroner, 1954), lesson V, p. 79.

27. For example: "Thus Poetry and Philosophy, which another kind of dilettantism sets in contrast, are similar in that each one of them requires a self-engendered picture [*Bild*] of the world that comes into being spontaneously" ([ibid.,] lesson VI, p. 98). "Mathematics belongs to the world consisting simply of reflected image [*abgebildete Welt*] insofar as it manifests foundational knowledge and absolute identity only in a reflection" (lesson IV, p. 69). "Without intellectual intuition, no philosophy. Even pure intuition of space and time is not present as such in common consciousness; for it is also intellectual intuition, but only as reflected [*reflektierte*] in sense-perception" (70).

28. On the subject of that "humanist" or "anthropological" invariant in the concept of invention, it is perhaps time to quote Bergson (as the affinity with Schelling obliges): "Invention is the essential undertaking of the human mind, the one that distinguishes men from animals."

29. Schelling, *Studium Generale: Vorlesungen,* 49–50.

30. This economy is obviously not limited to any conscious representation and to the calculations that appear there. And if there is no invention without the intervention of what was once called genius, or even without the brilliant flash of a *Witz* through which everything begins, still that generosity must no longer respond to a principle of savings and to a restricted economy of differance. The aleatory advent of the entirely other—beyond the incalculable as a still possible calculus—there is "true" invention, which is no longer invention of truth and can only come about for a finite being: the very *opportunity* [chance] of finitude: It invents and appears to itself only on the basis of what *happens* thus.

2. *The Retrait of Metaphor*

1. The noun *entame* and its verb *entamer* play a large role in the essay. *Entamer* means to make the first cut in something (e.g., a loaf of bread) and thus to begin something (e.g., a discussion), to initiate, to broach but also to breach (e.g., defenses), to undermine, to damage, to break into, etc. Here, *entame* will most often be translated as cut or incision, but we will also frequently signal that it is both a breaching and broaching.—Trans.

2. Martin Heidegger, *Unterwegs zur Sprache* (Pfullingen: Gunther Neske, 1959); *On the Way to Language*, trans. Peter D. Hertz et al. (New York: Harper & Row, 1971).—Trans.

3. "La mythologie blanche: La métaphore dans le texte philosophique," in *Marges—de la philosophie* (Paris: Minuit, 1972), 247–324; "White Mythology: Metaphor in the Text of Philosophy," in *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 207–71. The note in question is 269n19; 226n22; the page numbers cited here and parenthetically in the text are those of the original and the translation, respectively, in that order; translations have frequently been modified.—Trans.

4. Paul Ricœur, *La métaphore vive* (Paris: Seuil, 1975); *The Rule of Metaphor: Multi-disciplinary Studies of the Creation of Meaning in Language*, trans. Robert Czerny et al. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977).

5. "La différance," in *Marges*, 25; "Différance," in *Margins*, 24.—Trans.

6. Martin Heidegger, "Sprache und Heimat," *Hebbel-Jahrbuch*, 1960, 28.

7. Jean Greisch, "Les mots et les roses: La métaphore chez Martin Heidegger," in *Revue des sciences théologiques et philosophiques* 57, 3 (July 1973): 443–56.

8. Heidegger, "Brief über den 'Humanismus'" (1947), reprinted in *Wegmarken* (Frankfurt a/M: Klostermann, 1967), 189; "Letter on Humanism," trans. Frank A. Capuzzi, in Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, ed. David Farrell Krell (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), 236–37.

9. Martin Heidegger, *Die Frage nach dem Ding* (Tübingen: M. Niemeyer, 1962), 172.

10. Here is the passage that Derrida is commenting on and translating, as rendered into English by Hertz. *Aufriss* is translated as "design":

> The unity of the being of language for which we are looking we shall call the design. The name demands of us that we see the proper character of the being of language with greater clarity. The "sign" in design (Latin *signum*) is related to *secare*, to cut—as in saw, sector, segment. To design is to cut a trace. Most of us know the word "sign" only in its debased meaning—lines on a surface. But we make a design also when we cut a furrow into the soil to open it to seed and growth. The design is the whole of the traits of the drawing that structures and prevails throughout the open, unlocked freedom of language. The design is the drawing of the being of language. . . . Yet the

> design of language's nature will remain veiled to us even in its approximate outline, as long as we do not properly attend to the sense in which we had already spoken of speaking and what is spoken. (Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, 121)

11. See Martin Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 60ff.—Trans.

12. See Jacques Derrida, "Pas," *Gramma*, no. 3/4 (1976).—Trans.

3. *What Remains by Force of Music*

1. Derrida quotes in this essay from two texts by Roger Laporte, *Fugue* (Paris: Gallimard, 1970) and *Fugue: Supplément* (Paris: Gallimard, 1973).—Trans.

2. Roger Laporte, *La veille* (Paris. Gallimard, 1963).

5. *Envoi*

1. Derrida's title has a literary as well as a literal sense; in certain poetic forms the envoi served as a dedication, a signing-off, a summary, something with which the poem was as it were "sent off" to the prince, perhaps, for whom it was written. From *envoyer*, "to send," the term has here as well the sense of a "send-off" for the work of the congress. A further meaning of "dispatch," something sent with urgency and in telegraphic language, is also sometimes in play in the text. With *envoi* Derrida translates Heidegger's use of *Geschick*, *Geschick des Seins*, the sending (or destiny) of Being. Finally, the word echoes its use in the plural, *Envois*, that titles the first part of Derrida's *La carte postale: De Socrate à Freud et au-delà* (Paris: Aubier-Flammarion, 1980). For his English translation of that work, Alan Bass likewise left *Envois* in French (*The Post Card: From Socrates to Freud and Beyond* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987]).—Trans.

2. Martin Heidegger, "Die Zeit des Weltbildes," in *Holzwege* (Frankfurt a/M: Klostermann, 1950), 84; "The Age of the World Picture," in Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, trans. William Lovitt (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), 125.

3. Ibid., 90–91; 139.

4. Ibid., 84; 130.

5. Ibid., 90–91; 139.

6. Ibid., 84; 131.

7. Jacques Lacan, *Écrits* (Paris: Seuil, 1966), 835; "Position of the Unconscious," trans. Bruce Fink, in *Reading Seminar XI: Lacan's Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, ed. Richard Feldstein et al. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), 265.

8. Lacan, *Écrits*, 860.

9. Heidegger, *Holzwege*, 98; *Questions Concerning Technology*, 147.

10. Ibid.

11. Heidegger, *Holzwege*, 85; *Questions Concerning Technology*, 132.

12. Jean Laplanche and Jean-Baptiste Pontalis, *The Language of Psycho-Analysis*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (New York: Norton, 1973), 364, 365nβ.

13. Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy, *Le titre de la lettre* (*une lecture de Lacan*) (Paris: Galilée, 1973); *The Title of the Letter: A Reading of Lacan*, trans. François Raffoul and David Pettigrew (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992); Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, *Le sujet de la philosophie* (Paris: Aubier-Flammarion, 1979); *The Subject of Philosophy*, trans. Thomas Trezise et al. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993); Jean-Luc Nancy, *Ego sum* (Paris: Aubier-Flammarion, 1979).

14. Cf. Jacques Derrida, "Préjugés—devant la loi," in *La Faculté de juger* (Paris: Minuit, 1985); "Before the Law," trans. Avital Ronell, in Derrida, *Acts of Literature*, ed. Derek Attridge (New York: Routledge, 1992).

6. *Me—Psychoanalysis*

1. The "game of fort-da, which has fed so much speculation," is illuminated by the process of introjection in a remarkable unpublished manuscript of 1963, "The 'Crime' of Introjection," now available in Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok, *L'Écorce et le noyau* (Paris: Aubier-Flammarion, 1978); see, for example, p. 128. [This essay is not included in the English version of *The Shell and the Kernel*.—Trans.]

2. Abraham, "The Shell and the Kernel," 27; hereafter page references to the *Diacritics* version of this essay are given in the text in parentheses.

3. Jean Laplanche and Jean-Baptiste Pontalis, *The Language of Psycho-Analysis*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (New York: Norton, 1973).

4. See, e.g., "Le fantôme d'Hamlet ou le VI^{e} Acte, précédé par l'Entr'Acte de la 'vérité'" in Abraham and Torok's *L'Écorce et le noyau*, the epigraph to which is from "The Leaden Echo and the Golden Echo" by Gerard Manley Hopkins, translated by Abraham. The epigraph of Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok's *The Wolf Man's Magic Word: A Cryptonomy*, trans. Nicholas Rand (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), is a translation from Mihály Babits; *Anasémies* vol. 3, entitled *Jonas et le cas Jonas: Essai de psychanalyse littéraire*, is a translation of and psychoanalytic commentary on Babits's *Book of Jonah*; and vol. 5, *Poésies mimées*, will include translations of Hungarian, German, and English poets.

5. "Toothing-stone," or simply "toothing," is an architectural term: "in Building. Bricks or stones left projecting from a wall to form a bond for additional work to be built on" (OED).—Trans.

7. *At This Very Moment in This Work Here I Am*

1. [Cf.] "I am sick with love," Song of Songs, v. 8 [Levinas's note].

2. Emmanuel Levinas, *Autrement qu'être ou au-delà de l'essence* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1974), 180–81; *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1981), 141–42; page references to the original and the translation are henceforth included in the text; translations of this and all cited works by Levinas have frequently been modified.—Trans.

3. Emmanuel Levinas, "Le nom de Dieu d'après quelques textes talmudiques," in *L'analyse du langage théologique: Le nom de Dieu*, ed. Enrico Castelli (Paris: Aubier-Montaigne, 1969); "The Name of God According to a Few Talmudic Texts," in Levinas, *Beyond the Verse*, trans. Gary D. Mole (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994).

4. See also Levinas, "Name of God," 160

5. Emmanuel Levinas, *Totalité et infini* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1961), 261; *Totality and Infinity*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969), 285.

6. Emmanuel Levinas, *Humanisme de l'autre homme* (Montpellier: Fata Morgana, 1972), 60; "Meaning and Sense," *Collected Philosophical Papers*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1998), 104.

7. Levinas, *Totalité et infini*, 202–4; *Totality and Infinity*, 227–28.

8. Emmanuel Levinas, "The Trace of the Other," trans. Alphonso Lingis, in *Deconstruction in Context*, ed. Mark Taylor (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), and id., *Humanisme de l'autre homme*.

9. Emmanuel Levinas, "Du sacré au saint," trans. Annette Aronowicz as "From the Sacred to the Holy: Five New Talmudic Readings," in *Nine Talmudic Readings* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994).

10. Jacques Derrida, "Violence and Metaphysics," in *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 320–21n92.

11. Levinas, *Totalité et infini*, 254; *Totality and Infinity*, 276.

12. Emmanuel Levinas, "Judaism and the Feminine," in *Difficult Freedom: Essays on Judaism*, trans. Seán Hand (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), 34–35.

13. Emmanuel Levinas, "Et Dieu créa la femme," in *Du sacré au saint: Cinq nouvelles lectures Talmudiques* (Paris: Minuit, 1977), 132–42; "And God Created Woman," in *Nine Talmudic Readings*, trans. Aronowicz, 167–73.

14. Catherine Chalier, *Figures du féminin: Lecture d'Emmanuel Levinas* (Paris: La nuit surveillée, 1982), 97.

15. Levinas, *Autrement qu'être*, 113n; *Otherwise than Being*, 192n27.

16. Levinas, "Name of God," 120.

17. Ibid., 121.

8. Des tours de Babel

1. François-Marie Arouet de Voltaire, *Philosophical Dictionary* (*A–I*), trans. Peter Gay (New York: Basic Books, 1962), 106–7.

2. See Jacques Derrida, *Ulysse gramophone: Deux mots pour Joyce* (Paris: Galilée, 1986); "Ulysses Gramophone: Hear Say Yes in Joyce," trans. Tina Kendall and Shari Benstock, in Derrida, *Acts of Literature*, ed. Derek Attridge (New York: Routledge, 1992), and Derrida, "Two Words for Joyce," trans. Geoff Bennington, in *Post-Structuralist Joyce: Essays from the French*, ed. Derek Attridge and Daniel Ferrer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 145–59.

3. Walter Benjamin, *Œuvres*, trans. Maurice de Gandillac (Paris: Denoël, 1971).

4. Walter Benjamin, "The Task of the Translator," trans. Harry Zohn, in *Selected Writings*, vol. 1: *1913–1926* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996), 259. Although page references are given to this translation in parentheses in the text, quotations from it have frequently been modified to follow more closely the French translation by de Gandillac on which Derrida is relying.—Trans.

5. Walter Benjamin, "On Language as Such and on the Language of Man," in *Selected Writings*, 1: 66.

6. Claude Colombet, *Propriété littéraire et artistique* (Paris: Dalloz, 1976).

7. Henri Desbois, *Le droit d'auteur en France* (Paris: Dalloz, 1978).

9. Telepathy

1. Such a remainder [*restant*], I am no doubt publishing it in order to come closer to what remains inexplicable for me even to this day. These cards and letters had become inaccessible to me, materially speaking at least, by a semblance of accident, at some precise moment. They should have appeared, as fragments and in accordance with the plan [*dispositif*] adopted at that time, in "Envois" (Section One of *La carte postale* [Paris: Aubier-Flammarion, 1980]). In a manner that was apparently just as fortuitous, I rediscovered them very close at hand, but too late, when the proofs for the book had already been sent back for the second time. There will perhaps be talk of omission through "resistance" and other such things. Certainly, but resistance to what? To whom? Dictated by whom, to whom, how, according to what routes [*voies*]? From this bundle of daily dispatches that all date from the same week, I have extracted only a portion for the moment, for lack of space. Lack of time too, and for the treatment to which I had to submit this mail [*courrier*], triage, fragmentation, destruction, etc., the interested reader may refer to "Envois," 7ff.

2. Slashes (/ . . . /) indicate those words that appear in English in the original.—Trans.

3. *Devine* is both an imperative of the verb *deviner*, to guess, and a noun meaning a (feminine) soothsayer.—Trans.

4. For the story that follows, see Ernest Jones, *Sigmund Freud: Life and Work*, 3 vols. (London: Hogarth Press, 1953–57), 1: 316–17; and for the context of Marie Bonaparte's role here, see also Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson's introduction to *The Complete Letters of Sigmund Freud to Wilhelm Fliess, 1887–1904* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1985), 3–11.—Trans.

5. See Jones, *Sigmund Freud: Life and Work*, 2: 19.—Trans.

6. See ibid., 3: 422.—Trans.

7. Derrida is referring in particular to the following texts in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. and trans. James Strachey et al. (London: Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis): "Psycho-Analysis and Telepathy," 18 (1955): 173–93; "Dreams and Telepathy," 18: 195–220; and "Some Additional Notes on Dream Interpretation as a Whole," which includes a section on "The Occult Significance of Dreams," 19 (1961): 135–38; and to "Dreams and Occultism," in Freud's *New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis*, trans. James Strachey, Pelican Freud Library, vol. 2, ed. James Strachey, assisted by Angela Richards (rpt., Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin Books, 1983), 60–87.—Trans.

8. "Dorothy Burlingham also came to Freud and psychoanalysis as Anna's close friend. Leaving her disturbed husband, she moved to Vienna from America with her four children. She was first in analysis with Theodor Reik and then Freud. . . . A member of the Tiffany Family, Dorothy Burlingham could afford to pay for the treatment of her whole family; her children were among Anna Freud's first patients. Freud was happy when Anna found Dorothy as a friend; to him it meant she was now in safe hands. In 1929 he wrote 'our symbiosis with an American family (husbandless), whose children my daughter is bringing up analytically with a firm hand, is growing continually stronger, so that we share with them our needs for the summer' [to Binswanger]. And in 1932 Freud noted that Anna and 'her American friend (who owns the car) have bought and furnished . . . a weekend cottage' [to Zweig]. Anna Freud loved dogs, and in his old age Freud would play 'with them as he used to play with his ring' [Sachs]. Dorothy . . . was the main source not only of Freud's dogs but also of the chows that went to others in Freud's circle. . . . Anna became a second mother to her children, and Dorothy was recipient of one of Freud's rings." Paul Roazen, *Freud and His Followers* (New York: Random House, 1975), 448. (Note added January 22, 1981, while correcting proofs.)

9. Jones, *Sigmund Freud: Life and Work*, 3: 423–24.—Trans.

10. Here, as elsewhere, Derrida is quoting the French translation of Jones. In his circular letter of February 15, 1926, Jones quotes from an article in a recent issue of the journal *Psyche* as follows: "A few years ago the analysis of dreams must have seemed to many adherents of the Viennese school to be developing into a not altogether inexact science. . . . But to-day the wild men are once more not far from the fold—for if Telepathy be accepted the possibility of a definite oneiric aetiology recedes some decades, if not centuries, into the future" (Jones, *Sigmund Freud: Life and Work*, 3: 422).—Trans.

11. "Toothing-stone," or simply "toothing" is an architectural term: "in Building. Bricks or stones left projecting from a wall to form a bond for additional work to be built on" (OED).—Trans.

12. See Jones, *Sigmund Freud: Life and Work*, 3: 406.—Trans.

13. It has in fact since been argued that "M.P." was none other than the "Wolf Man": see Maria Torok's "Afterword" to *The Wolf Man's Magic Word: A Cryptonymy*, by Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok, trans. Nicholas Rand (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 85.—Trans.

11. The Deaths of Roland Barthes

1. Roland Barthes, *Writing Degree Zero*, trans. Annette Lavers and Colin Smith (New York: Hill & Wang, 1983), 9–10. [All notes added by translators.]

2. Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill & Wang, 1980), 94). The French title is *La chambre claire* (Paris: Seuil, 1980).

3. Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility," trans. Harry Zohn and Edmund Jephcott, in *Selected Writings*, vol. 4, ed. Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003).

4. Maurice Blanchot, *Le livre à venir* (Paris: Gallimard, 1959), 25.

5. "Tourner autour du point" is a play on "tourner autour du pot," "to beat around the bush."

6. Roland Barthes, *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill & Wang, 1977), 142.

7. Maurice Blanchot, *Friendship*, trans. Elizabeth Rottenberg (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 289. As Derrida later explains, both the book and the last section of the book (289–92), which is entirely in italics, bear this title.

8. Blanchot begins *Friendship* (ix) with two epigraphs from Bataille: "My complicitous friendship: this is what my temperament brings to other men"; "friends until that state of profound friendship where a man abandoned, abandoned by all of his friends, encounters in life the one who will accompany him beyond life, himself without life, capable of free friendship, detached from all ties."

9. Derrida is referring here to his own text. First published in *Poétique* in September 1980, it was written about a year before that, approximately six months after Barthes's death in March 1980.

10. Like so many other things that do not survive translation, the passage on the back of *La chambre claire* has been omitted in *Camera Lucida*. We thus restore here this "gesture around what we believe to be the essential writing": "Marpa was very shaken when his own son died, and one of his disciples said to him, 'You have always said that everything is an illusion. Is not the death of your son an illusion as well?' And Marpa responded, 'Certainly, but the death of my son is a super-illusion'" (*A Practice of the Tibetan Way*).

11. In the English edition, these handwritten lines of Barthes's appear in black on a white background and have been incorporated into the opening and closing pages of the text rather than printed on the front and back inside covers. Howard translates these two inscriptions: "It must all be considered as if spoken by a character in a novel"; "And afterward? / —What to write now? Can you still write anything? / —One writes with one's desires, and I am not through desiring."

12. *Revenant* as a gerund means "returning" or "coming back," and as a noun, "ghost" or "phantom." Two sections further, Derrida uses the phrase *revenant à la lettre*, which can be translated as "returning to the letter," "literally returning," "ghost to the letter," or even "literally a ghost."

13. Roland Barthes, "Analyse textuelle d'un conte d'Edgar Poe," in *L'aventure sémiologique* (Paris: Seuil, 1985), 329–59.

12. An Idea of Flaubert: "Plato's Letter"

1. That is, "deux impertinences égales." Materialism and Spiritualism are "impertinent" in both senses of that word: they are "not pertinent," "irrelevant," but also "presumptuous," "insolent," "meddlesome." Later in this text, Derrida explicitly defines "impertinence" as "naïve incompetence," a usage that is far better sustained by the original French *impertinence* than by its English homonym.—Trans.

2. The phrase translated here is "le reçu flaubertien," which can denote the body of received ideas (*idées reçues*) about Flaubert, an accepted version of his life, work, opinions, poetics, and, by extension, the range of facts admissible as evidence (receivable in the legal sense) within the institutions of literary history and criticism. Also, perhaps, a written acknowledgment of goods received—"the Flaubertian receipt."—Trans.

3. Flaubert to Louise Colet, December 17, 1852: "It's necessary that throughout the entire book, there is not a single word of my own invention, and that after having read it, no one would dare any longer to open his mouth for fear of saying spontaneously one of the phrases found therein."

4. Flaubert to Marie-Sophie Leroyer de Chantepie, November 4, 1857: "Speaking of Spinoza (that great man!), try to obtain the biography written by Boulainvilliers. It is in the Leipzig edition in Latin. I believe Emile Saisset has translated the *Ethics*. You must read that. Mme Coignet's article in the *Revue de Paris* was really quite inadequate. Yes, you must read Spinoza. Those who accuse him of atheism are asses. (Goethe said, 'When I am troubled I reread the *Ethics*.') Perhaps like Goethe you will find calm in the reading of this great book. Ten years ago I lost the friend I had loved more than any other, Alfred Le Poittevin. Fatally ill, he spent his last nights reading Spinoza."

5. Flaubert discovered the *Tractatus* in 1870. He wrote to George Sand in April–May, 1870: "I knew Spinoza's *Ethics*, but not the *Tractatus Theologico-politicus*. The book astounds me; I am dazzled, and transported with admiration. My God, what a man! what an intellect! what learning and what a mind!" Doesn't this eager autodidact sound exactly like Bouvard and Pécuchet?

The same year, and again to George Sand, Flaubert wrote: "I have resolved to begin work on my *Saint Anthony* tomorrow or the day after. . . . These past few days I have read a lot of tedious theology, interspersed with some Plutarch and Spinoza" (February 1870). "Recently, I have spent my evenings reading Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* in Barni's translation and going over my Spinoza" (February 1872). "If only I don't botch Saint Anthony as well? I shall return to it in a week, when I have finished with Kant and Hegel. These two great men have gone a long way toward stupefying me; when I take leave of them, it is with voracity that I pounce on my old, three times great Spinoza. What a genius! What a work the *Ethics* is!" (end of March 1872).

6. Gustave Flaubert, *Bouvard and Pécuchet*, trans. T. W. Earp and G. W. Stonier (New York: New Directions, 1954), 240; further page references are given in parentheses in the text, and the translation has occasionally been modified.—Trans.

7. We know that Flaubert was an avid reader of Sade, though he always kept a distance from this author who, for him, represented the hyperbole of Catholicism. See what he says of Sade to the Goncourt brothers (quoted in J.-P. Richard, *Littérature et sensation: Stendhal, Flaubert* [Paris: Seuil, 1954], 195). From another point of view, he defended himself against what Sainte-Beuve had called his "touch of sadistic imagination" (see his letter to Sainte-Beuve of December 1862).

8. The exchange takes place in the context of a passage on the imagination of the prophets and on the idolatry of visions and of figurative language: "'He is going to deny the prophets now!' 'Not at all! But in the heat of excitement they saw Jehovah in different forms as a fire, as a bush, an old man, a dove, and they were not certain of Revelation for they were always asking for a sign.' 'Ah! and you discovered these fine things . . . ?' 'In Spinoza.'"

9. "As for obviousness, denied by some, affirmed by others, it is its own criterion. Monsieur Cousin has demonstrated this."

10. "Stupidity is immovable; nothing attacks it without shattering against it. It has the character of granite, hard and resistant. In Alexandria, a Mr. Thompson of Sunderland wrote his name on Pompey's Pillar in letters six feet high. There is no way to see the pillar without seeing Thompson's name, and without consequently thinking of Thompson. The cretin has incorporated himself into the monument and perpetuates himself along with it" (letter cited by J.-P. Richard, *Littérature*

et sensation, 233). When elsewhere he says that "masterpieces are stupid" ("they have the same tranquil look as the products of nature, like large animals and the mountains" [to Louise Colet, June 26–27, 1852]), we might also think of the stony, monumental resistance they can offer to history. The proper name incorporates itself in the masterpiece, and this is not a secondary benefit to be derived from this speculation on stupidity. I began by underscoring the *stones* [pierres].

11. Flaubert to Louise Colet, September 22, 1846: "What a good man, that mailman! I left orders in the kitchen that he be given a glass of wine to quench his thirst. . . . Yesterday he brought me nothing, so he got nothing! You send me everything you can find to flatter my affection; you throw all the tributes others pay you at my feet. I read the letter from Plato with all the concentration I could muster. I saw a great deal in it, a great, great deal; he is a man whose heart, whatever he may do to make it appear serene, is cold and empty; his life is bleak . . . but he has loved you very much and still loves you with a deep and solitary love; it will last him for a long time. His letter made me suffer. . . . As a rule the philosopher is a kind of mongrel being, a cross between the scholar and the poet, and envious of both. Metaphysics pours a lot of rancor into your blood. It is very odd and very entertaining; I worked at it rather hard for two years, but I regret the time wasted."

12. Flaubert to Marie-Sophie Leroyer de Chantepie, November 4, 1857: "Woman strikes me as an impossible thing; the more I study her, the less I understand her. I've stayed out of her way as much as I could. She is an abyss that entices and scares me! Besides, I think one of the causes of the moral weakness of the nineteenth century is our exaggerated *poeticization* of her. Thus, the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception seems to me a stroke of political genius on the part of the Church. It formulated and annulled all the feminine aspirations of the era, to the Church's benefit. The writer doesn't exist who has not exalted mother, wife, or mistress.—A generation overcome with pain now weeps like a sick child in women's lap. No one realizes *how fainthearted men are with them*!"

To Mlle Leroyer de Chantepie, December 18, 1859: "So that, to avoid living, I steep myself in Art, out of desperation; I get drunk on 'ink as others do on wine.'"

13. Flaubert to Louise Colet, April 6, 1853: "They say Lamartine is dying. I don't mourn him. . . . What he leaves behind won't get him a eunuch for a ghost; he lacks balls; he has never pissed anything but pure water." The succession of ideas is curious and could be confronted with a certain Hegelian reflection on the oneness of the canal through which both sperm and urine flow, substances Hegel likens respectively to conceptual thought and representation.

14. Flaubert to Amélie Bosquet, August 9, 1864: "From all this I conclude, following old Mr. Cousin, that the Beautiful is intended only for some forty people a century in Europe."

15. Flaubert to Louise Colet, January 16, 1852, and September 30, 1853.

16. So difficult is it to "propose to people a language *in which they have never thought!*" I am displacing and deforming the most evident meaning of this sentence. In the context of this letter to Feydeau (end of October 1858), Flaubert speaks of the impossible task of describing Carthage, of which "nothing is known." In its generality, however, the formula also moves in another direction, toward the senseless and the impossible of which I am speaking here. Two lines earlier, Flaubert had said: "Since the beginning of literature, no one has undertaken anything so senseless."

17. October 14, 1846. And much later, from a different point of view, Flaubert writes to Marie-Sophie Leroyer de Chantepie on October 23, 1863: "Art must never serve as a pulpit for any doctrine whatsoever, on pain of degradation!"

18. This was in 1979. Eugenio Donato died in 1983. A few months earlier, he published "Who Signs Flaubert?" (in *MLN* 89, 4 [May 1983]) and cited this letter to Maxime Du Camp: "one almost always dies in uncertainty about one's proper name."

19. For example, in his letter to Edmond de Goncourt, beginning of July 1870.

14. My Chances/Mes chances*: A Rendezvous with Some Epicurean Stereophonies*

1. This will be my only "footnote," in order to say: This essay proposes in a certain way an almost silent reading of the words *"tombe"* [tomb] or *"tomber"* [to fall] in *La carte postale*. This is one of the most frequently used words in "Envois." For example, the entry for March 14, 1979: "An other, whom I know well, would unbind himself immediately in order to run off in the other direction. I bet that he would fall upon you again. I fell in well with you, so I remain." On the following day: "If you were mad you would have come to wait for me like a hallucinating woman. I would have run toward you along the platform, right next the tracks, and I would have done everything not to fall" [Derrida, *The Post Card: From Socrates to Freud and Beyond*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 182–83]. I quote this book because it is included in the program of this encounter; it has been inscribed there, in a certain way, in the meeting's charter. Don't accuse me, therefore, of being, as one says in English, "self-centered." In truth, I have forever dreamt of writing a *self-centered* text; I never managed it, never arrived at that point. I always fall upon the others. This will end up by being known.

2. Lucretius, *De rerum natura*, trans. W. H. D. Rouse, rev. ed. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992), 113.

3. *The Short Fiction of Edgar Allan Poe*, ed. Stuart and Susan Levine (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1978), 181.

4. Charles Baudelaire, "Edgar Allan Poe, sa vie et ses ouvrages," in *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Claude Pichois (Paris: Gallimard, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1976), 2: 249.

5. Baudelaire, *Œuvres complètes*, 2: 297.

6. Sigmund Freud, *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*, trans. James Strachey, in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. James Strachey et al., vol. 6 (London: Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1960), 26–27; further page references are given in parentheses in the text.

7. *The Complete Letters of Sigmund Freud to Wilhelm Fliess, 1887–1904*, ed. and trans. Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1985), 264.

8. Actually, it is the fifth that has been so numbered. But given that Derrida has just said he is less and less sure about all these chances, we leave the "mistake" as is.—Ed.

9. Freud, *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, in *Standard Edition*, 7: 168.

10. Freud, "Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of His Childhood," in *Standard Edition*, 11: 136–37.

15. Racism's Last Word

1. *Political Imprisonment in South Africa: An Amnesty International Report* (London: Amnesty International Publications, 1978).

2. Howard Schissel, "The Liberal Alternative as Solution: How to Reconcile the Defense of Human Rights with Increase in Profits," *Le Monde diplomatique*, Oct. 1979, 18; for the same tendency, see in the same issue of *Le Monde diplomatique*, René Lefort, "Racial Solidarity and Class Interests: Meeting Economic Imperatives Without Renouncing 'Separate Development,'" 15–16, and for the same "logic" from a labor-union point of view, Brigitte Lachartre, "A System of Prohibitions Become a Nuisance," 16–17; see too Marianne Cornevin, *La République sud-africaine* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1982).

3. *The Fundamental Principles of Calvinist Political Science* (1951), cited in Serge Thion, *Le Pouvoir pâle ou le racisme sud-africain* (Paris: Rombaldi, 1969).

16. No Apocalypse, Not Now

1. Current expressions in the open debate going on in the United States: should we be the first to use nuclear weapons, so as not to find ourselves in a weak strategic position (a "first use" that is at least preventative), or should we rather adopt the rule of using nuclear weapons only in retaliation ("no first use")?

2. Permit me to refer here to my article "Mochlos ou Le conflit des facultés," *Philosophie*, April 2, 1984 [trans. as "Mochlos, or the Conflict of the Faculties," in Jacques Derrida, *Eyes of the University: Right to Philosophy 2* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004)].

3. See "Psyche: Invention of the Other" above. In fact, the two lectures were delivered the same week at Cornell University. The allusions are numerous from one to the other.

4. As early as 1897, Freud said he was convinced "that there are no indications of reality in the unconscious, so that one cannot distinguish between truth and fiction that has been cathected with affect" (letter 69, September 21, 1897, in *The Complete Letters of Sigmund Freud to Wilhelm Fliess, 1887–1904*, ed. and trans. Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson [Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1985] 264). I propose a different reading of this observation in "Before the Law," in Derrida, *Acts of Literature*, ed. Derek Attridge (New York: Routledge, 1992), 192ff.

5. Leslie H. Gelb, "Is the Nuclear Threat Manageable?" *New York Times Sunday Magazine*, March 4, 1984.

6. Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger's letters of August 1982 and July 1983 are quoted and discussed by Theodore Draper, "Nuclear Temptations," *New York Review of Books*, January 19, 1984.

7. See "The Principle of Reason: The University in the Eyes of Its Pupils," in Derrida, *Eyes of the University*, and "Heidegger's Hand: *Geschlecht* II," in *Psyche* 2.

8. Jonathan Schell, *The Fate of the Earth* (New York: Knopf, 1982).

9. Theodore Draper, "How Not to Think About Nuclear War," *New York Review of Books*, July 15, 1982.

10. Solly Zuckerman, *Nuclear Illusion and Reality* by Solly Zuckerman (New York: Viking Press, 1982).

11. In parentheses and in passing, Heidegger notes that Leibniz, "father of the principle of sufficient reason, is also the inventor of 'life insurance'" (Martin Heidegger, *The Principle of Reason*, trans. Reginald Lilly [Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996], 124). During the colloquium at Cornell, I dedicated this note to Frances Ferguson, who had previously introduced her own lecture on the "nuclear sublime" with these remarks: "Recently I received a notice from State Farm Insurance with the following information about the coverage on my house: 'Under no circumstances *does your policy provide coverage for loss involving a nuclear incident*'" (Ferguson, "The Nuclear Sublime," *Diacritics* 14, 2 [Summer 1984]: 4).

12. See Jacques Derrida, *Of Spirit: Heidegger and the Question*, trans. Geoffrey Bennington and Rachel Bowlby (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 129–36, n. 5.

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