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Granier, Brandon James

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Flights from the Hermeneutic: Precisions of Reading in Derrida, de Man and Deleuze

DISSERTATION

submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in Comparative Literature

by

Brandon James Granier

Dissertation Committee:
Professor Ackbar Abbas, Chair
Professor Emeritus Martin Schwab
Chancellor's Professor Bryan Reynolds

2014

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

CURRICULUM VITAE

Brandon James Granier

2001   B.A. in Literature, University of California, Santa Cruz

2006   M.A. in Comparative Literature, Dartmouth College

2007   M.A. in French, Middlebury College in Paris

2008-10   Teaching Assistant, Department of French,
University of California, Irvine

2010-14   Teaching Assistant, Department of English,
University of California, Irvine

2014   Ph.D. in Comparative Literature,
University of California, Irvine

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Flights from the Hermeneutic: Precisions of Reading in Derrida, de Man and Deleuze

By

Brandon James Granier

Doctor of Philosophy in Comparative Literature

University of California, Irvine, 2014

Professor Ackbar Abbas, Chair

Although hermeneutics continues to predominate in humanities departments wherever semantic claims about phenomena are advanced (and not solely where 'the hermeneutical' is explicitly invoked), its destiny remains unwritten. Jacques Derrida, Paul de Man and Gilles Deleuze conceptualized reading as a more retorse movement than the circular totalization that hermeneutics traces. Following their leads, this thesis advances the potential for an act of reading which no longer serves the behest of discourse [*Redesinn*], articulation or recognition. The first chapter, "Derrida's Afterlife of Reading: the Paris 1981 Gadamer Encounter," frames the intervention by elucidating the points of contention between hermeneutics and deconstruction. It demonstrates the logic of conciliation by which Gadamerian hermeneutics seeks to integrate deconstruction within the positioning of living discourse [*Redesinn*]. Derrida's afterlife of reading, in contradistinction, conceives of a positioning of textuality after it has been prescribed according to discourse. In the second chapter, "The Precise Illegibility of de Man," interpretive precision is re-conceived outside the province of mimetic representation. In tracing de Man's return to an etymology of precision as "cutting off," a praxis of reading

outside models of equivalence and understanding finds its quintessential expression in the de Manian allegory. Finally, in the third chapter, "Reading with Pause and Muscles: Deleuze's Theatre of Sensation," a nascent Deleuzian concept is developed and its broad implications are considered. Best emblematized by the *entr'expression* of the Leibnizian Baroque, Deleuze's 'reading' breaks with a phenomenological hermeneutics, and its model of recognition, for a line of flight at the threshold between the faculties. This dissertation addresses those for whom the destiny of reading remains yet unwritten.

INTRODUCTION

When Martin Heidegger wrote that "*hermeneuein* is that exposition which brings tidings because it can listen to a message,"[1] he leaned hermeneutics back upon its etymological origin, thereby closing the definitional circle. In the same dialogue, we are told that Hermes, the divine messenger, "brings the message of destiny."[2] Hermeneutics' own destiny, however, has not been sealed as a foregone conclusion, an observation which Heidegger himself registered. That the act of reading must be predicated on the bearing of message, this well-oiled axiom permits more give than we often recognize. Indeed, certain iconoclastic figures of the 20th century traced more tortuous paths for the act of reading. They forced us to take notice that the praxis of hermeneutics, while conventionally employed, invited serious methodological suspicions. The centrifugal movement of hermeneutic circle, it turns out, was not immune to the fugitive.

Jacques Derrida, Paul de Man, and Gilles Deleuze are three thinkers who sought exits from the regime of hermeneutics. Though their suspicions were not homogeneous, they share a reconceptualization of the act of reading as an alternative to hermeneutics. Hermeneutics, as predicated on logocentric and, more specifically, phenomenological assumptions, remains complicitous with the philosophical systems which shape its heritage. Hermeneutic interpretation constitutes an iteration of the form of the philosophical systems which justify their claim to validity. They obey an axiomatic structure which, in its circular logic, endows them their license.

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[1] Martin Heidegger, "A Dialogue on Language between a Japanese and an Inquirer," in *On the Way to Language*, trans. Peter D. Hertz (New York: HarperCollins, 1982), 29.
[2] Ibid., 29.

Derrida, de Man, and Deleuze envision reading as a flight from the hermeneutic circle as a figure of totalization. This totality [*Gestalt*] is directed by the understanding [*Verstehen*] and discourse [*Rede*] of interlocutors claimed to share the same lived experience [*Lebenszusammenhang*]. As equiprimordial structures, the understanding and discourse direct all of reading according to the anticipation of totality [*Sinngestalt einer Rede*] in a message, whose smallest semantic unit is the sentence. (The German *Satz* signifies both sentence and statement, thus consolidating the hermeneutic faith in grammar to convey theorem unproblematically.) Hermeneutic totality signifies the constitution of a coherent message, as discourse and understanding are inextricably fundamental. That the message, or discourse, *is* understanding, regardless of its content, finds a formulation in Kafka's *The Trial*: "The correct understanding of any matter and a misunderstanding of the same matter do not completely exclude each other."

Hermeneutics: Human and Historical

It is the priest who explains the Law to Josef K., a legal matter [*Sache*] of hermeneutic interpretation. Hermeneutics has priestly origins in theological exegesis and also praxis in jurisprudence; both concern settling disputes over textual matters, sacerdotal or secular. Like Kafka's parables, every text consists in a densely constituted aggregate, divorced from a life-world and impervious to the contextualization which would place it in a familiar situation. Every attempt to read a parable, or give a hermeneutic interpretation of a text, must proceed at the behest of the living discourse. When one understands in the hermeneutic sense, the understanding of the textual matter remains indistinguishable from

its misunderstanding, as interpretation traffics uniquely in discourse aimed at extracting a coherent message. Understanding is irreducibly discourse; one must understand or misunderstand in the only way one can, discursively. In distinguishing the text from both the understanding and discourse, hermeneutics places its matter outside the province of textuality and in the discursive function. Discourse understands the text as discursive and thus abandons the matter, the obstinate textual materiality.

What precisely is the matter of this matter, one will inquire. As we have seen, the matter [*Sache*] of discourse is distinct from the materiality of the textual aggregate. When hermeneutics privileges the living discourse as the matter or *Sache*, it simultaneously inherits a belief in the *Lebenswelt* of phenomenology. Conceived in its broadest form, hermeneutics' phenomenological heritage consists in a conception of consciousness reliably accessible to the act of reading. Consciousness—experience [*Erlebnis*] of the self and of the phenomenal world—is the starting assumption of every phenomenology of reading. The phenomenology of reading benefits from an aura of obviousness that obscures the illustrious history establishing its reign. Beginning as an exegetical practice aimed at resolving disputes of interpretation over sacerdotal texts, hermeneutics invested the act of reading written script with the task of accessing the sacred word in its lost, spoken presence. Yet, the claim to this possibility can be traced even earlier to Plato's dialogues, transcriptions of the living discourse of a Socrates who neither wrote nor, by most accounts, privileged written texts above conversation. Reading, in both instances, permits a distanced form of access to living, sometimes sacralized, beings.

If all histories are necessarily ethnocentric, then the logocentrism and phono-centrism of hermeneutics evinces that it cannot cast away its heritage and that it therefore

should not assert claims to ecumenism. Ethnocentrism, however, has never prevented it from asserting its universal applicability. Whenever we read hermeneutically - and thus, whenever we subscribe to a phenomenology of reading which undergirds it - we reproduce an iteration of a contingent model of the readable-thinkable. Hermeneutics is human, all-too human, but it simultaneously masks the humanism by which it operates.

Hermeneutics has always served the community and sought to establish solidarity. As we have observed, hermeneutic exegesis sought to resolve interpretive disputes over the realm of the sacred. Thus, its aim was inextricably linked to justification before a community distanced from the living preaching which it attempted to gain access by means of a mute script. Analogously for Platonism: although Socratic wisdom worked by anamnesis of eidetic forms, it operated through an elenchus oriented toward agreement. In its appeal to accessing a community of speakers, the hermeneutical reading of texts ineluctably takes recourse to a meaning grounded in the solidarity of agreement. That reading testify to a community of readers, who themselves bear witness to the selfsame evidence: such is the circular logic of agreement according to which hermeneutics operates.

Recognition and Hermeneutics

Reading predicated on agreement, grounded in justification, ultimately turns upon the axiomatic structure of recognition. Thus hermeneut Hans-Georg Gadamer confidently asserts that "All cognition is re-cognition."[3] This Platonist claim, grounded in *anamnesis*, marks only the beginning of the recognitive tradition. Whereas Platonist recollection

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[3] Hans Georg-Gadamer, *The Idea of the Good in Platonic-Aristotelian Philosophy*, trans. P. Christopher Smith (New Haven: Yale UP, 1986), 52.

theory posits the transcendence of the idea [*eidos*] to be grasped in the act of interlocution, Cartesian object-ness serves the commonsensical model which reigns today. The idea that there exist shared objects for a subject hardly appears controversial, but its inception can be located when Descartes recognized a piece of wax, inaugurating philosophically the recognitive model which had heretofore inhabited the province of common sense.

That each of the faculties—vision, smell, taste, touch—refers to wax-ness and not to its own distinct quality, 'sight of melting mass' or 'scent of burning,' would appear less a dogma than a pragmatic way of speaking. Unfortunately, pragmatics does not ipso facto guarantee the validity of a claim; useful ways of speaking manifest a simplification, simultaneously blessing and bane. This Cartesian logic is also circular. The first bold assumption, that qualitatively distinct sensory data refer to a discrete spatiotemporal object, led Descartes to posit the coordination of the faculties, which, in turn, gave evidence of a subject. The initial postulate of the discrete piece of wax evinces the coordination of the faculties in a subject, which in turn solidified the hypothesis of the self-contained object. Similarly, Cartesian doubt of existence leads to existential certainty *in actu*. Descartes doubted everything except the capacity for recognition, itself a point of contention, rather than a given, in Greek thought. Formally, the Cartesian point of departure is recognition, rather than doubt; recognitive certainty is also the conclusion, closing the circle upon itself.

The recognitive axiom operates in all hermeneutic approaches to reading, even in a hermeneutics of suspicion. Suspicion is ultimately the obverse of certainty, both turning upon the fulcrum of recognition which we have just traced in its Cartesian circular pivot. Thus, when Paul Ricoeur establishes Freud, Nietzsche and Marx as the three suspicious 'masters,' he circumscribes their suspicions precisely in order to integrate them within a

recognitive framework which can, with admirable certainty, distinguish between latent and manifest meanings. Analogously, Fredric Jameson's self-proclaimed 'elaborate hermeneutic geiger counters' register the political shifts through an interpretive transcoding of socially symbolic acts. However, insofar as transcoding remains a problem of linguistic reference, it bypasses a consideration of its own operations for a transparent adequation between language and world, fundamentally a relation of recognition. It is precisely the critique of a model of recognition that would alone permit flight from the circle of hermeneutics. The three thinkers who pose the greatest potential for the fugitive from this centrifugal movement are Derrida, de Man and Deleuze.

Derrida's Afterlife of Reading: the Paris 1981 Gadamer Encounter

Nietzsche once anointed himself to the caste of the posthumous people, whose life would begin in death. He wrote:

> The last is the trick of the *posthumous* people par excellence. ("What do you think?" one of them once asked impatiently; "would we feel like enduring the estrangement, the cold and the quiet of the grave around us—this whole subterranean, concealed, mute, undiscovered solitude that among us is called life but might just as well be called death—if we did not know what will *become* of us, and that it is only after death that we shall enter *our* life and become alive, oh, very much alive, we posthumous people!")[4]

Nietzsche's influence on Derrida may be manifold, but the Derridean dispute with hermeneutics can perhaps best be located in the Nietzschean conception of the posthumous life. As Nietzsche projects, he enters his life, is born, at the moment in which

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[4] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science, with a prelude in rhymes and an appendix of songs*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (NY: Vintage Books, 1974), 321.

he finally disappears from his living solitude and becomes discovered in his text. Hermeneutics conceives of a living discourse [*Redesinn*] which animates the dead text conceived as an aggregate of congealed speech. For hermeneutics, speech emitted from a living being, situated within a phenomenological *Lebenswelt* of experience, falls silent in the text. The hermeneutic task serves ultimately to revivify the written word, to place it within a context of the living reader's world. As Maurice Blanchot puts it, such a reader possesses a "stubborn insistence upon remaining himself in the face of what he reads."[5]

Instead of conceiving the textual aggregate as a dead text to be integrated within the phenomenological *Lebenswelt*, Derrida locates life squarely within the province of reading. This is eminently demonstrated in Gadamer's 1981 exchange with Gadamer at the Goethe Institute in Paris. In this symposium, Derrida engages Gadamer's claims about the hermeneutic understanding [*Verstehen*] to demonstrate how in fact the anticipation of totality [*Sinngestalt einer Rede*] results in the hypostatization of reading. Hermeneutic interpretation, rather than animating the text, makes it stand still. The Gadamer-Derrida debate hinged upon the contention over Heidegger's positioning of Nietzsche within his own discourse—and within discursive functioning *tout court*. In reading Nietzsche's texts on life, Derrida demonstrates that Heidegger dismisses Nietzschean biologism for an equally egregious reduction: the postulate of an 'essential thinking.' Both are structures of discourse, the *Sinngestalt einer Rede*.

It is otherwise for Derrida's practice of disseminative reading. Derrida's afterlife of reading, like Nietzsche's posthumous life, is born in a spectral haunting which can neither

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[5] Maurice Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*, trans. Ann Smock (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1982), 198.

shirk the possibility of the historical being nor verify its presence. Reading, in its disseminative play, is permitted precisely because, like the Ghost's visor in Hamlet, its hinge is loose enough to invite an identification of the non-living and identify the reader himself as a function of a text no longer conceived of as dead. When the hermeneut or traditional scholar approaches the aggregate text, like Horatio, he fixes his gaze upon it, hypostatizing it to accord with his life-world, not imagining that it gives more than is dreamt of in his philosophy. As Derrida conceives of reading, it is precisely because writing distances itself from an identifiable *Lebenswelt* that it permits a life beyond the phenomenological one. Dissemination spreads life as reading and thereby serves as the precondition for the phenomenological and hermeneutic models.

The Precise Illegibility of de Man

When Paul de Man claimed that the act of reading called out for a future hermeneutics, this was decidedly not a hermeneutic gesture. Hermeneutics already operates by an anticipatory temporality of closure, to be realized in the coherence of the semantic message. If hermeneutics anticipates a totality [*Gestalt*] at the behest of discourse exclusively, de Man's figure of the allegory takes equal recognizance of poetics, which precludes the totalization that reading necessarily calls out for. Placing the hermeneutic anticipation itself in an anterior future, de Man defers the closure of the circle indefinitely.

The call for semantic meaning, like that for God's response, evinces its absence and even defers it in the very act. "To take the divine out of reading," as de Man described his critical project, was not a specific reference to the sacerdotal origins of hermeneutics but

rather to the hermeneutic investment in semantic determinations. De Manian deconstruction and de-canonization remain inextricable, as the canonized text feigns to cohere as a hermeneutic object articulated by discourse. That is why de Man concentrates his critical work upon canonized texts. De Manian deconstruction, by unveiling the aggregate as a disarticulated piece of prosaic language, performs the disjunction between material inscription and the anticipation of a semantic message. Whereas hermeneutics anticipates a totality of the message, de Man noted that reading precisely never ceases to produce a negative totalization, or disjunction.

That disjunction, or cutting off, is a result of a precision of reading. Whereas hermeneutics exclusively accounts for semantic determinations, reading precisely involves following a more retorse movement. Disjunctions along grammatical and rhetorical models, within signifying units, between linguistic theorem and praxis: such is the fallout when reading takes its etymological root of precision in the literal sense of *praecidere*, "cutting off." De Man's strategy of reading often surprises in the audacity of interpreting a figure literally, such as when he earnestly inquires of Yeats' rhetorical question, "how can we know the dancer from the dance." Similarly, de Man's return to a model of precision, which eschews its figurative meaning of equivalence, seeks to return to a literal signification. Whereas the etymology of decision, *decaedere*, retains its determinative denotation, precision is left to merely "cut off" outside a system of semantic determination. De Man's praxis of precision eschews the metaphysical exhaustive narrative, as the materiality of inscription cannot concede to a series of determinations under the sole direction of hermeneutic discourse. Precision leads to illegibility, the precisely illegible itself serving as a figure of the hermeneutic project taken to its most rigorous, self-annihilating, conclusion.

Reading with Pause and Muscles: Deleuze's Theatre of Sensation

Reading has insistently, tenaciously been presumed to be a retracing of ideas. The phenomenology of reading assumes that the reader installs himself within the consciousness of the author, re-experiencing the author's thought in its development over the duration of a narrative. Hence, Poulet asserted that the "thought of the critic becomes the thought of the author criticized."[6] A phenomenological reading can only merit the name if "it succeeds in re-feeling, in re-thinking, in re-imagining the author's thought from the inside."[7] In the hermeneutic model, language is a kind of reservoir of meaning, an available presence to each reader in precisely the same way. The source of this conception can be located in the linguistic rendition of the Platonist model of the logoi on which hermeneutics is predicated. As Gadamer specifies, being "may never be apprehended in the unrestricted presence of some *unus intuitus* ("unitary intuition")."[8] Hermeneutic reading follows mediated thoughts, rather than immediate intuitions, a philosophical formulation of the colloquial expression: "did you follow my reading?"

For Deleuze, this iterative structure of a phenomenology of reading is a consequence of the idea-motor schema. Observing that every phenomenology is an epi-phenomenology, Deleuze's critique was lanced at precisely the idea-motor of phenomenological reading, a model which reproduces iterations because it invests its faith in a system of ideational language in equilibrium. This is the hermeneutic model of the reservoir of meaning, in

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[6] Georges Poulet, *Les Lettres nouvelles*, 24 juin 1959, quoted in Gérard Genette, *Figures: essais* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1966), 158.

[7] Ibid., 158.

[8] Hans-Georg Gadamer, "The Heritage of Hegel," in *Reason in the Age of Science*, trans. Frederick G. Lawrence (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1992), 60.

which the lake is available to each swimmer in its placid form; analogously, the text, when conceived as a medium of ideas, invites us to conceptualize reading as a shared activity. It is the contrary with ocean swimming, one of Deleuze's emblematic examples of *sensori-motricité* and Blanchot's narrative figure in *Thomas the Obscure*. Ocean swimming is an apprenticeship that can never proceed by imitating the movements of even the best instructor, since the waves assaulting apprentice and teacher remain different. Imitation is always a secondary, corrective, movement; the idea-motor abstracts from immediate intuition in order to realize the shared life-world of all phenomenologies. In contrast, apprenticing with the waves entails conjugating one's body with the points of contact through a medium of sensations. In contradistinction to the hermeneutic idea-motor, swimming is a sensory motor endeavor, a primary movement that registers disturbances before the Intelligence can intervene. The ocean, rather than the still reservoir, serves as the Deleuzian medium of apprenticeship, just as Deleuze observes that language (langue and parole conceived as one in the same) manifests an explication of an implicated system in perpetual disequilibrium.

Taking up Nietzsche's observation that reading signs is always a retracing [*zurückgelesen*] of more primary sensations, Deleuze develops a concept of a theatre of reading that enacts the sensory motor disarticulation of the faculties. Deleuze's discourses consistently conceptualize the transition between the faculties. Thus, 'reading' intervenes at the threshold of intensities, when, for example, perceptibility transitions to legibility or, within a single faculty, when visuality remarks saturation out of rarefaction. Inspired by the Leibnizian *entr'expression*, Mallarmé's journal, Baconian sensation, Proustian sign, Kafka's minor tongue and the cinematic reflections, Deleuze develops a concept of the

theatre of reading as an alternative to the phenomenological retracing of ideas. In place of *idéo-motricité*, it is *sensori-motricité* which unchains the affects of a machinic order of reading. In its emblematic disturbance to a regime of recognition, the Deleuzian rencontre serves as a figure for our suspicions of a hermeneutic practice which seeks to establish agreement in a shared phenomenological life-world and its reservoir of meaning. Deleuze's linguistic system in disequilibrium challenges the recognitive model and, in eschewing a centrifugal hermeneutics, sends reading on a fugitive line of flight toward new beginnings for philosophy and for reading.

CHAPTER 1

Derrida's Afterlife of Reading: the Paris 1981 Gadamer Encounter

Three inescapably operative concepts in the act of reading are the hermeneutic understanding [*Verstehen*], living discourse [*Redesinn*] and linguistic positionality. Assumptions about their precise configuration, let alone the possibility of their neat extricability, inevitably inform every interpretation, though only exceptionally are they interrogated with any rigor. This chapter will serve as an attempt to delineate but not resolve these tensions and therefore to make a statement about the compatibility or incompatibility of hermeneutics and deconstruction. That the precedent for this investigation was a historical encounter[9] between figureheads of hermeneutics, Hans-Georg Gadamer, and of deconstruction, Jacques Derrida, should reveal the polemical stakes in the debate. However, it was questioned whether a dialogue took place, even an aporetic one. Although the topic was the determination of whether the hermeneutic understanding could be made compatible with deconstruction, the performance itself was determined to fail, in advance. It was determined to fail at the start because the starting position provided not only a point of departure but one of irresolvable contention.

Gadamer's hermeneutics, predicated on the logical structure of Socratic elenchus, does not explicitly admit that the positionality of the interlocutors plays a determinative role. Socratic elenchus employs interlocutors as the conduits for an anamnesis, or recollection, of eidetic forms. In the formal structure of anamnesis, the result of the

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[9] The symposium took place in April 1981 at the Goethe Institute in Paris.

recollection is necessary but the particular dialogical road leading to it contingent. Therefore, Gadamer would have been relieved of the quandary of positionality if the Socratic model had been sufficient for his hermeneutics. Platonist anamnesis is a recognitive model, but it functions through interlocution; even Socrates himself would not learn the truth if he did not enter a dialogue. However, since Gadamer sought to abandon the metaphysical assumptions of Platonic essences, he was forced to make the detour through Hegelian dialectics to replace a structure of *eidos*—or a truth to be recollected in its self-presence [*Selbstpräsenz*][10]—by the temporal concretization of Being through propositional determinations. The Hegelian relation to Platonic essences remains nevertheless complicitous: "Hegel had nothing at all against essence or ousia; he was simply insisting that it be conceived, not abstractly and timelessly, but concretely, in and as a process of historical becoming."[11] But whereas Hegel in no way sought to mask the violence of the negative, in its positioning character, Gadamer elevates the dialogical character of the understanding to that of the positioning agent, immune to all determinations in its role as determinant. That is, Gadamer replaces a transcendent, Platonist anamnesis with a dialogical, Hegelian structuring, simply re-inscribing the logos as a different revelation of being in the word:

> The word is correct if it brings the thing to presentation (Darstellung)—i.e., if it is a representation (mimesis). What is   involved here is certainly not an imitative representation in the sense of a direct copy, depicting the visual or aural appearance of something, but it is the being (ousia)—that which is

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[10] Hans-Georg Gadamer, "Text and Interpretation," in *Dialogue and Deconstruction: The Gadamer-Derrida Encounter*, ed. Diane P. Michelfelder and Richard E. Palmer, trans. Dennis J. Schmidt and Richard Palmer (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 43.

[11] John D. Caputo, "Gadamer's Closet Essentialism: A Derridean Critique," in *Dialogue and Deconstruction: The Gadamer-Derrida Encounter*, ed. Diane P. Michelfelder and Richard E. Palmer (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 260.

considered worth of the attribute "to be" (einai)—that is to be revealed by the word.[12]

The ousia of Gadamer's hermeneutics invests the word with a bringing to presence of being, and this constitutes the dialogical re-inscription of positioning according to a bare propositional logic bereft of an *anamnesis* of Platonist Ideas. Gadamer's *Verstehen* can thus be said to conform to the same logic as that of the transcendental understanding insofar as it still retains the determinant positionality which had determined the *eidetic* structure of the Platonist *elenchus*.

In contrast, Derrida is a thinker for whom positionality is integral to language's signifying potential. Unlike Gadamer, he does not elevate the understanding or discourse above linguistic positioning. What Derrida illuminates, and particularly in the Paris 1981 exchange with Gadamer, is the blind spot which hermeneutics encounters in the claim that the understanding positions thought, which, as such, can never return behind itself to understand its own positioning. In the series of exchanges with Gadamer, Derrida draws on his previous work on Nietzsche, the name, and positioning, to perform a counter-demonstration to Gadamer's claim that the understanding orients the position of thinking.

Positions: in the Beginning was the "Word"

For Gadamer, conversation is positioned by a shared horizon that can ideally realize a fusion signaling a moment of communication. The beginning of conversation both inherits a tradition as its contextualizing horizon and also claims to inaugurate a new starting point

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[12] Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (New York: Continuum Publishing Group, 2004), 410.

in the finiteness of a particular dialogue. Gadamer formulates his position in the following way for the Goethe Institute encounter, characteristically framing it as his expression of openness to the other: "Whoever wants me to take deconstruction to heart and insists on difference stands at the beginning of a conversation, not at its end."[13] Yet, what Gadamer never questions sufficiently is precisely how to conceive of the beginning of dialogical thought. Stating that one is at the beginning of a dialogue masks a prior supposition, namely, that of the postulate of intersubjectivity. While Gadamer is adamant that, in fact, his hermeneutics eschews subjectivity, this claim must be qualified, for it is precisely the logos which he retains in the form of the self-presence of the word to the interlocutors. "So it seems to me entirely justifiable to start with the process in which mutual agreement is shaped and reshaped in order to describe the functioning of language and of its possible written forms."[14] The justifiability of beliefs may serve as a criterion for knowledge, but Gadamer's usage of "entirely justifiable" also serves a colloquial interest in claiming that the starting point in intersubjectivity has a pragmatic consequence: namely, the effectuation of communication.

Gadamerian communication is effectuated through the medium of the word conceived as a presence-ing of being. The conception of the self-presence of the word has a beginning, a historical one, which may mark the start of logocentrism but which does not thereby justify its claims. Gadamer's argumentation proceeds by a rhetoric that conflates descriptive and evaluative modes, where the description itself implies a positive valuation.

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[13] Hans-Georg Gadamer, "Destruktion and Deconstruction," in *Dialogue and Deconstruction: The Gadamer-Derrida Encounter*, ed. Diane P. Michelfelder and Richard E. Palmer, trans. Geoff Waite and Richard Palmer (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 113.
[14] Hans-Georg Gadamer, "Reply to Jacques Derrida," in *Dialogue and Deconstruction: The Gadamer-Derrida Encounter*, ed. Diane P. Michelfelder and Richard E. Palmer, trans. Diane Michelfelder and Richard Palmer (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 56.

This is manifestly present in Gadamer's description-valuation of Plato's fundamental opposition between dialectic and immediacy:

> Plato himself designated the network of relationships among the logoi as "dialectic"; and this pertains to the being itself, which exposes itself to thought. By this he simultaneously meant that being itself may never be apprehended in the unrestricted presence of some *unus intuitus* ("unitary intuition").[15]

Conversation subordinates the unitary intuition to a dialectic broadly conceived as mediatory. The word's self-presence as mediation arrives at the expense of the immediate, just as thought eclipses intuition. The word, for Gadamer and the tradition he upholds, marks the true unfolding of being; but it is ultimately the manifestation of the spoken one, living discourse.

The history of hermeneutics is a particularly tenuous one, partially because historicization itself is implicated in the problematic itself. Werner Hamacher traces this genesis of the prioritization of living discourse to Schleiermacher's functionalization of hermeneutics "to broaden the field of hermeneutical operations beyond the limits of theological and rationalistic canons of writing and even beyond the reaches of fixed and already codified writing."[16] Hamacher then appositely proceeds to cite Schleiermacher's address to the "editors of written work to practice diligently the interpretation of more significant conversations."[17] The logocentrism of Plato, which debuts as a philosophical position, becomes in Schleiermacher a pragmatic injunction to editors to explain the

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[15] Gadamer, "Heritage of Hegel," 60.
[16] Werner Hamacher. "Hermeneutic Ellipses: Writing the Hermeneutic Circle in Schleiermacher," in *Premises: Essays on Philosophy and Literature from Kant to Celan*, trans. Peter Fenves (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1996), 49.
[17] Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Hermeneutik und Kritik*, ed. Manfred Frank (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1977), 313, quoted in Werner Hamacher, *Premises: Essays on Philosophy and Literature from Kant to Celan* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1996), 51.

"[speaker's] spiritual being, the mode in which thoughts develop from communal life."[18] The goal is to "understand a sequence of thoughts as a moment when life bursts forth and as acts bound up with many other kinds of acts."[19]

While Hamacher describes the functionalization of script into speech, the practical reason for this mobilization receives little speculation. In particular, the choice of the editor's profession in Schleiermacher's discourse remains unanalyzed by Hamacher's otherwise admirable explication. An editor's function is precisely to consider the community's interests and mold the literary work to accommodate what proves most accessible to a potential readership, namely the life and acts which appear "more significant" than the writer's "lonely meditation on an entirely isolated piece of writing."[20] Schleiermacher's figure of the editor ultimately serves, like modern hermeneutics, to integrate the "lonely meditation" or the 'unitary intuition' into not only the *Lebenswelt* but also, not incidentally, the universal community. Modern hermeneutics is no longer simply a philosophical method, as it was in Plato, but from Schleiermacher on, makes claims to an intersubjective community and even to solidarity.[21]

Hermeneutics has not infrequently been accused of its normativization, and this accusation bears significant justification. An insidious normativization occurs in its simple logocentric assumption of the word as a presence bereft, however, of subjectivity. Whenever Gadamer asserts the rejection of subjectivity in modern hermeneutics, it always serves as a concession for the re-inscription of the subjective in the self-presence of the word before a temporally situated community. If the written word can be claimed as "the

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[18] Schleiermacher, *Hermenutik und Kritik*, 51.
[19] Ibid., 51.
[20] Ibid., 51.
[21] Observe, for instance, Gadamer's appeals to solidarity in both the Paris 1981 encounter with Derrida and in *Reason in the Age of Science*.

aggregate state"[22] of the *Lebenswelt*, then a synechdochal relation can be established between the living world of discourse and an individual life. It is at the orchestration of this logic that the word becomes re-inscribed as a subjectivity without a subject. Gadamer is at his most candid in his pronouncement of Schleiermacher's inauguration of a modern hermeneutics: "...Schleiermacher asserts that the aim is *to understand a writer better than he understood himself*, a formula that has been repeated ever since; and in its changing interpretation the whole history of modern hermeneutics can be read."[23]

To understand a writer better than he understood himself: this slogan carries a historicist connotation—congruent with the historicism of Wilhelm Dilthey, Hippolyte Taine and Charles Augustin Sainte-Beuve—to which Gadamer would be wary to subscribe. Gadamer sheds the purely *eidetic* for the dialectical movement of mediation, but as we have noted earlier, Hegelian dialectics retained the husk of ousia as essence. This ousia is just as patently present in the Schleiermacherian notion of understanding a writer as a living being in the self-presence of the word. The stubborn remnant of the subject is the word as living discourse, prescribed though it must be by a textual hermeneutics of the aggregate state of the text. Gadamer's embrace of this logos constitutes the position that always already configures the hermeneutic understanding.

For Heidegger, the *Verstehen* as understanding is primordial and therefore ontological in its positioning character. To claim, like Gadamer does in the symposium, that one ought to adopt a "good will" to understand, is a paradoxical formulation. Either the understanding is primordially (always already) operative or, in contradistinction, dependent on a voluntary act. It cannot, however, be both simultaneously and remain the

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[22] Schleiermacher, *Hermeneutik und Kritik*, 51.
[23] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 191.

same *Verstehen*. The distinction is significant, since it demonstrates not only that Gadamer has endowed the Heideggerian understanding with a colloquial usage[24] (which he understands elsewhere to be a primordial) for the purposes of the symposium but additionally invites the question of the motivation behind this crafty redeployment. While Heidegger asserts that the *Verstehen* positions *Dasein*, the Gadamer of the 1981 symposium claims that the interlocutor serves as the positioning agent of the understanding through the voluntary act of good will. This important distinction surfaces in the ensuing debate between modern hermeneutics and what Dallmayr terms the "the French scene" to which Derrida is claimed to represent.

While there are disparate threads running through the volume entitled *Dialogue and Deconstruction*, the common one remains the question of whether hermeneutics and deconstructive reading are compatible or whether their initial assumptions prove incommensurable. It is in the interests of, nay the necessity of, hermeneutics to claim that in fact deconstruction can be integrated within the hermeneutic purview of the understanding. On the other hand, it is Derrida's demonstration that Heidegger's *Verstehen*, upon which Gadamer's hermeneutics is predicated, animates the textual aggregate

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[24] Gadamer's colloquial redeployment of terms would merit a study of its own, as the penetration of everyday diction into systematic philosophy is all-pervasive in his conversational philosophy. Ironically, in "Hermeneutics as Practical Philosophy," Gadamer himself registers an anxiety of the colloquial register to which he consistently succumbs in the Paris 1981 encounter with Derrida: "Interestingly enough, the expression self-understanding today has become quite fashionable. It is constantly used even in current political and social discussions, not to mention popular fiction. Words are slogans. They often express what is missing and what should be. A self-understanding become unsure of itself is talked about by everyone." Hans-Georg Gadamer, "Hermeneutics as Practical Philosophy," in *Reason in the Age of Science*, trans. Frederick G. Lawrence (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1992), 102. This colloquial register, however, is as prevalent in Gadamer's diction and vocabulary throughout the symposium of Paris, 1981 that a rapport with Hegel on these lines may exist: "The problem with Hegel's terminology is not so much an excessive use of jargon as such, but his free and rather careless use of everyday terms in a variety of contexts, a source of annoying obscurity only vaguely excused by the theory of "speculative" language and the "the fluidity of the Concept." Terms are used inconsistently; they are played off against one another and punned upon. Casual colloquialisms are drafted to do the job of concepts that ought to be well-defined and, worst of all, Hegel seems to think that the less explicit a term, the greater the scope of its meaning." Robert C. Solomon, *In the Spirit of Hegel: A Study of G.W.F. Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1983), 273.

according to the living discourse [*Redesinn*] and thereby overlooks the specific demands which the textual aggregate makes in positioning a reading. The impasse in positioning between hermeneutic dialogue and deconstruction cannot be overcome because hermeneutics cannot resist the hypostatization of the "living dialogue" as aggregated in the text. It concomitantly cannot avoid the requirement to reanimate the textual inscription to a state of living discourse which would ultimately position it according to the semantic determinations of the understanding.

Gadamer's Word in Question

Gadamer's discourse in the symposium mobilizes variegated traditions: Heidegger before the *Kehre*, a Hegelian defense of practical reason, Schleiermacherian hermeneutics, Socratic good will, a recourse to colloquialisms when any impasse should occur. All of these traditions are reconciled in the deliberate attempt to preserve the all-encompassing structure of the dialogical understanding. Therefore, following Gadamer's own discourse necessitates tracing the paradoxical mobilization of a hermeneutic understanding that is at turns Heideggerian primordial and valorized openness of Socratic (in contradistinction to Kantian) good will; a self-presence in the unit of the word and in the semantics of the sentence; a distinctly alternative tradition to deconstruction and the implicit operation in the deconstructive demonstration; a normativizing threat to the neurotic subject and the very structure of the psychoanalytic cure for neurosis.[25] For Gadamer, the *Verstehen* is all of

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[25] Gadamer asserts that it "is a sign of sickness when one has so dissimulated oneself to oneself that one can know nothing further without confiding in a doctor. Then in a common labor of analysis, one takes a couple steps further toward clarifying the background of one's own unconscious—with the goal of regaining what

these things because ultimately it functions paradoxically: a proposition-less positionality; a historically concretized discourse (Hegel) that has always already been present as a primordial (Heidegger); an anticipation of totality which confers upon a text a new understanding that it simultaneously regulates according to its strictures. What must become patently evident in these contradictions is that Gadamer's *Verstehen* serves as the ultimate malleable concept that is always operational and also valorized as the ideal operation. It is, to give it a name, a descriptive-valuation. The coincidence of an ontological structure of understanding which is simultaneously endowed with a value judgment in ensuring community solidarity should be viewed not only as a contradiction but also as a specious form of propositional logic. This sense of contradiction extends to Gadamer's claims toward the hypostatization of the logos.

While the *Verstehen* is postulated as a primordial whose medium is the logos, Gadamer registers the need to adopt a distinction between a hermeneutics of "ordinary discourse" and one of "literature."[26] This distinction is not one established by the field of linguistics but rather a phenomenological importation which can be witnessed throughout the hermeneutic tradition insofar as it mobilizes the term artwork [*Kunstwerk*] in contradistinction to text. It derives from the phenomenological heritage of Heidegger's distinction between handiness [*Zuhandenheit*] and the breakdown of its functionality which provokes recognition of the presence of the object [*Vorhandenheit*]. For Heidegger, this distinction is one of *Dasein*'s phenomenal existence, endowing his analogy to poetry's linguistic impact [*Stoss*] with an existential structure. Gadamer's inheritance of this

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one had lost: the equilibrium between one's own nature and the awareness and language shared by all of us." Hans-Georg Gadamer, "Hermeneutics as Practical Philosophy," in *Reason in the Age of Science*, trans. Frederick G. Lawrence (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1992), 109.

[26] Gadamer, "Text and Interpretation," 43.

phenomenological conceptualization of the literary text is in evidence when he follows

Heidegger's assertion that a "work of art thrusts itself upon us, it deals us a blow [*Stoss*]."[27]

The implications of this phenomenological heritage can be witnessed in Gadamer's mirror

claim that "[o]nly where the process of understanding is disrupted, that is, where

understanding will not succeed, are questions asked about the wording of the text, and only

then can the reconstruction of the text become a task in its own right."[28] It is easy to

witness the relation between Gadamer's claim here and the *Zuhandenheit-Vorhandenheit*

distinction. *Zuhandenheit* is reading without paying attention to wording, *Vorhandenheit* a

recoil from this more primary experience to the objectification of language which

linguistics putatively represents. Thus, we have Heidegger's warning that "[s]peaking about

language turns language almost inevitably into an object."[29]

The incommensurable divide between phenomenology and linguistics persists in

their divergent conceptualizations of "literariness." There is an identifiable

phenomenological inheritance to Gadamer's discussion of literature, which is not for him

simply a prosaic piece of language but constituted by a different fundamental essence. Not

incidentally, Gadamer remains silent about the formal and syntaxic examination of

literariness as inaugurated by the Russian formalists, whom Derrida viewed as provoking

"a symmetrical reaction or reduction ... [that] ... consists in isolating, in order to shelter it, a

formal specificity of the literary which would no longer have to be articulated with other

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[27] Gadamer, "Reply to Jacques Derrida," 57.
[28] Gadamer, "Text and Interpretation," 32.
[29] Heidegger, "A Dialogue on Language," 50.

theoretical or practical fields."[30] Gadamer does indeed shelter the literary text from the ordinary one, but only to delimit the freedoms it may be granted from discourse.

Gadamer's Concessionary Logic and the Mobilization of the Word

This concessionary logic is at work in Gadamer's definition of the literary text in contradistinction to ordinary discourse. In Gadamer's specification, "A literary text is not just the rendering of spoken language into a fixed form. Indeed, a literary text does not refer back to an already spoken word at all."[31] Another prominent hermeneut, Ricoeur, does not make this distinction: "The attention given most exclusively to phonetic writings seems to confirm that writing adds nothing to the phenomenon of speech other than the fixation that enables it to be conserved."[32] Ricoeur's claim that the text is merely an aggregate state of speech may seem dogmatic in its premature closure of the possibility that the letter of inscription may possess a material supplement to speech or that indeed the written word may have served as the initial prescription to the spoken one. Indeed, Hamacher reminds us not to forget that Schleiermacher himself conceded that "writing is also, outside of language, something for itself, and it has certain positive aspects that, when abstracted from writing, do not appear in speech."[33]

However, where Ricoeur is at least dogmatically candid, Gadamer's claim that the literary text claims no original utterance or intention of the speaker is facile: even so-called

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[30] Jacques Derrida, *Positions*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 70.
[31] Gadamer, "Text and Interpretation," 42.
[32] Paul Ricoeur, *From Text to Action: Essays in Hermeneutics, II*, trans. Kathleen Blamey and John B. Thompson (Evanston: Northwestern UP, 2007), 106.
[33] Schleiermacher, *Hermeneutik und Kritik*, 66.

"ordinary" discursive texts may not have been uttered preceding their inscription. The distinction between literary and ordinary texts is moot on this point. However, it turns out that, for Gadamer, while the literary text has no oratory precedent, its essential distinction is that it "prescribes" speech. Thus, Gadamer explains that "the literary text is text in the most special sense, text in the highest degree, precisely because it does not point back to some primordial or originary act of linguistic utterance but rather in its own right prescribes all repetitions and acts of speaking," inexhaustible though they may be.[34] Ultimately, the distinction between "literature" and the "ordinary text" serves a logic of containment which places the former under the vigilant eye of the "meaning of the discourse as a whole [*Redesinn*]"[35] pertaining to the latter.

The ornate maneuvers which Gadamer must orchestrate to integrate the literary text into the field of hermeneutics are considerable, since his teacher Heidegger reminds us ultimately that "Hermes is the divine messenger" and that "*hermeneuein* is that exposition which brings tidings because it can listen to a message."[36] In order to avoid reducing the "literary text" to a functional message, Gadamer is forced to endow the unit of the word itself with a unity in its "full self-presence" [*Selbstpräsenz*]. Thus, he claims that "Every part of speech, every member, every individual word that submits to the unity of meaning in the sentence, represents in itself a kind of unity of meaning insofar as through its meaning, something meant is evoked." That is, "the word's own naming power is allowed to unfold" in the "literary text" in a way that it is forbidden in "ordinary discourse" where the *Verstehen* always anticipates a semantic message, whose smallest unit is the sentence.

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[34] Gadamer, "Text and Interpretation," 42.
[35] Ibid., 43.
[36] Heidegger, "A Dialogue on Language," 29.

Thus, Gadamer's definitional distinction surreptitiously inscribes the *Verstehen* as the positioning agent, insofar as the understanding alone distinguishes ordinary discourse from literary texts. From the point of view of formal and syntaxic analysis, there can be no distinction between "ordinary language" and the "literary text" in that the former is in fact constituted by the same tropes conventionally remarked in the latter. Gadamer's definition, therefore, is of the same order as that of generic conventions, in which poetry is distinguished from prose, for the simple reason that a genre classification is always a matter of placing a given text within a context of conventions, of identifying an iteration of a form. It turns out that the hypostatization of the artwork and the classification of genre share the same source in the hermeneutic movement of contextualization.

As long as the hermeneutic understanding positions a text, meaning subordinates inscription, positioning it in the service of ousia as logos, living communicable dialogue. An important thread in the symposium follows the line of the *Verstehen*'s congelation, or hypostasis, of material language in the privileged realm of being. One of these transformations is described by Gadamer as the grammatical parsing to hypostatize the sentence as the most elementary unit for "ordinary language" (but not, as we have seen for "the literary text"):

> It is instructive to recall what in Latin class was called "construing," an art one learned in connection with parsing Latin prose: The student must look for the verb and then the subject, and from there articulate   the   whole collection of words until elements that at the outset seemed disparate suddenly come together into a meaning. Aristotle once described the freezing of a liquid when it   is shaken as a *schlagartigen Umschlag*, a sudden reversal that comes like a blow from without. It is like this with the blow-like suddenness of understanding, as the disordered fragments of the sentence, the words, suddenly crystallize into the unity of a meaning of the whole sentence.[37]

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[37] Gadamer, "Text and Interpretation," 48.

In the service of the grammatical coherence of the sentence, hermeneutics hypostasizes the articulation of grammar and grants this coherence with the term, the 'understanding.' The understanding, in this context, signifies the reanimation of ordinary language into a living speech, one which would be enunciated correctly but would have concomitantly effaced its stubborn, material aggregate of inscription. The message is always conveyed at a cost, though one that has gone unmeasured since the Greek valorization of speech over script. As Heidegger explains the Greek double meaning of *legein* as both to tell and to lay being, "whatever is put into language in any real sense [telling] is essentially richer than what is captured in audible and visible phonetic conformations, and as such falls silent again when it is put in writing."[38] Following in this prioritization of the spoken over the written word, but formulated under a pious colloquialism, Gadamer claims that Derrida "should not forget that writing is intended to be read."[39] What Gadamer provincially means by "read" here, however, is oral dictation in which the other's presence (even in physical absence) mediates between the textual aggregate and the living discourse with "appropriate modulations, articulations, and emphases."[40] (Reading in the Derridean and de Manian sense, contradistinctive to hermeneutic interpretation, appears to be absent from Gadamer's lexicon, which is egregious in that the symposium is ostensibly a dialogue between deconstruction and hermeneutics.) The justification for Gadamer's logocentric valorization is simultaneously resolutely historical and supremely commonsensical,

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[38] Martin Heidegger, *What is Called Thinking?*, trans. J. Glenn Gray (NY: Perennial, 1976), 206.

[39] Hans-Georg Gadamer, "Hermeneutics and Logocentrism," in *Dialogue and Deconstruction: The Gadamer-Derrida Encounter*, ed. Diane P. Michelfelder and Richard E. Palmer, trans. Richard Palmer and Diane Michelfelder (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 118.

[40] Hans-Georg Gadamer, "Letter to Dallmayr," in *Dialogue and Deconstruction: The Gadamer-Derrida Encounter*, ed. Diane P. Michelfelder and Richard E. Palmer, trans. Richard Palmer and Diane Michelfelder (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 96.

making it particularly insidious. "The word is what one person speaks and another understands."[41] This phrase, composed in a colloquial diction which conceals the philosophical lineage of its content, expresses a Hegelian movement of alienation of the self in the other.

The Colloquial Conversation and the Appeal to Experience

The mobilization of the colloquial in Gadamer's wording of concepts is no less prevalent throughout the symposium, and it overlays an aura of obviousness onto claims whose justifications are historically contingent at best, and specious at worst. In a primary instance, play remains a central concept in Gadamer's discourse, and it predictably surfaces in a symposium concerning the possibility of subsuming Derridean deconstruction as a subset of hermeneutics. However, play as a concept for Gadamer is essentially a rendition of the colloquial application of the term, the ludic ontological "experience." This is evident in Gadamer's not infrequent analogies to games, theater and sports[42] and in the sheer proliferation of variegated examples which can only be related to textual interpretation through broad analogy. Gadamer's colloquialisms run rampant in the symposium, leading him to claim that "if someone persists in the use of word-play and witticisms, we become irritated because it disrupts the unity of the discourse."[43] In this benign example, it is the speaker who actively wills linguistic wordplay, not language itself which permits the experience of the ludic. The ludic is here the ontological manipulation of the linguistic, a

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[41] Gadamer, "Letter to Dallmayr," 95.
[42] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 109.
[43] Gadamer, "Text and Interpretation," 45.

play on words rather than of words. Moreover, play, like many of Gadamer's concepts, submits to a concessionary logic which permits some mobility in meaning in order to guarantee the strictures of discourse. Thus, Gadamer characteristically concludes his address to Derrida by conceding, "Perhaps the experience of a text always includes such a moment of encountering limits; but precisely for this reason it also includes all that binds us together."[44] Analogies, and especially Gadamer's, are at their most insidious in their commonsensical appeal to "experience," and for this reason, colloquialisms most often take recourse to phenomenological clichés.

This is not incidental, since hermeneutics laid its fundamental roots in phenomenology, even though, broadly conceived, the former historically predates the latter. As Ricoeur specifies, hermeneutics transitions to a "philosophy of interpretation – and not simply a methodology of exegesis and philology" once "it addresses itself to the linguistic condition—the *Sprachlichkeit*—of all experience."[45] However, he quickly qualifies that hermeneutics, though it denies Husserl's claim to self-immanence of an epochē capable of cleansing itself of the mediation of signs, nevertheless "shares with phenomenology the thesis of the derivative character of linguistic meaning."[46] *Sprachlichkeit* is subordinated to "the experience that comes to language,"[47] and it is the experiential which orients the colloquial analogies to play we have noted in Gadamer's Truth and Method. As Ricoeur explains, "...hermeneutic philosophy begins with the experience of art, which is not necessarily linguistic. Moreover it accentuates, in this experience, the more ontological aspects of the experience of play—in the playful [*ludique*] as well as the theatrical sense of

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[44] Gadamer, "Reply to Jacques Derrida," 57.
[45] Ricoeur, *Text to Action*, 38-39.
[46] Ibid., 41.
[47] Ibid., 41.

the word...."[48] Play, as an experience that comes to language, is multifarious in that it can designate a variety of experiential modes. However, it is primordially experiential rather than linguistically positional, a distinction that Gadamer, for obvious reasons, seeks to avoid in his discourses in the symposium but which Ricoeur candidly exposes. All 'wordplay' does not play the same game. Gadamer obfuscates the differences between his own conception of play and that of Derrida, attempting, as he does, to integrate deconstructive play of the signifier within an incompatible ontological sense of the ludic.

Even Gadamer's literary text does not submit to Derrida's disseminative play of the signifier. "[T]he polyvalence of words" [49] cannot be equated with Derridean dissemination, as we shall see. Rather, meanings in Gadamer's literary text are "subordinated" to the "discourse," which serves an analogous contextualizing role to that of the horizon's framing of the phenomenal object. One can witness this analogy in Gadamer's claim that "[i]n a literary text, the accompanying meanings that go along with a main meaning certainly are what give the language its literary volume, but they are able to do this by virtue of the fact they are subordinated to the unity of meaning of the discourse and the other meanings are only suggested."[50] The phenomenological horizon situates the appearance of phenomena, just as, for Gadamer, the anticipated unity of the main meaning [*Sinn* as denotation] contextualizes play (of connotation). Again, the presence of the colloquial register permeates Gadamer's discourse, as his statement regarding the literary text repeats the circulated notions of connotative ("accompanying") meanings subordinate to denotative

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[48] Ricoeur, *Text to Action*, 41.
[49] Gadamer, "Text and Interpretation," 45.
[50] Ibid., 45.

("main") ones. Gadamer's literary play, it turns out, is indissociable from what ordinary language has always been understood to make possible.[51]

Pace Gadamer, the distinction between the literary text and ordinary language does not finally derive from a difference in their respective linguistic constitutions—they both manifest the same formal and syntaxic structures—but rather from the hermeneutic necessity of ensuring a claim that, at the very least, ordinary language conforms to a "unity of meaning of the discourse," which, from this discursive positioning of denotation, concedes a space for the benign play of connotation. Ultimately, Gadamer seeks to ensure that the literary text derives from the semantic unity anticipated in ordinary discourse; literature may allow some give from the presupposed unity of meaning but it is precisely the freedoms granted to it which confirm its subordination to the semantic. In this account, the literary usage derives from ordinary language, rather than vice versa. In this way, Gadamer's rhetoric serves to stave off the encroachment of linguistic prioritization, a disturbance which hermeneutics must at all costs keep at a distance. It is inevitably at the precise locus of Gadamer's concessionary claims where the resistance to the threat of a different kind of play, that of the signifier, can be found. Although Gadamer attempts to subsume Derridean play under the polysemy permitted by the *Rede*, this serves to conceal the incommensurability between the hermeneutic and deconstructive conceptions of the 'word.'

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[51] Hans-Georg Gadamer, "Hermeneutics as Practical Philosophy," in *Reason in the Age of Science*, trans. Frederick G. Lawrence (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1992), 102.

Derrida and the Priority of Linguistic Positioning

Derrida's response to Gadamer consists in two addresses, realizing separate phases. The first can be characterized as a direct posing of three questions to Gadamer's opening address, "Text and Interpretation." Derrida's second address, entitled "Interpreting Signatures (Nietzsche/Heidegger): Two Questions" is more oblique in its form, though it nevertheless directly engages Gadamer's discourse (if not his name) in the symposium. Derrida has isolated certain pressure points in Gadamer's discourse, and in Heidegger's, which provoked certain commentators to claim he played the role of Socrates the gadfly to the Socratic Gadamerian conversationalist. In fact, this observation obscures the essential contention at hand, which is the persistent, irreconcilable conflict of a hermeneutics which claims language as a derivative of experience and, vice versa, the deconstructive demonstration of the irreducibility of writing to speech. The essential challenge that Derrida enacts in the encounter with Gadamer is to challenge the reductive hermeneutic model that conceives of the text as an aggregate *tout court*. His deconstructive reading thus animates the reified text from a fundamentally different position than the reanimation toward *Redesinn* of hermeneutics.

The consistent project of Derrida's manifests itself specifically in the Gadamer encounter as a critique of the totalization of the "lived experience" [*Lebenszusammenhang*] which remains operative in hermeneutics and which deconstruction seeks to interrogate. As is well-known, Derrida's deconstructive project consistently counters the phenomenological position which asserts a "layer of pure meaning, or a pure signified" referring "to a layer of prelinguistic or presemiotic (preexpresive, Husserl calls it) meaning

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whose presence would be conceivable outside and before the work of différance, outside and before the process or system of signification."[52] In Gadamer's case, and in the hermeneutics broadly conceived, there persists a similar claim to the living experience of living dialogue. Derrida does not simply wish to reverse the claim that in fact *un vécu* or lived experience derives from language. Rather, in the very contestation of experiential prioritization, the empirical itself no longer counts as discursive currency. The deconstructive reading which Derrida orchestrates does not simply reverse the dichotomy between language and experience but suspends that movement which would constitute a metaphysical recourse to sublations of a Hegelian logic.

The Derridean Critique of the Axiomatic Structure of Metaphysics

The aggregate life of the text cannot be contested, for Derrida, from a position outside its own signification. For this reason, deconstructive reading must realize the life which aggregation alone permits, contradistinctively to the living discourse which hermeneutics endows from a pre-textual primordial, discourse. The afterlife of a text cannot consist in the prescriptions which the living discourse might grant to the aggregate, as Gadamer suggests it can. The afterlife of a text arrives after the living discourse interprets it according to its own life. We must recall that the hermeneutic living discourse, as a primordial, works "outside and before the process or system of signification."[53] Derrida's afterlife consists in the signifying life of the text, not in the message that the living discourse claims to endow from outside the process of signification. In distinguishing

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[52] Derrida, *Positions*, 31.
[53] Ibid., 31.

between these two separate conceptions of life, the primordial *Redesinn* and the more baffling textual reading, Derrida sets the afterlife as the exclusive province of deconstruction and wrests it from Gadamer's claim to a hermeneutic positioning.

Gadamer's hermeneutic mobilization to the equiprimordial *Verstehen* and *Redesinn* does not originate in *Truth and Method* but reaches back to earlier beginnings in a phenomenological work, Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit*. In this, Derrida's contestation of Gadamer's hermeneutics must critique the structure of interpretation itself in its hermeneutic form. His strategy in the Gadamer exchange is to question whether Heidegger's 'essential thinking' turns on the axiomatic structure of a metaphysics which seeks to say only one. Here is where Derrida is incisive in his deconstructive critique: he asks whether Heidegger's interpretation of Nietzsche does not merit a Nietzschean (or even Heidegerrian) attribution but simply hermeneutic *Redesinn* itself which hypostatizes the textual aggregate of *The Gay Science* into a semantic message. In demonstrating the metonymic violences which Heidegger enacts on Nietzsche's texts, Derrida does not seek to attribute a willful malevolence Heideggerian strategies. Instead, he wants to demonstrate how the very equiprimordial *Vestehen* and *Redesinn* anticipate a totality, or *Sinngestalt einer Rede*, which does not animate the text but buries its unassimilable aspects.

We have seen briefly how hermeneutics mobilizes a discourse about life: *Lebenswelt*, *Lebenszussamenhang*, *Redesinn* (this latter as translated to living discourse). All of these terms describe life according to an experiential analytic of *Dasein*. When the hermeneut asserts that the written aggregate has been divested of life, this signifies that it has been separated from the living contexts of experience. In a living conversation, one has the interlocutor at hand, can access his word in the full presence of its speech and can demand

clarification. It is the living discourse which, so the hermeneut claims, breathes life into the text. However, who decided that life possess this meaning and this one alone?

Certainly not Nietzsche, whose vitalistic philosophy has been interpreted in the hermeneutic sense, but perhaps was never truly read before Derrida. Certainly Derrida reads it against the grain of a hypostatizing account which Heidegger presents in his conception of "Nietzsche as Thinker of the Fulfillment of Metaphysics." Like Derrida's engagement with Lacan's Poe, his reading of Heidegger's interpreted Nietzsche grants the text its own staging of an axiomatic structure, thereby undermining the interpretive axiom of the hermeneutic interpreter. Just as Derrida demonstrates Lacan to have positioned Poe's discourse of the secret in "The Purloined Letter" according to a pre-textual analytic which "represents the existence of communication"[54] even in the lie, so his reading of Heidegger shows that even Nietzsche's discourse of life is positioned by the living discourse which subordinates the aggregate's own claims to an identifiable experience of the *Redesinn*. The living discourse appropriates the lie as a truth in Lacan and the life as an experience in Nietzsche. Insofar as the living discourse provides the structure for Gadamer's conversation, this latter can also be said to operate as an appropriative structure.

Heidegger's Essential Thinking as an Essence of the *Redesinn*

In approaching Derrida's reading of Heidegger's Nietzsche, we are simultaneously engaging with Gadamer's valorization of the hermeneutic living discourse and the

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[54] Jacques Derrida, "The Purveyor of Truth," in *The Purloined Poe*, ed. John P. Muller and William J. Richardson, trans. Alan Bass (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins UP, 1988), 197.

understanding. In the symposium with Gadamer, Derrida stages his reading of Heidegger to demonstrate the consequences of integrating Nietzsche's text within the hermeneutic conversation. The result is that Nietzsche's textual aggregate has been truncated, and thereafter framed in order to speak a message which corroborates Heidegger's own discourse. Heidegger's position about Nietzsche's essential thinking seeks to both save his thought from the clutches of a biologistic interpretation (of the Nazis, for instance) to which his vitalist discourse can easily fall prey and to proclaim him as the final thinker of a metaphysics. The crux is that to contest the former and embrace the latter position, Heidegger can only take recourse to the hermeneutic *Sinngestalt einer Rede* which places the Heideggerian interpretation on the same level as the biologist's mobilization. Both are functions of the hermeneutic living discourse which would position an aggregate according to the anticipated message of the textual body. This is nowhere more evident than in Gadamer's own interpretation of Celan, in which Derrida observes that he justifies placing the accent upon the final lines of the poem: "Dès sa première phrase, Gadamer avait annoncé, je le répète, que, « selon le principe herméneutique », il commencerait par le vers final qui porte l'accent… [and which] « se trouve de toute évidence le noyau de ce petit poème »."[55] By this principle of knowing in advance of reading the particular text, where it must hold its accent, hermeneutics positions it from what Gadamer identifies as the "anticipation of completion" [*Vorgriff der Volkommenheit*].[56] That is, the text is positioned from beyond its own significations and regardless of what they may signify.

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[55] Jacques Derrida, *Béliers, Le dialogue ininterrompu : entre deux infinis, le poème* (Paris: Éditions Galilée, 2003), 34.
[56] James Risser. "The Two Faces of Socrates: Gadamer/Derrida," in *Dialogue and Deconstruction: The Gadamer-Derrida Encounter*, ed. Diane P. Michelfelder and Richard E. Palmer (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 182.

It is for the same reason that Heidegger's interpretation of Nietzsche must proceed by an anticipation of postulates which the text would corroborate. Thus, Derrida "sees why" Heidegger chose the following passage of The Gay Science at the same time as he understands the necessity of withholding the paradoxical title:

> *In media vita!* No! [These four words—the title, in short—and above all, these two exclamation points, are omitted by Heidegger—this   time without ellipses. JD] Life has not disappointed me! On the contrary, I find it truer, more desirable and mysterious every year—ever since the day when the great liberator came over me: the idea that life might be an experiment of knowers—and not a duty, not a calamity, not trickery! And knowledge itself: let it be something else for others; for example, a bed to rest on, or the way to such a bed, or a diversion or a form of leisure—for me it is a world of dangers and victories in which heroic feelings, too, find places to dance and play. "*Life as a means to knowledge*"—with this principle in one's heart one can live not only boldly but even gaily, and laugh gaily, too! And who knows how to laugh anyway and live well if he does not first know a good deal about war and victory?[57]

Why does Heidegger choose this as an exergue to his book on Nietzsche? He explicitly justifies its appearance in a sentence of his own which presents the exergue: "Nietzsche himself names the experience that determines his thinking:".[58] Heidegger informs us that Nietzsche describes an experience, and as we observe, one of life. To follow Heidegger's discourse to its conclusion, Nietzsche names the experience of life that determines his thinking. In this account, it is life that determines his thought, be it the very thinking about living.

As Derrida observes, "This choice of an exergue is sufficient evidence that the question about life and the "alleged biologism" stand at the active center of Heidegger's

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57 Friedrich Nietzsche, Aphorism 324, in *The Gay Science*, quoted in Jacques Derrida, "Interpreting Signatures (Nietzsche/Heidegger): Two Questions," in *Dialogue and Deconstruction: The Gadamer-Derrida Encounter*, ed. Diane P. Michelfelder and Richard E. Palmer, trans. by Diane Michelfelder and Richard Palmer (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 66.

58 Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, trans. Pierre Klossowski (Paris: Gallimard, 1971), quoted in in *Dialogue and Deconstruction: The Gadamer-Derrida Encounter*, ed. Diane P. Michelfelder and Richard E. Palmer, trans. by Diane Michelfelder and Richard Palmer (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 67.

Nietzsche."[59] Heidegger's discourse against the objectification of knowledge (and by extension of biologism) can be found as early as *Sein und Zeit*. There he advances a distinction between a primary mode of *Dasein*'s thrown-ness in a world of projects, which he calls handiness [*Zuhandenheit*], and a secondary objectification of the understanding, objective presence [*Vorhandeheit*]. To cite an example of Heidegger's from *Sein und Zeit*, handiness is the wind in the sails; objective presence is the measurement of its velocity. Existence's primary comportment is this thrown-ness in the world, a primary mode from which we derive our theoretical objectifications of it. Biology and "reductionist" biologism fall on the side of *Vorhandeneit*, an objective presence which can never make claims about the primacy of its accounts. Life, like *Zuhandenheit*, does not allow itself to be subordinated "under the model of biology or as a celebration of life as the ultimate aim—even to the determination of life as the Being of beings, or being as a whole."[60] For the historically concerned nineteenth century, biography and psycho-biography functioned as the triumph of a Schleiermachian hermeneutics that Heidegger resisted. Nevertheless, as Derrida observes, Heidegger, "[i]n legitimately scorning biographism, psychologism, or psychoanalysis, ... instead embraces reductionist empiricisms that in turn only cover up what is given as thinking."[61]

Nietzsche's Gay Science passage, as truncated by Heidegger, does indeed preempt an interpretation of his thought as biologistic, as supporting a belief in biology's reductionist account of its primacy. It counters the biologist position that would seek to assimilate the name Nietzsche under its own projects. By the same token, however, its hermeneutic

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[59] Jacques Derrida, "Interpreting Signatures (Nietzsche/Heidegger): Two Questions," in *Dialogue and Deconstruction: The Gadamer-Derrida Encounter*, ed. Diane P. Michelfelder and Richard E. Palmer, trans. by Diane Michelfelder and Richard Palmer (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 66.
[60] Ibid., 66.
[61] Ibid., 62.

position of having identified a message in Nietzsche, a coherent Netzschean thought about life, accords this essential and essentialist thinking the same positionality of which the living discourse makes use. Nietzsche's statements about life do not accord with the biological account which Heidegger counters but neither do they square with the Heideggerian counter-position which he asserts in claiming: "Nietzsche himself names the experience that determines his thinking:". What Derrida helps us bear witness to is the positioning power of living discourse itself, a discursive positing that exists outside and before the signification of the textual aggregate, The Gay Science. Thus, one very perceptive and rigorous commentator of the Gadamer-Derrida exchange, Josef Simon, analyzes Gadamerian dialogical positionality in the context of Socratic interlocution. However, the position-counterposition dialectic is itself positioned in advance by the form of enunciation, the *Sinngestalt einer Rede*, discourse as totalizing all conversation from the moment it is animated in a hermeneutic interpretation. This is a revelation that deconstructive reading, in contradistinction to Gadamer's living conversation, gives to thought.

What, after all, could discourse make of the title which Heidegger withholds: "In media vita!". Heidegger claims to have identified the "experience which determines" Nietzsche's thinking. But the title permits (or mandates) a semantic ambiguity in 'medium,' expressing either "a mean between two extremes" (life and death) or the "milieu in which the experiment of knowledge finds its place."[62] The passage itself, while contradicting any reduction to a biologism that conceives life as a mere objective presence, remains itself paradoxical to the accessible codes deployed by discourse. Derrida observes that the passage consists of "fundamentally secretive assertions."

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[62] Jacques Derrida, "Interpreting Signatures," 62.

The Secret Life of Secrecy

We have already followed Gadamer in his claim that the logos denies the claims to being by the *unus intuitus* ("unitary intuition"). What cannot be enunciated for the other in a dialectics is therefore ostracized from Hegel's absolute reflection, which, as Rodolphe Gasché asserts, "anticipates all logically possible reflective stands on the speculative totality of philosophy by turning them into particular moments of that totality."[63] Under this regime, the secret must serve as the enunciation of the absence of a possible presence. Logocentric conversation therefore appropriates the secret as the unfulfilled possibility of an enunciation. Derrida observes that "in completing itself, [philosophy] could both include within itself and anticipate all the figures of its beyond, all the forms and resources of is exterior; and could do so in order to keep these forms and resources close to itself by simply taking hold of their enunciation."[64]

The logocentric structure of the enunciative in Hegel can be witnessed in its translation into Émile Benveniste's semiotic definition of *discours*, "every enunciation assuming a speaker and a hearer, and in the speaker the intention of influencing the hearer in some way."[65] Benveniste's *énoncé*, a linguistic figure of the unitary intuition, remains unmediated and therefore excluded from the realm of discourse, upon which Gadamer's hermeneutics turns. Indeed, one can ask whether the entire reader-response school of criticism does not fall under the same axiomatic structure of a hermeneutics of presence, as is evinced when one of the most notable practitioners, Stanley Fish, remarks that

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[63] Rodolphe Gasché. *The Tain of the Mirror* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1986), 124.

[64] Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 252.

[65] Émile Benveniste, *Problems in General Linguistics*, trans. Mary Elizabeth Meek (Coral Gables: University of Miami Press, 1971), 208-209.

"autobiographers cannot lie because anything they say, however mendacious, is the truth about themselves, whether they know it or not."[66] The lie as an absence of truth is here compared and conflated with a performative model in which the *énoncé* becomes the enunciation, not of a hidden presence but of the lying performance itself. The presence of performance replaces that of substantive truth but it does not, for all that, subvert the speculative totality which operates by discourse. *Rede* (or *énonciation*) manifests itself differently, but it still exerts its semantic determinations upon reading.

The Purveyor of the Truth as Hermeneutic Message

Thus, Derrida will critique Lacan's psychoanalytic reading of Poe's "The Purloined Letter" along analogous lines. He cites Lacan's *Écrits* as endemic of precisely the logocentric bringing to presence: "Even if it communicates nothing, the discourse represents the existence of communication; even if it denies the evidence, it affirms that speech constitutes truth; even if it is intended to deceive, the discourse speculates on faith in testimony."[67] Psychoanalysis rehearses insistently the primacy of discourse in that Lacan, Derrida notes, consistently writes of unveiling the truth to the master (analyst) "in order to link the truth to the power of speech."[68] Lacan reads the letter as a figure of the phallus, its lack as integrated within an economy of equivalence between presence and absence, truth and lie. Derrida characterizes this Lacanian reading with the formulation: "Something is

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[66] Stanley Fish, "Just Published: Minutiae Without Meaning," *The New York Times* Opinion (September 7, 1999), accessed November 1, 2014. http://www.nytimes.com/1999/09/07/opinion/just-published-minutiae-without-meaning.html.
[67] Derrida, "Purveyor of Truth," 197.
[68] Ibid., 197.

missing from its place, but the lack is never missing from it."[69] In this Lacanian model,

castration substantiates woman as the presence of her lack and therefore the truth of her

absence. She is the proof, the enunciation, of a regulated economy. The Lacanian secret

presences a fixed topos for the relay between presence and absence.

> As Derrida formulates it,

> [c]astration-truth... is that which contracts itself (stricture of the ring) in order to bring the phallus, the signifier, the letter, or the fetish back into their *oikos*, their familiar dwelling, their proper place. In this sense castration-truth is the opposite of fragmentation, the very antidote to fragmentation: that which is missing from its place has in castration a fixed, central place, freed from all substitution.[70]

The hermeneutic structure of contextualization, which operates in placing the particular

fragment within its totalizing context, performs an analogous formal operation in Lacanian

psychoanalysis. Both return the signifier to its familiar dwelling, *oikos*, proper place. Thus,

Derrida observes that, by "determining the place of the lack, the topos of that which is

lacking from its place, and in constituting it as a fixed center, Lacan is indeed proposing, at

the same time as a truth-discourse, a discourse on the truth of the purloined letter as the

truth of "The Purloined Letter."[71] That is, if as Heidegger reminds us, Hermes is the divine

messenger, then how does one read his message if, embedded within it, there exists a

second one? Derrida poses the same question of Lacan's reading of "The Purloined Letter."

The text itself stages an analytics of reading the letter's location, so Lacan's application of a

psychoanalytic discourse can only take recourse to the signified diegetic world of the

narrative (following the letter as if it were a phenomenal object) and not the signifiers as

they stage their fundamentally other narration. Lacan follows the diegesis rather than the

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[69] Derrida, "Purveyor of Truth," 184.
[70] Ibid., 184.
[71] Ibid., 185.

narrative, conflating the two: "At the moment when the Seminar, like Dupin, finds the letter where it is found [*se trouve*], between the legs of woman, the deciphering of the enigma is anchored in truth."[72] Lacan's *Rede* directs its semantic determinations in following a diegetic object (the letter) and in this very process, necessarily neglects the textual signification of Poe's "The Purloined Letter." Lacan could be likened to a spectator of an Elizabethan play who, so engrossed by the play-within-the-play, forgets that it is in fact the function of a more primary play.

Derrida calls this more primary play 'dissemination.' This play does not traffic in a consistent economy of exchange and therefore does not produce secrets that may be discovered. Dissemination, in contradistinction to polysemy, does not assume a unity in advance which only thereafter is dispersed. Polysemy is a function of hermeneutics as conceived by Gadamer, for whom discourse [*Rede*] directs signification from outside language's signifying potential. Derrida distinguishes dissemination from polysemy by observing that the latter is "organized within the implicit horizon of a unitary resumption of meaning, that is, within the horizon of a dialectics.... a teleological and totalizing dialectics that at a given moment, however far off, must permit the reassemblage of the totality of the text into the truth of its meaning...."[73] *Rede* still directs polysemy from beyond signification, by a phenomenological horizon. It is otherwise with dissemination: "Far from presupposing that a virgin substance thus precedes or oversees it, dispersing or withholding itself in a negative second moment, dissemination affirms the always already

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[72] Derrida, "Purveyor of Truth," 187.
[73] Derrida, *Positions*, 45.

divided generation of meaning."[74] Lacan's speculative discourse at work in his seminar on "The Purloined Letter" causes him to account for the secret as a reassemblage of the message's location as predicated on the signification of his own psychoanalytic discourse. The textual aggregate is animated to take on a life that is not its own, and thus the secret it reveals does not belong to the text, or writing, either. *Rede* always delivers its proper (*propre*) message, and the letter always arrives. Thus, Derrida remarks that:

> [t]he sense of the tale, the meaning of the purloined letter ("what the 'purloined letter,' that is, the not delivered letter [*lettre en souffrance*], means is that a letter always arrives at its destination") is uncovered. The deciphering (Dupin's, the Seminar's) uncovered via a meaning (the truth) as a hermeneutic process, itself arrives at its destination.[75]

The secret is always decipherable by a hermeneutics which, as we have witnessed, proves exhaustive by claiming enunciation as the bringing to presence of truth.

Nietzsche's Umbrella, Folded and Mani-folded

Is the secret a fundamentally different one for hermeneutics (or a hermeneutic psychoanalysis) than for deconstruction? What can Nietzsche's "fundamentally secretive assertions" in Heidegger's passage withhold that a hermeneut might discover? What can be discovered in the place of the secret for hermeneutics, besides the transformation of an *énoncé* into an *énonciation*, of a unitary intuition into a dialectically situated word under the master direction of the *Rede*?

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[74] Jacques Derrida, *Dissemination*, trans. Barbara Johnson (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1981), 268.
[75] Derrida, "Purveyor of Truth," 187.

As should be evident, the secret is a locus of contention and namely between a hermeneutic model which assumes it can be brought to enunciation (as *Sprachlichkeit* itself consists in experience's coming to language) and the deconstructive suspicion that perhaps secrecy withholds only a pretense to it. Derrida's refusal to reduce Nietzsche's text(s) to a hermeneutic message or an essential thinking has a predecessor in his book, *Éperons: Les Styles de Nietzsche*, in which the secret functions as a riposte to hermeneutics in an analogous way that woman disseminates outside a system of truth and falsehood. In reading Nietzsche, Derrida conceives a figure of woman as dissimulatress: her secret eschews the metaphysical conception of a binary of falsehood and truth. This is because her initial two positions, both as potentate of falsehood and of truth are still within the metaphysical horizon of the secret as instigated by man, the figure of the philosopher. It is only in her third position-less position where she has relinquished the projection of a substantive secret that she can truly adopt her role as dissimulatress. In an analogous way, Derrida asserts, "Reading, which is to relate to writing, is to perforate such a horizon or the hermeneutic sail."[76] That is, in this third position of woman as dissimulatress, "it is indeed still a matter of reading it, its what for, or why, like a woman or like writing, it passes itself off for what it passes itself off for."[77] In this recursive formulation, the secret no longer refers to a hidden presence but to the linguistic structure of pretense itself, which can always be read *en abîme*. It is in the context of Nietzschean figure of woman as dissimulatress, a trope which opens Nietzsche's *Beyond Good and Evil*, that Derrida questions the metaphysical assumptions in the hermeneutic structure of the secret. The secret must withhold a truth and thereby structures the hermeneutic process of

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[76] Jacques Derrida, *Spurs*, trans. Barbara Harlow (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1979), 127.
[77] Ibid., 127.

contextualization since Schleiermacher: *to understand a writer better than he understood himself*.

In *Éperons: Les Styles de Nietzsche*, Derrida stages the problematics of conceiving a hermeneutics which could, like philosophy itself, come to terms with writing. That is, he questions whether a hermeneutics can abandon its own terms of the understanding in order to grant writing its own set. The conclusion to *Éperons* explicitly poses the challenge to hermeneutics of understanding, in the full hermeneutic sense of that term, a phrase, "I have forgotten my umbrella" (the statement itself inscribed between quotations), among Nietzsche's unpublished manuscripts. Deriding the dogmatism of editors, whom he views as exhibiting a "hermeneutic somnambulism," Derrida observes that "[i]n blithest complacency their every word obscures so well a veritable beehive of critical questions that only the minutest scrutiny could possibly recover there those questions which preoccupy us here."[78] Derrida's critical vigilance is nowhere more evident than in his attempt at awakening the hermeneut from a somnambulism which would bury Nietzsche's text under a mound of historical facts to be understood, a will or desire to be attributed, a series of codes to be deciphered.

This hermeneutic project is evinced illustratively in the case of Georges Poulet, of the Geneva school of phenomenological criticism, who sought to integrate all discursive forms of an author into an account that would synthesize a coherent consciousness. Novels and private correspondence both held import. Ultimately, the coherence of a consciousness and the capacity to paraphrase it (for Poulet's style is eminently paraphrastic), the two perhaps inextricable, remain the sole determinants of phenomenological discourse. As a

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[78] Derrida, *Spurs*, 125.

manifestation of Schleiermacher's hermeneutics, Poulet's *modus operandi* would be calibrated to understand Nietzsche's inscription, "I have forgotten my umbrella." For the hermeneut, the task at hand is straightforward enough. Already having classified "I have forgotten my umbrella" as a form of secondary discourse whose relation to the 'philosophical body' may thereafter be contextualized either according to Nietzsche's own published discursive texts or to others historically synchronous with them, the hermeneut may proceed to integrate it within the anticipated totality of the author's discourse.

However, despite these recognizable hermeneutic maneuvers which "I have forgotten my umbrella" might provoke, there persists a remainder that is uniquely[79] textual, namely the quotation marks, the graphic gesture of attributing a sentence to another, even if that other is oneself, an unrecognizable self who might sign 'Nietzsche.' Derrida develops the unique life which the textual aggregate alone, and Nietzsche's phrase especially, can give to read:

> Because it is structurally liberated from any living meaning, it is always possible that it means nothing at all or that it has no decidable meaning. There is no end to its parodying play with meaning, grafted here and there, beyond any contextual body or finite code. It is quite possible that that unpublished piece, precisely because it is readable as   a piece of writing, should remain forever secret. But not because it withholds some secret. Its secret is rather the possibility that indeed it might have no secret, that it might only be pretending to be simulating some hidden truth within its folds.[80]

A dire threat to hermeneutics, and by extension to logocentric reading, is that enunciation may persist in the illusion of the decipherable secret as a result of dissemination, a structure that signification alone permits. Dissemination does not recognize a horizon, or

[79] Following Hamacher, let us recall that it was Schleiermacher himself who conceded the irreducibility of text to speech, even if that fact remains buried, for evident reasons, by Gadamer and Ricoeur.
[80] Derrida, *Spurs*, 133.

resumption of meaning within a dialectics of totalization, because it can never be decided whether it serves as the precondition for the figure's very appearance.

The unpublished piece signed Nietzsche, placed in quotation marks, may not conceal any substantive message at all. Quotation marks permit attribution; signatures signify an attributive code but do not *a priori* attribute a consciousness to the inscribed name. "I have forgotten my umbrella," signed Friedrich Nietzsche, disseminates a play, seducing with the attribution of a pithy, quotidian assertion whose living context remains opaque. Describing dissemination's effect, Derrida specifies that, "like a woman or like writing, it passes itself off for what it passes itself off for."[81] It may signify Nietzsche attributing the statement to himself, but to the self of the signature, a mere convention, or to the association of his name with the memory of something tremendous. Derrida, as much as anyone, was recognizant of Nietzsche's playful "metonymizing free from limits or positive devices."[82] Manifesting a predilection for upsetting the relationship of genus and species, "which governs the thought or even the anticipation of totality,"[83] Nietzsche renders ineffectual the positive devices, the cognitive understanding, of interpretation. His name can only be attributed to a message following significant metonymic violence to the textual aggregate which he has painstakingly grafted with his styles.[84] In an important sense, Nietzsche's penchant for free metonymizing, his masquerade of names and his rhythmic composition of punctuation all serve the disseminative function which places "I have forgotten my umbrella" as potentially emblematic of his entire philosophical enterprise. Indeed, Derrida grants that "the hypothesis that the totality of Nietzsche's text, in some monstrous way, might well be of the

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[81] Derrida, *Spurs*, 127.
[82] Derrida, "Interpreting Signatures," 71.
[83] Ibid., p. 71.
[84] Jacques Derrida, *The Ear of the Other: Otobiography, Transference, Translation*, ed. Christie McDonald, trans. Peggy Kamuf (Lincoln: University of Nebraska press, 1985), 14.

type "I have forgotten my umbrella" cannot be denied."[85] Derrida proposes a totality beyond the hermeneutic ken of anticipation of closure. Nietzsche's unpublished piece is a fragment that, like the pieces of Benjamin's broken vase of language, never constituted a totality in the first place.

Such a 'totality' would then consist in a sort of parody of the hermeneutic *Sinngestalt*: in the dissemination, a playfulness, a pretense to simulation, which would call out for a reading beyond a strict hermeneutics or series of codes, as we have given them critical exposition in this chapter. The task of reading, suspicious of hermeneutics and of the anticipation of totality in a message, must re-conceptualize the life of reading beyond a hermeneutic living discourse that Derrida consistently sought to expose as reductionist. The linguistic positioning synonymous with dissemination, in contradistinction to hermeneutic polysemy, fragments the writing of and complicates the reading of an aggregate, infusing an afterlife beyond the living discourse which will survive to the extent that it disseminates:

> I shall remain in Borges, not in myself (if it is true that I am someone), but I recognize myself less in his books than in many others or in the laborious strumming of a guitar. Years ago I tried to free myself from him and went from mythologies of the outskirts to the games with time and infinity, but those games belong to Borges now and I shall have to imagine other things. Thus my life is a flight and I lose everything and everything belongs to oblivion, or to him.
> I do not know which of us has written this page.[86]
> "Borges and I," Jorge Luis Borges

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[85] Derrida, *Spurs*, 133.
[86] Jorge Luis Borges, "Borges and I," in *Labyrinths: Selected Stories & Other Writings*, ed. Donald A. Yates and James E. Irby (NY: New Directions, 2007), 246-247.

CHAPTER 2

The Precise Illegibility of de Man

"To judge from various recent publications, the spirit of the times is not blowing in the direction of formalist and intrinsic criticism."[87] While this phrase of Paul de Man is recognizable to anyone familiar with his work, a question arises in the spirit of our times: which facial expression—for according to a recent biographical account, de Man was fascinated by the face and especially his own[88]—should be attributed to the intentionality implied in the sentence? In the prosopoeia "from the grave," we conventionally imagine the deceased one rolling over, expressing disdain from below or up high, as the case may be. Today, how is it that de Man, if we allow a figure to grant him a subjectivity from beyond earthly life, would read this statement, in the most colloquial sense of its oral performance? Would he lend it an ironic tone of understatement with a sly, tongue-in-cheek grin? Or would he rather, wary of the biographical attention to his wartime writings and sensationalizing accounts of his private life, adopt an apologetic, rising intonation, with a final exhalation of resignation?

As this query should demonstrate, implicit in how de Man would orate his own sentence remains how we ourselves interpret it. If we interpret it, according to the two possibilities provided or adopt a third, then we are not yet reading in the de Manian sense of the term. Like Heidegger embarked upon the path to—but not yet—thinking, de Man

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[87] De Man, "Semiology and Rhetoric," in *Allegories of Reading* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1979), 3.
[88] Evelyn Barish, *The Double Life of Paul de Man* (New York: Liveright, 2014), 3.

knew that the potentiality for an act did not guarantee its actualization. Indeed, as expressed in his statement, reading in literary institutions would continue to be the least actualized potentiality. There is certainly no dearth of interpretations, but as for readings? If interpretation and reading in the de Manian lexicon are fundamentally antinomous operations, it is because the latter undoes the former. Interpretations are figures for a stance, a position that masks the imposition inherent to it. Readings, on the contrary, force the reader to assume impossible positions which reveal (the at least two) interpretations to be impositions on the text. If we are forced to adopt two interpretive stances simultaneously rather than successively, such a contortion proves literally impossible for a body and cognitively baffling in its retorse movement.

Interpretation implies a singular positioning, an assertiveness, an action, a pursuit, in sum: a personality. Reading, in contradistinction, necessitates opening oneself to the impersonal. As Maurice Blanchot observes, "What most threatens reading is this: the reader's reality, his personality, his immodesty, his stubborn insistence upon remaining himself in the face of what he reads—a man who knows in general how to read."[89] All precise readers not only do not know the text at hand but begin ignorant of how to read *tout court*, though they understood this fact very precisely. De Man's precision, as I will assert in the following chapter, even interrogates what it means to be precise. Precision, in both everyday parlance and that of most academicians, suggests a painstaking accuracy which corresponds more accurately with the object of inquiry. Precision, in this conception, is an extension of the trope of mimesis. However, for de Man, precision marks the point of departure toward an awareness which baffles the cognitive apprehension of it.

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[89] Blanchot, *Space*, 198.

Paradoxically, the more precise the reading, the more unreadable the text becomes. Yet, it is not as if the scission itself, the parsing of signifiers or the divisions of linguistic models, remains a uniquely de Manian "compulsion to polarize."[90] On the contrary, any act of interpretation presupposes the parsing of signifiers, just as it necessitates the recognition of divergent grammatical and rhetorical models. The difference between an interpretation and de Manian reading is most effectively revealed when literary language unveils precision itself as an inadequate guarantee of the necessity of an interpretive stance.

Precision itself must be defined more precisely. In the field of literary criticism, an equivalence between the signifying referentiality of language and the phenomenal world is ostensibly guaranteed by the precision of description. Accuracy in mimesis, according to this model, provides the evaluative scale. As Hamlet advises to his players, suit the word to the action, the action to the word, a chiasmatic expression of equivalence in which the correct vocabulary corresponds to the phenomenon and vice versa. This conception of precision, an ostensibly neutral criterion, is in fact steeped in what de Man terms "aesthetic ideology," or the correspondence theory which assumes an *a priori* equivalence between the signifying potential of language and knowledge of the subject or of the phenomenal world. Aesthetic ideology is just as instrumental in the equivalence upon which self-consciousness is predicated. As Werner Hamacher explains, "the language of self-consciousness is so closely bound up with the demand for equality that every intention in the system of consciousness attempt to realize itself according to the model of equivalence."[91] Precision in this model submits to the ideology of mimesis, itself a linguistic

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[90] Rodolphe Gasché, *The Wild Card of Reading* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1998), 197.
[91] Werner Hamacher, *Pleroma: Reading in Hegel*, ed. Werner Hamacher and David E. Wellbery, trans. Nicholas Walker and Simon Jarvis (Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 1998), 97.

trope which prefigures the construction of greater or lesser correspondence and thus of equivalence.

This sense of precision, of mimetic representation, does not correspond to de Man's mobilization of it. De Man manifests what I will designate as a precision of the scission, in which tropes carve language not in the service of equivalence toward the phenomenal world but rather in the delineation of its signifying potential. As Augusto Ponzio puts it, "with its restlessness, scissions, and contradictions, literary language does no more than express the specificity of language."[92] Acceding language its autonomy entails eschewing the mobilization of it in an interpretation. If language can be granted its full autonomy (etymologically, the capacity of a self-naming), this freedom would hold enormous consequences for reading. Language allows glimpses of its self-naming autonomy, such as when catachresis endows a name to the unnamed, carving out reference in its own image. Catachresis is a figure that establishes reference outside of a system of equivalence, since it does not replace another name for the object but inaugurates its identity *in actu*. It exemplifies language's brute authority in predicating the possibility of referencing the phenomenal world and simultaneously evinces the impersonality of the trope.

It is impossible to speak of impersonality in reading without citing the influence of Blanchot. In a passage that de Man himself quotes, autonomy is endowed its particularly impersonal character:

> Reading does not produce anything, does not add anything. It lets be what is. It is freedom: not the freedom that produces being or grasps it, but the freedom that welcomes, consents, says yes, can say only yes, and, in the space

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[92] Augusto Ponzio, *Man as a Sign: Essays on the Philosophy of Language*, trans. Susan Petrilli (New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 1990), 245.

opened by this yes, lets the work's overwhelming decisiveness affirm itself, lets be its affirmation that it is—and nothing more.[93]

Reading for Blanchot opens up a space of affirmation in indecision. The decision manifests an interpretation which would allow one to "produce" or "grasp" being. In contradistinction, Blanchot exhorts an "overwhelming" decisiveness, a letting be not of a momentous decision but of the affirmation of the "space opened up" in its decisive-ness, in its essential possibility. Decisive-ness designates the possibility for the elimination of the will to a semantic determination. For de Man, undecidability must always prove an expression of precision. It is the precisely undecidable that can alone constitute a reading, in contradistinction to an interpretation, which always implies a decision or determination. The crisis in reading which de Man performs throughout his career consists in the rigorous demonstration that the precision of reading leads ineluctably to undecidability. In the following chapter, I will investigate de Man's strategy of reading in the scission, as it manifests in both precision and undecidability.

Context: the Need for Precision, Paul de Man's Praxis of Reading

Every reading involves a scission, a cut, or parsing of signifying units and linguistic models. Precision derives its etymology from præcidere, signifying "cutting off," and thus in a reading, it implies a deliberate carving up of a text. If a colloquial expression of precision imagines that it delineates the curves of the phenomenal world, de Man's praxis differs at this point. An encounter with the world may provoke a description, but like the narrator of Poe's "The Pit and the Pendulum," our narration of this obscurity invites a proliferation of

[93] Blanchot, *Space*, 194.

precisions of language rather than an increasing exactitude of the phenomenal world's

coordinates. If the precisions of language can also be surmised to delineate the phenomenal

world, we cannot know that the rules coordinating linguistic delineation and those that

govern the phenomenal world actually coincide. Hence, de Man defines aesthetic ideology

as the refusal to acknowledge that literature "is not *a priori* certain that language functions

according to principles which are those, or which are like those, of the phenomenal

world."[94] Why is aesthetic ideology so insidious in the first place, one may inquire? De Man

hinged the commonsensical adoption of aesthetic ideology on the "natural enough affinity"

between logic and grammar that extends from Cartesian linguistics to A.J. Greimas.[95]

Ultimately, the link between grammatical and logical structures serves to propagate an

unbroken equivalence between grammar and scientific claims as predicated upon "the

universality that logic shares with science."[96] De Man is not the first to make such an

observation of grammar's capacity to establish equivalences with realms beyond its

province. Nietzsche observed that grammar served as a conditioning factor in the belief in a

law-like universe.[97]

We thus have to understand de Man's praxis of precision as a divergence from

exactitude as criterion for correspondence. Since language cannot be assumed to adequate

to the phenomenal world, suiting the word to the action cannot be the goal of precision. At

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[94] Paul de Man, "Resistance to Theory," in *The Resistance to Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 11.

[95] Ibid., 14.

[96] Ibid., 14.

[97] ""I fear we are not getting rid of God," Nietzsche quipped, "because we still believe in grammar". The unconsciously accepted and employed rules of grammar serve as the preparatory exercise for man's belief in a lawlike universe subject to divine, metaphysical, or natural principles. Nietzsche's remark, "Every word is a prejudice" punctuated his discovery of the "linguistic danger to spiritual freedom". Grammar, "the metaphysics of the people," is to be assaulted as a shadow of God.""

Leslie Paul Thiele, *Friedrich Nietzsche and the Politics of the Soul: A Study of Heroic Individualism* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1990), 109.

the same time, however, de Man does not view precision as the means to achieve a hermeneutic understanding. Hans-Georg Gadamer, one of the leading proponents of hermeneutics, established a strong distinction between method, in its application, and truth as the form of human understanding. The understanding, so the argument goes, may make use of method and scientific rigor [Wissenschaftlichkeit] but ultimately concerns itself with "what thinking and knowing mean for human beings in their practical life."[98] Therefore, for Gadamer, precision cannot be conceived solely as an equivalence established in a scientific method but also may assume the form of an intuition, a harmony, or to utilize his term, "balance" of the understanding:

> In the natural sciences one speaks of the "precision" of mathematizing. But is the precision attained by the application of mathematics to living situations ever as great as the precision attained by the ear of the musician who in tuning his or her instrument finally reaches a point of satisfaction? Are there not quite different forms of precision, forms that do not consist in the application of rules or in the use of an apparatus, but rather in a grasp of what is right that goes far beyond this?[99]

Leaving aside the infelicitous juxtaposition of registers and metaphors in Gadamer's statement, it is notable that even when he considers precision as an art form—in the musician tuning his instrument—it nevertheless serves to correspond to a rightness conceived of as harmony. Gadamer equates precision to the intuitive realm which de Man characterizes as "perception, consciousness, experience" and which "leads at once into the world of logic and of understanding with all its correlatives, among which aesthetics occupies a prominent place."[100] De Man claims a different source for precision in a linguistic terminology which "considers reference as a function of language and not

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[98] Hans-Georg Gadamer. "From Word to Concept: the Task of Hermeneutics as Philosophy," in *The Gadamer Reader: A Bouquet of the Later Writings*, ed. Richard E. Palmer (Northwestern UP, 2007), 113.
[99] Ibid., 113.
[100] De Man, "Resistance to Theory," 8.

necessarily as an intuition."[101] What if we, spurred on by Gadamer, asked if there were a form of precision that abandoned correspondence altogether?

De Man's praxis of precision does not aim for correspondence, for we cannot be "*a priori* certain that literature is a reliable source of information about anything but its own language."[102] Instead, precision must retain its etymological root of "cutting off," a delineation not of the curves of the world but rather of the very parsing of language and of divisions (and disjunctions) that linguistic models register. What reading produces is a cutting off, a precise undecidability. Although decidability has been thoroughly contextualized in its relation to Hegelian determination,[103] this particular etymological origin has been favored over that other, and related, meaning of de-cædere: cutting off. While both precision and decision share the etymological origin of "cutting off," the latter term additionally signifies determination. Every decision is a determination, but precision is left to merely cut off. Indeed, in de Man's readings, the exacting demands of precision are the means by which determination is led to an interruption. It is in this suspense of movement that precision is endowed its truest and most paradoxical definition.

De Man's undecidability serves as an analogous term for what Blanchot terms, in all its paradoxical grandeur, "overwhelming decisiveness." For the overwhelming leads not to the action of a decision but rather leaves one suspended by a decisive-ness as pure potentiality. This can only be expressed by a seemingly paradoxical formulation, as in de Man's gloss on Blanchot: "The urge to let a work be exactly what it is requires an active and

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[101]De Man, "Resistance to Theory," 8.
[102] Ibid., 11.
[103] See "Postscript 2: Language, Consciousness, Allegory" in Andrzej Warminski, "Ending Up/Taking back (with Two Postscripts on Paul de Man's Historical Materialism)," *Critical Encounters: Reference and Responsibility in Deconstructive Writing*, ed. Cathy Caruth and Debora Esch (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1995), 27-41.

unrelenting vigilance, which can only be exercised by means of language."[104] For Gasché, de Man's notion of the "autonomous potential of language" can be seen to manifest an ontology that refuses the mandate of any specific determination:

> ...language is a *dynamis adynamia*; in other words, the power not to proceed to action, to remain pure potentiality, a negative power which, according to Aristotle, constitutes all potentiality as such. In distinction from Aristotle, for whom the power not to proceed to action is the condition of possibility for the passage to action, language, in de Man's understanding, hovers in a state of pure *adynamia*.[105]

If language for de Man possesses this *dynamis adynamia*, this pure potentiality, then that state can only be revealed in a reading which registers this potential.

Although de Man's precision cannot aspire to correspondence, its cuts pertaining exclusively to the order of language, this does not suggest that reference is abandoned.[106] On the contrary, reference is taken more seriously than by phenomenological critics who assume a transparent relation between the laws of language and those of the phenomenal world. Although it can be demonstrated that certain linguistic models, such as grammatical and rhetorical ones, reveal over-determinations, it would not be possible to understand the laws of their disjunction in order to develop a science or phenomenology of reading. The ensuing experience of the undecidable does not constitute an act of cognition which would be about this theme, itself an object of aesthetic generality. For as de Man observes, themes belong to the metaphorical order in that the particular language in which they are

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[104] Paul de Man. *Blindness and Insight* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), 65.

[105] Gasché, *Wild Card*, 133.

[106] Jacques Derrida traces the etymology of reference in his claim that "...a referent is what "carries back to." Referent, means "referring to the other." And the other is precisely what can never allow itself to be closed again within any closure whatsoever.... It is just as paradoxical for me to see this thought translated as a thought without reference, as it is to see textual thought translated as thought about language." Jacques Derrida, "Deconstruction in America: An Interview with Jacques Derrida," Critical Exchange 17 (Winter 1985), quoted in Andrzej Warminski, "Ending Up/Taking back (with Two Postscripts on Paul de Man's Historical Materialism)," *Critical Encounters: Reference and Responsibility in Deconstructive Writing*, ed. Cathy Caruth and Debora Esch (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1995), 11.

expressed is claimed as an exemplar of a thematic conceived in its universality. Like the concept of theme, those of metaphor, correspondence, and cognition all serve as figures of totalization. However, behind all metaphorical structures lies a simple and insidious logic: "Aesthetic generality is the precondition for resemblance which also means that it is constitutive of metaphor."[107] Metaphors work through a movement of substitution that is also always a non-equivalence, a cutting away of specificity, thereby masking the violence of the transport.

De Manian precision, in a demystifying turn, disarticulates this false unity. De Man's praxis of precision can thus be situated within a deconstructive tradition which theorizes the cut in its irreducibility to equivalence. A recent and trenchant critique of unity as equivalence can be found in Werner Hamacher's Pleroma: Reading in Hegel, an exegesis of Hegel which demonstrates an alternative conception of being to that of self-consciousness. If self-consciousness for Hegel would proceed through the symmetrical substitutions which establish equivalence, the pleroma of being changes the modality to make unity consistent with the remainder. In various explications, Hamacher returns to figures of pleroma, or the being of plenitude that eschews the approximations of self-consciousness which work by substitution. In place of substitution and equivalence, the pleroma exists as an "unvalued superflux"[108] analogous to Blanchot's "overwhelming decisiveness." Both serve as figures of reading in which precision does not establish a correspondence or equivalence to reference nor to an ontology of self-consciousness. What they produce instead is a cut outside of all systems of logical determination.

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[107] Paul de Man, "Self (Pygmalion)," in *Allegories of Reading* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1979), 183.
[108] Hamacher, *Pleroma*, 58.

In Warminski's formulation, de Man's conception of language may be analogized to the Marxian term, "overdetermined contradictions,"[109] bereft, however, of the scientism attributed to Marx. For Warminski, de Man's critique of ideology targets the movement of substitution and chiasmus, that of metaphor, which produces simple inversions at work when, for instance, Feuerbach replaced Hegel's idealism with an anthropological materialism. Thus, Warminski speculates on the alternative movement that reading as ideology critique would need to enact. It would consist in "a more difficult, more retorse, movement of thought that is anything but a mediation of the terms."[110] Hence, if mediation —that is, determinate (semantic) negation—is to be eschewed, how might we characterize the movement of reading in its more retorse configuration? Overdetermined contradictions may not—and for de Man, cannot—contradict exclusively on the order of a logic of negation. An overdetermined contradiction, like an overwhelming decisiveness, would not obey the rules of grammatical logic because rhetoric's intrusion actively contradicts grammar's conventions, even as this disjunction itself remains opaque in its precise contradictory mode. Rhetoric does not contradict grammar as a strict negation of the other, since the two are incarnate in the statement or *Satz*.[111] A rhetorical model necessarily incarnates grammar, just as grammatical models can exclusively deliver meaning at the behest of rhetoric.[112] Overdetermination is not necessarily a model of discrete units in that it does not *a priori* assume the possible enumeration of determinations or the possibility of

[109] Andrzej Warminski, "Ending Up/Taking back (with Two Postscripts on Paul de Man's Historical Materialism)," *Critical Encounters: Reference and Responsibility in Deconstructive Writing*, ed. Cathy Caruth and Debora Esch (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1995), 31.
[110] Warminski, "Ending Up/Taking Back," 15.
[111] De Man observes that "Satz in German signifies not just sentence, in the grammatical sense; it also means statement — Heidegger will speak of Der Satz des Grundes; Satz is the statement, the most fundamental statement, meaning — the most meaningful word...." Paul de Man, "Task of the Translator," in *The Resistance to Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 88.
[112] De Man, "The Resistance to Theory," 17.

an account of their workings. As Heidegger wrote of Nietzsche's account of metaphysics, the world consists in either the object (*Wirklichkeit*, or reality) or that which determines or works it (the *Wirkende*).[113] What is at stake in de Man's discourse of reading is the capacity or incapacity to know, in the fullest epistemological sense of that term, the *Wirkende* which determine the act of reading a textual object. Since texts refuse the reduction to a model of objective intuition, or one predicated on a phenomenology of a subject, reading's *Wirkende* cannot be reduced to a model of semantic determinations and rather instigate a "negative process in which the grammatical cognition is undone, at all times, by its rhetorical displacement." If it can be stated that rhetoric displaces "at all times," it can equally be asserted that this displacement occurs at all places, all cornerstones where one might make an incision.

If the movement of reading does not proceed by an accountable series of semantic determinations, this is a positive assertion of an impossibility. As Warminski suggests, the term "disjunction" would most accurately characterize the de Manian movement of reading as long as we do not claim to understand, again, the workings of the disjunctive character, as if they could be reduced to discrete contradictions of a binary order. If, for de Man, binary contradiction does not correctly model the act of reading and rather disjunction characterizes its movement, how would the precision of reading apply to this latter modality? That is, how could the precision of reading be conceptualized outside the model of a single, logical determination and still retain its (over)determining character? I will argue that de Man's use of precision manifests the "cutting off" involved in the act of parsing language, which remains endemic to any reading. It therefore leads to a

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[113] Martin Heidegger, "The Word of Nietzsche," in *Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays* (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), 100.

Blanchotian overwhelming decisiveness, stunting the determination of ideational thought to the degree that it dramatizes the cutting off of material language, a contrast which Warminski suggests in his rapprochement between de Man and Marx. Whereas ideational thought—or the concept as *Begriff*, to adopt the Hegelian term—is a product of a history consisting of logical contradictions, language's determinations cannot be reduced to the fourfold logical schematism which determines Hegel's idea. Reading, in de Man's conception, is short-circuited from ever proceeding by accountable determinations of thought because the material existence of consciousness as language involves the parsing of the brute material inscription. Ironically, the road to the undecidable begins with the earnest goal of precision.

Praxis of Precision: the Refrain of "Disjunction" in de Man

Although it has been observed that de Man conceives of reading in its disjunctive character, it remains heretofore un-theorized the disjunction of parsing which de Manian precision enacts. Readers of de Man will undoubtedly recognize the idiosyncratic style of his precision, but this particular methodology may appear compulsively his own.[114] I will argue that de Man's praxis of precision serves to unveil the disjunction between the materiality of language and the ideality of thought. To cite an example from the later de Man, in his "Reading (Proust)" section of Allegories of Reading, Marcel's encounter with the signification of Giotto's Charity explicitly features the caption, KARITAS, a theme which will nevertheless find itself contradicted by an "iconic detail that sidetracks our attention and

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[114] Gasché, *Wild Card*, 197.

hides the potential resemblance from our eyes."[115] In Proust's "passage of great precision," de Man explains, every explicit and thematic attempt of Marcel's to read Charity will inevitably be undermined by an iconic detail; in this case, that of a "heavy and mannish" facial expression contrapuntal to the generosity explicitly claimed.

That a fresco's single material detail does not corroborate the proper, ideational meaning of Charity serves as an analogy for reading texts. A text's materiality remains irreducible to explicit thematic statement in the same way that the markings of paint never can approximate an idea in a one-to-one correspondence. In the pictographic world of painting, one is likely to encounter few objections to the claim that a color or a line be endowed with an autonomous existence outside of the whole which it constitutes; in the ostensibly dialogical world of texts, it is almost a given that the letter's materiality will be stripped of this autonomy. It is not that Giotto failed in his representation of KARITAS, which he has inscribed as its explicit aim, but rather that from the moment he put brush to plaster, he was destined to undermine the proper, intended meaning by the aesthetic instantiation of it. A fresco, like a written text, can never practice what it preaches because praxis is always overdetermined by the brute material inscription which precedes semantic intention (*visée intentionelle*) or evaluation. It is overdetermined not by a simple logical contradiction which would place the "heavy and mannish" facial expression as a mere semantic negation to the ideal of Charity but rather by the very fact that a stubborn material detail exists at all, or that literal (of the letter) language "cuts away" from proper meaning (of the sacralized, canonized work) in a disjunctive movement which overdetermines the act of reading.

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[115] De Man, "Reading (Proust)," in *Allegories of Reading* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1979), 74.

As Warminski asserts, we cannot understand the disjunction produced in the literal

text's deflection from the proper meaning. It cannot be cognized because it does not follow

a mere semantic determination on the level of alternative meanings but rather disjoins

inextricably, in its very performance or instantiation. For it is not as if the "mannish"

expression simply negates KARITAS in a binary contradiction; materiality and its rhetorical

dimension scarcely manifest the capacity to explicitly negate but instead vigorously deflect

from proper figuration. The proof is that even a discourse which would make this very

assertion about disjunction on the level of its proper, thematic statement would be

undermined by the materiality constituting its praxis. Walter Benjamin's notoriously

opaque essay, "The Task of the Translator" makes the literal statement of a disjunction

between symbol and symbolized, but achieves this by mobilizing a set of imagistic tropes,

thereby making his negative statement dependent on a praxis which his theory denounces.

De Man thus seizes upon Benjamin's "perverse"[116] images which undermine the statement

being advanced:

> Benjamin, who is talking about the inability of trope to be adequate to
> meaning, constantly uses the very tropes which seem to postulate   the
> adequation between meaning and trope; but he prevents them in a way,
> displaces them in such a way as to put the original in motion, to de-canonize
> the original, giving it a movement which is a movement of disintegration, of
> fragmentation.[117]

The introduction of the aesthetic image of the vessel, as trope, undermines Benjamin's

distinction between the original and the translation. Benjamin's fondness for illustrative

discourse, in which he utilizes imagistic tropes, is not merely aesthetic but also tropological

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[116] De Man, "The Task of the Translator," in *The Resistance to Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 98.
[117] Ibid., 92.

in its rhetorical function. This rhetorical function, however, is not that of seduction on the level of trickery but fundamentally of the earnest attempt at proof.

De Man rightly notes that rhetoric cannot be reduced to a modality of persuasion in its understanding as founded upon intentionality but must also include the mode of verification *tout court*. Thus, speech act theories can be subject to the reductive analysis of

> persuasion, which is indeed inseparable from rhetoric, to a purely affective and intentional realm and makes no allowance for modes of persuasion which are no less rhetorical and no less at work in literary texts, but which are of the order of persuasion by proof rather than persuasion by seduction.[118]

Benjamin's examples are "perverse," according to de Man, in that the tropes which he utilizes to exemplify his theory of translation serve to undo the very assertions he makes on the level of direct statement. Tropes which initially appear to exemplify a particular statement undo that claim by the counter-factuality they present. The example abandons its anecdotal function the moment it undoes the claim as counterexample, thereby becoming a (counter-) fact. This is not a peculiarity of Benjamin but of all discursive engagement, even discourses which, like my own, would theorize the possibility of infinite fragmentation. This is no less true of the Greek atomists, who observed the disjunction between the theory of infinite divisibility of an object and the aesthetic image of its praxis that undermines it. If Aristotle, following the atomists, proved on the level of deductive logic that the subdivision of an object can proceed to infinity, once he (anecdotally) imagined it, illustrated it with an aesthetic image as trope, he demonstrated the disjunction between mathematical theory and logistical praxis. A block of wood if subdivided— Aristotle's example in explicating Democritus—will inevitably produce a dust so fine that

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[118] De Man, "Resistance to Theory," 18.

no logistical splitting could be carried out in a praxis suggested by the image.[119] As de Man says of Hegel's piece of paper on which he sought to prove the immediacy of sense certainty (by writing "here and now" upon it), the atomists' block of wood is "no longer an example but a fact." While Hegel's inscribed "here and now" of sense certainty is given a factual basis in its physical inscription of a piece of paper that we can hold in our hands, it has been rendered "undeniable but totally blank [in its effacement of the phenomenal truth]." Analogously, the aesthetic trope of splitting a block of wood counters the theory of the infinite divisibility at the same time as it persists as a tropological (counter-) fact.

Far from manifesting an idiosyncratic compulsion to polarize, de Man even takes discourses of parsing at their word. That is, he displays the propensity for demonstrating how even discourses of polarization and fragmentation cannot practice what they preach. For de Man, all praxes of reading necessitate precision, a cutting off of language's pretensions toward the consistency of statement, because to read remains irreducibly linguistic rather than acceding to a consistent economy, or exchange, of concepts. To take reading's medium as consisting of nominal linguistics entails neglecting language's obstinate materiality. Such an evasion of reading would view precision not in its etymological root of "cutting off" but instead as a phenomenological effort at a "thematic découpage" which "deliberately ignores the borderlines and the closures of actual texts." [120] As we will see, those textual borderlines are the locus of reading for de Man.

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[119] Aristotle, *GC* 315b28-317a17, quoted in *The Atomists: Leucippus and Democritus*, trans. C.C.W. Taylor (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 77.
[120] Paul de Man, "Hommage à Georges Poulet," in *The Paul de Man Notebooks*, ed. Martin McQuillan (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), 131.

Cutting off from Proust's Cliché: de Man and the Problem of Parsing

Parsing language may be as overwhelming as perceiving infinite gradations along a spectrum of color; it is just as phantasmic. Even the designation of the verbal unit, de Man explains, proved phantasmic to Saussure. By choosing the unit of -gram, or word, Saussure warded off, in his language, the "monstrous species of things" that the selection of -phone might have suggested. De Man intimates the threat at Saussure's door:

> [t]he "choses inouie[s]" would precisely be that the phonic, sensory and phenomenal ground of poetic diction has been unsettled, for the laws for the dispersal of the key word in the text, be it as ana-, para- or hypogram, are not phenomenally nor even mathematically perceivable. Since the key word is the proper name   in all its originary integrity, its subdivision into discrete parts and groups resembles, on the level of meaning, the worst phantasms of dismemberment to be found in D. P. Schreber's *Denkwürdigkeiten eines Nervenkranken*.[121]

That there are no perceivable "laws" governing the dispersal of Saussure's key word places language as an inscription characterized by brute, dumb materiality. Just as the poetics of the inter-sentence disrupts the determinate meaning of the entire phrase, the materiality of the letter stunts the semantics of the word.

The counterpoint to parsing, or dividing, is that of uniting, and the deconstructive gestures of de Man serve to demonstrate that in fact every unity poses falsely in its guise of unification. Every articulation, or act of jointing signifying units, serves as an imposition upon an always already disarticulated materiality. While the parsing of signifiers necessarily serves as the precondition to an act of interpretation, the question remains

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[121] De Man, "Hypogram and Inscription," in *The Resistance to Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 37.

exactly the position of the partitions. What considerations are engaged in the act of parsing signifying units?

Proximity and neighborliness, as well as contiguity, are measurements not only of space but also of time. And, more importantly for de Man, they configure not only spatiotemporal phenomena but also the potentially signifying units of text on a page and within a narrative. Proust was a probing thinker of the thematics of space no less than time. It is for this reason that de Man craftily redeploys Proustian discourses on phenomenal proximity, which theorize the dichotomy between metaphorical and metonymic associations, in order to apply them to language rather than to the intuition of phenomena. Marcel's theory—its conceptual apparatus—advances strong claims about the superiority of metaphor over metonymy, but its material praxis, the language he actually employs in this task, enlists metonymic structures as the support upon which his statements rest in ostensible security. What are the stakes for Marcel of privileging metaphor over metonymy? He thematizes his dichotomy as determining the possibility of a subject capable of partitioning off subjectivity from the contaminants of the objective world. Marcel values metaphor because it remains uncontaminated by a "mere association of ideas" provoked by happenstance spatial contiguity, which can render "our" comparisons circumstantially contingent and therefore not ours, after all. Marcel cannot avoid associating Albertine with aquatic images for the simple reason that he initially took notice of her silhouetted against the sea at Balbec. Gilberte, on the other hand, is imbued with the aura of the hawthorns at Tansonville, the same locale where Marcel initially encountered the girl.

What hangs in the balance in Proust's discourse on metaphor and metonymy is the capacity to secure a subjectivity as self-sufficient, delimited by its own borders. The discourse runs as follows: if it is possible to ascribe a pure volition to a particular metaphorical creation, then a unique perspective can be said to adhere to the subject who freely devises the comparison. If, on the other hand, the act of establishing a metaphorical link were contaminated by the contiguity of a neighboring influence, then the individual subjectivity ostensibly manifest in the metaphor would in fact derive from a mere environmental contingency and not from an essential perspective on the world. For Marcel, the metonymic association upsets the ideal of an authentic artistic perspective that the metaphorical creation—the beloved stylistic device incanted throughout the *Recherche*—exemplifies. A palpable anxiety exists for Marcel that the self may derive its solidity from the contingencies of spatiotemporal associations rather than from inherent expression. The incipit itself dramatizes the act of awakening to one's subjectivity as a complete dependency on the objects which populate one's bedroom and which alone allow an exit from the interstitial maelstrom of half-sleep.

De Man redeploys the Proustian dichotomy of metaphor and metonymy in the intention to say something about textual contiguity rather than phenomenal proximity. If, in Marcel's world (or the one that critics ascribe to Proust's "Raumgeist" and "Zeitgeist"[122]), metonymies are phenomenal because expressions of spatial contiguity, objects that enter one's ken and give rise to contingent associations, de Man makes the much more modest observation that words on a page possess a proximity all their own. Whereas Proustian discourse thematizes metonymic associations as phenomenal-spatial contiguities, de Man

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[122] Joshua Landy, *Philosophy as Fiction: Self, Deception, and Knowledge in Proust* (New York: Oxford UP, 2004), 74.

ascribes a different notion to proximity, endowing the term with a textual signification that intends not only to diverge from studies of Proustian space but also to uproot the very possibility of securing assertions about spatiotemporal cognition.

However, it would be a mistake to assume that de Man's reading of the Recherche (and metaphor) diverges from Proust, though it certainly is not "Proustian" in the lineage of critics who interpret the novelist's thematics. The *Recherche* certainly thematizes and is about spatial contiguity, but, as we have already observed, themes are of the order of metaphor, since the language which thematizes must claim a resemblance between its singularity and the thematic as an expression of universality. It would therefore be easy to entertain the false notion that de Man's reading of Proust were in fact an imposition on the text, a rejection of thematics for a linguistic analysis. In fact, it is the contrary, since a merely thematic reading follows the substitutive, metaphorical movement of the text while neglecting the metonymic, material contiguities which effectuate these transports of metaphor. A thematic reading is unbeknownst to the author of it, purely, yet insufficiently, linguistic: it is metaphorical.

De Man does not therefore contradict Proust but rather counters the received notions that circulate as Proustian and which a tradition of phenomenological critics have canonized under the novelist's name. To let Proust be himself would (to follow Blanchot) allow his work be read in its overwhelming decisive-ness: a potentiality to not only be partitioned in the precision of its linguistic particularity but necessarily also to allow that scission of indetermination. De Man remains faithful to Proust by eschewing easy metaphorical substitutions, paraphrastic re-phrasings, and phenomenological abstractions which would produce deterministic interpretations but not undecidable readings. Whereas

interpretations are deterministic in the substitutive movement of metaphor, readings stunt determination because metonymies do not produce a crossing or transport. They instead cut away spaces of signification and open up indeterminacies.

This is the motivation behind de Man's choice of analyzing metaphor in Proust. As Geoffrey Hartmann notes, deconstruction demonstrates that "there are no dead metaphors."[123] In other words, there exist no metaphors whose signifying determinations are not rooted in a material substratum, the metonymic. Thus, when de Man employs the Proustian discursive term of metonymy, he does not seek to subscribe to a highly codified understanding of metonymic relations but rather intends to mobilize the term as a denotation of contiguity conceived in the logic of its signification. (Similarly, de Man terms grammar an isotope of logic simply because it follows a mechanical pattern analogous to the grammatical system.) Metonymy follows a relational logic of contiguity, which itself can refer to spatial bordering, psychological association, or textual juxtaposition. Common to all three is the relational character, Object A compares to Object B through a bordering relation in contradistinction to the transport, or leap, of metaphor. De Man sheds the husk of phenomenal connotations at play in Proustian discourses which claim either spatial bordering or psychological association, since both are, at bottom, metonymically related to textual juxtaposition. They are all related in that no substitution or selection need take place to effectuate them, in contradistinction to metaphor, which requires the aesthetic generality inherent in any act of resemblance. Metonymies have no pretense to resemblance or aesthetic ideology; on the contrary, they are powerless to make referential claims, mired in the contingency of their existence. Where metaphors effect a signifying

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[123] Geoffrey Hartman, "Looking Back on Paul de Man," in *Reading de Man Reading*, ed. Lindsay Waters and Wlad Godzich (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 19.

determination, metonymies depend on a specific parsing, a scission but no determinable decision, or paradigmatic selection.

De Man's precise reading analyzes Proustian discourse more faithfully than even the critics do themselves. That is, de Man is the one who takes the most precise measure of Poulet's formulation in Proustian Space: "The Proustian universe is a universe in pieces, of which the pieces contain other pieces, those, also, in their turn, other pieces."[124] Whereas Poulet's modus operandi of criticism proceeds by a paraphrastic discussion on the level of themes (the thematic *découpage* across Proust's entire œuvre), de Man applies Proustian insights about fragmentation to the act of reading itself. Granted, Poulet does seek to describe Proust's thematic of fragmentation with precision: "To the dividing of beings into fractions there is added the parceling out of things, of works, and even of thoughts."[125] However, why stop short at thoughts and not, as de Man will do, continue on to words (gram) and phonemes (*torr-* of *torride*)?

To preempt any objection to this discourse of fragmentation as local to a particular historical moment, let us address the historicist's objection. As in all historicist gestures, one parades a dismissal of the discourse as a historical manifestation. From this hypothetical standpoint that the discourse is contingent to a specific time and place, the historicist subsequently works backward to find (or invent, for the distinction is moot) the factors (*Wirkende*) which would convincingly determine the object as it is hypostasized by the hypothesis. Although fragmentation was a concern of such spatiotemporally disparate discourses as found in the Greek atomists, the tikkun of Walter Benjamin and the diagnosis of the "decadent" French *fin de siècle* by Paul Bourget, the historicist must discard this

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[124] Georges Poulet, *Proustian Space*, trans. Elliott Coleman (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1977), 39.
[125] Ibid., 38.

inconvenient truth. Paradoxically, the historicist ignores the breadth of the apparatus which he wields: history. After having selected (or imposed) a time and place for the conditioning of the discourse, one provides an account. To cite one of the most salient critics of fragmentation as a historical phenomenon, let us examine Paul Bourget's definition of decadence in its valorization of the fragment:

> [u]n style de décadence de est celui où l'unité du livre se décompose pour laisser la place à l'indépendance de la page, où la page se décompose pour laisser la place à l'indépendance de la phrase, et la phrase pour laisser la place à l'indépendance du mot.[126]

Bourget assumes the *a priori* unity of the book and from this point of departure, subsequently derives his formulation of the decadent turn toward the independence of the word. In this genetic account, the independence of the word is claimed as a consequence of the decadent period's overweening effect on literary style. A less naive and polemical account would neither grant Bourget's historical hypothesis nor his claim about reading. The act of reading never commences with an *a priori* understanding of the unity of a text, unless it be a thematic derived from received canonical notions, the sacralized conception of a text as an articulated original. All canonizations of a text represent the fiction of its articulation. Where it is claimed that the text derives from an already understood context, this signifies a hermeneutic project of contextualization. For de Man, however, hermeneutics runs up against an impasse in that it has no natural affinity with a poetics which it depends upon for signification; indeed, the two spell a disjunction insofar as practice bears out their ineluctable incompatibility. Nevertheless, hermeneutics depends

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[126] Paul Bourget, "Charles Baudelaire," in *Essais de psychologie contemporaine*, ed. Alphonse Lemerre (Paris: Plon 1885), 25.

upon recourse to poetics for the way in which it can signify.[127] This is an analogous

pressure to that of metonymy on metaphor, where the precise dependence of metaphorical

structures on metonymic ones resists any totalize-able account. It turns out that de Man's

debate over metonymy and metaphor plays for very high stakes.

Localizing de Man's Encounter with Genette

Preceding de Man's intervention in "Reading (Proust)," metonymy and metaphor

were conceptualized discretely. The theoretical breakthrough in de Man's problematization

was to demonstrate that the logic of metonymy is, to borrow Proust's term, a contagion.

However, it is no longer a contagion on the level of subjective perception but rather on the

level of its bare logic which undermines the assumption that metonymy and metaphor can

function as discrete instantiations. The swan song to the strict division between metonymic

and metaphorical structures, Gérard Genette's *Figures III* carried out a rigorous study of

Proustian metonymy and metaphor. De Man contends that Genette assumes "the combined

presence... of paradigmatic, metaphorical figures with syntagmatic, metonymic structures ...

descriptively and nondialectically without considering the possibility of logical tensions."[128]

As de Man observes, Genette holds that despite the "perilous shuttle between metaphor

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[127] "When you do hermeneutics, you are concerned with the meaning of the work; when you do poetics, you are concerned with the stylistics or with the description of the way in which a work means. The question is whether these two are complementary, whether you can cover the full work by doing hermeneutics and poetics at the same time. The experience of trying to do this shows that it is not the case. When one tries to achieve this complementarity, the poetics always drops out, and what one always does is hermeneutics. One is so attracted by problems of meaning that it is impossible to do hermeneutics and poetics at the same time..... The two are not complementary, the two may be mutually exclusive in a certain way." De Man, "Task of the Translator," 88.
[128] De Man, "Semiology and Rhetoric," 7.

and metonymy" in the Recherche, there persists a "solidity of the text."[129] Genette demonstrates that although Marcel explicitly valorizes metaphor over metonymy, the former depends upon the latter through a "detonation" effect in which the final arrival of metaphorical revelation is determined by a chain of metonymic associations, each one unleashing the following one in a logic of contiguity. Hence, Genette terms this a "système de ressemblance par contagion."[130] Genette is precise in that he painstakingly traces the metonymic chain from one contiguous metonymy to the next, even claiming to witness the progression over six pages of the *Recherche*.[131] Here he is on the verge of a revelation of textual contiguity (rather than diegetic juxtaposition) in gesturing toward the "espace du texte" and "les mots liés." He neglects, however, to take the logical sequitur which would stage the space of the text not as determining the diegesis (which, as in film discourse, signifies a phenomenal world) but as overdetermining it, and this because he misconceives precision as leading to a decision of semantic determination rather than in its Blanchotian overwhelming decisiveness. Genette still closes off figures in a neat semiotic analysis.

In particular, Genette still conceives of metaphor and metonymy as discrete figures rather than in a more collusive relationship. Therefore, for Genette, the metonymic "contagion" remains ultimately contained in that the reader can identify it in such a way as to render its instantiations as discrete, partitioned along atomistic lines. Whereas Genette follows the metonymic-metaphorical binary chain, de Man traces the much more disturbing

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[129] Gérard Genette, *Figures III* (Paris: Édition du Seuil, 1972), 72.
[130] Ibid., 44.
[131] Genette follows the progression: "...la longueur même de tels effets (six pages, en l'occurrence) et la façon dont ils s'étendent de proche en proche à un nombre croissant d'objets ... finissent par donner au lecteur l'illusion d'une continuité, et donc d'une proximité, entre comparant et comparé, là où il n'y a que multiplication de leurs point d'analogie et consistance d'un texte qui semble se justifier (se confirmer) par sa prolifération même." Genette, *Figures III*, 54.

tensions that result when rhetoric deflects[132] from grammatical patterns of cognition. For de Man, rhetoric's disjunctive rapport with grammar is not constituted by the neat divisions which Genette draws in *Figures III*. Analogously, metonymy cannot accurately be conceptualized as a succession of discrete terms in a chain but rather must occur simultaneously with metaphor in the "tourniquet" or whirligig of simultaneity. Metaphor is dependent on metonymy not within the diegetic narrative—for this spells a return to the phenomenalism of which Genette can be accused—but rather within the spatial movement of reading a text. Metonymic logic does not simply configure phenomenal perception in a diegetic narrative, nor can it be read exclusively as the parsing of discrete signifiers. Reading is a movement that is always metonymic spatially in that its contagion spreads beyond the mere word to infect textual contiguity, syntagma, *tout court*. What de Man interrogates for the first time, is the degree to which the logic of syntagma is parasitic on our attempts at establishing paradigms of understanding.

Reading thus no longer determines but overdetermines, cutting simultaneously in (at least) two directions. There is the disjunction along grammatical versus rhetorical lines, as well as the collapsing of syntagmatic-metonymic and paradigmatic-metaphorical axes. Rhetoric could not exist without grammatical patterns of the sentence form, just as metaphorical paradigms of selection depend on syntagmatic structures of combination. Any ostensible metaphorical selection of Marcel can be shown in fact to derive from the mechanical workings of metonymy, conceived not in the discrete sense but in the logic of contiguity that links syntagma. Analogously, the grammatization of rhetoric and the rhetorization of grammar do not produce binary divisions which establish clear lines of

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[132] Deflection is a rhetorical concept developed by Kenneth Burke that de Man mobilizes in his work, most explicitly in his own resonant term, "disjunction."

demarcation. "The couple grammar/rhetoric" is "certainly not a binary opposition since they in no way exclude each other."[133] Therefore reading precisely involves following the retorse movement that could best be conceived of as a splitting or cut. That is, it is inaccurate to proffer a model of temporal succession from one discrete model to another (grammar *or* rhetoric, metaphor *or* metonymy), as if one semantic consideration could take place without the other's presence. On the contrary, de Man is insistent that we cannot "in any way make a valid decision as to which of the readings can be given priority over the other; none can exist in the other's absence."[134]

This is the dilemma that arises when reading Proust's cliché. Or to speak more precisely, it is the retorse movement that Proust himself orchestrated by authoring the Recherche. What Genette ignores, and what de Man highlights, is an analogous sense of contiguity rendered present by following the rhetorical thrust of the passage (and neglected by a simple grammatical non-reading[135] as performed in *Figures III*). The rhetorical thrust hinges on the work of certain figures to successfully function and achieve the figural transports intended. One of those crucial figures, or cornerstones, which de Man seizes upon is a specific cliché in the Proust passage whose burdens, as we shall witness, are manifold.

As Nietzsche wrote of truth, a cliché is a metaphor but a smoothed and polished one, the paradigmatic selection of its coinage flattened out by good currency, frequent exchange. De Man follows in the line of Nietzsche when he states that "every word is a prejudice"; both thinkers interrogate the falsifying abstraction which all hypostasis produces. Indeed,

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[133] De Man, "Resistance to Theory," 12.
[134] Ibid., 12.
[135] Ibid., 17.

as de Man notes, "all figures" occur "in the guise of a cliché or convention."[136] A cliché is a conditioned selection of which the traces of its conditioning have been effaced by time and usage. Marcel's cliché analyzed by de Man can thus be viewed as a challenge to the semiotic reading which would have sought to isolate the paradigmatic from the syntagmatic. If Marcel wishes to isolate the selection of a metaphor from the syntagmatic conditioning of metonymy, he plays the same role as the semiotician who invests in a model of distinct axes for paradigms and syntagma. De Man demonstrates that in point of fact, the act of reading precisely always manifests the logic of cutting syntagma, that the syntagmatic derives ultimately from a system of contiguity, not merely parsed by grammar but also divided by rhetoric's own capacity to splice semantic units. Whereas Genette views metonymies as arranged purely along a syntagmatic arrangement of grammatical patterns, de Man extends the notion of syntagma to condition even the paradigmatic unit, the metaphor.

Cutting the Atom - Proust's cliché

That infamous cliché-metaphor, one in a series of allergens provoking resistance in readers of de Man,[137] is none other than "torrent d'activité." What could possibly be the stakes in this seemingly innocuous metaphor? First, as a canned expression, the cliché is indeed a dozing metaphor. It proves tempting to view it as a single semantic unit signifying "muchness of activity," since its figural meaning has cast the literal, qualitative meaning of torrent (a cool stream) to oblivion, leaving merely the figure of amplitude. However, de

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136 De Man, "Hypogram and Inscription," 47.
137 J. Hillis Miller, "Paul de Man as Allergen," in *Material Events: Paul de Man and the Afterlife of Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), 197-198.

Man observes that "torrent d'activité" is in fact being pulled in two semantic directions, pressured to adopt contradictory attributes.

Yet the mobilization intended by the rhetoric of the passage is not disjunction but unification. Dramatized by de Man as the "one single chain"[138] capable of reconciling "imagination and action" and of resolving "the ethical conflict that exists between them," the metaphor should ostensibly link the cool sheltered bedroom where Marcel reads and the outside world of activity and warmth to which his grandmother is incessantly urging him. That is its rhetorical function: "torrent d'activité" is mobilized to relay the warmth of the outside world of activity to the cool bedroom, just as "repose supports action" in Proust's image of "the quiet of a hand, held motionless in the middle of a running brook."[139] For the rhetorical thrust of the passage to succeed, or for the successful linking of the cool repose of the room and the workaday activity outdoors, recourse to aesthetic images must take place (as they must in any text), and the one that Proust has Marcel choose must be a metaphorical one, selected (on the paradigmatic axis) at will and uncontaminated by syntagmatic conditioning, the metonymic contagions theorized by Proustians. If it can be shown that the metaphor is not a product of un-coerced selection, then it cannot effectuate the transport because it would be of the contingent-metonymic order rather than the metaphorical-necessary one. More significantly for the meta-narrative of the novel, it would signify a case of the praxis of the text (its *aesthesis*) contradicting its expressed theory.

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138 De Man, "Reading (Proust)," 66.
139 Ibid., 65.

De Man demonstrates that this contradiction is indeed present. As he states, the metaphor "torrent d'activité" is "at least doubly metonymic."[140] It remains thoroughly contingent

> because the coupling of two terms, in a cliché, is not governed by the "necessary link" of resemblance (and potential identity) rooted in a shared property, but dictated by the mere habit of proximity (of which Proust, elsewhere, has much to say), but also because the reanimation of the numbed figure takes place by means of a statement ("running brook") which happens to be close to it, without however this proximity being determined by a necessity which would exist on the level of a transcendental meaning.[141]

So let us give account of de Man's identification of the double metonymy, remaining cognizant of the Proustian discourse of metonymic contagion and the analogous conditioning that syntagma can (but should not) effect on the paradigmatic selection of metaphor. Marcel has chosen a metaphor, certainly, but wittingly or unwittingly (Proust wrote it, that's all we can verify), it happened to be divisible into two self-contained syntagma (torrent + activité), a metonymy by contiguity broadly conceived as unmotivated since its clichéd meaning has rendered the juxtaposition of the terms contingent rather than necessary. Whenever I choose to employ the cliché "torrent d'activité," the two terms come bundled, inseparable, as is. In such a case, I would have chosen, for all intents and purposes, a given. The tensions are just beginning to take hold.

The passage burdens the reader (in contradistinction to the interpreter's assured poise) at each step with an overwhelming decisiveness sans decision. Is "torrent d'activité" ultimately a metaphor, as Marcel's discourse would have it? Does it satisfy the condition of being unconditioned, of a necessity purified of contingency? As de Man demonstrates, no,

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[140] The "at least" in de Man's lexicon serves as an expression of the potentiality of language we have already broached.
[141] De Man, "Reading (Proust)," 66.

not precisely, or to be precise, not determinately. The "masquerade"[142] of metaphors serves to disguise a florid play of metonymies. Unlike in Genette's semiotic account of the metonymic contagion of metaphor, de Man's deconstructive reading remains undecided as to precisely how metonymy acts on the metaphorical "torrent d'activité." If "torrent d'activité" is to function as a cliché (the dozing metaphor, signifying amplitude), it is metonymic because it manifests a linkage of two syntagma joined at the hip, so to speak. On the other hand, if it is to function as a reawakened metaphor (signifying the coolness of the stream), it does so at the behest of the "running brook" textually contiguous to it, and therefore, also is metonymically conditioned. Metonymy is thus present in both cases, concomitantly producing ("at least" two) disjunctive semantic lines.

"Torrent d'activité" is pulled in at least two semantic directions because the aesthetic, or literal, images of the passage emphasize the coolness of a literal torrent, a stream, while the rhetorical thrust awakens the dozing metaphorical meaning, the heat of activity (which, de Man observes, "can"[143] be heard in the etymological resemblance of torride). What de Man means by the aesthetic here is simply the imagistic evocations of the language. Grammar and rhetoric must uphold the structure of the aesthetic. Thus, for de Man, the rhetorical dimension of language cannot be ignored. However, this does not imply that rhetoric is a discrete mode that the reader could neatly extricate from the aesthetic or grammatical functioning of language. Both aesthetic and rhetorical dimensions are constitutive simultaneously of reading, but as we have seen, the precise account of their disjunction remains undecidable, overwhelmingly so.

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[142] De Man, "Reading (Proust)," 67.
[143] Again, de Man gestures toward the infinite potentiality in language.

The Logic of Disjunction

De Man registers Burke's coinage of deflection and re-conceives it as disjunction. Disjunction recurs in de Man's work, in different contexts, but takes a different approach than deflection, "any slight bias or unintended error" in Burke's definition.[144] De Man is clear that intentionality is a function of semantics rather than of a phenomenological subject, as in Husserl.[145] Themes, as we have observed, belong to the order of metaphor insofar as they abstract from the particularity of their instantiation in order to resemble other textual thematics. Yet the fact that themes are instantiated in the particularity of their textual inscription places them firmly in the contingency of localized, metonymic relations rather than the universal of a thematic. Disjunction works by the logic of metonymy in that it delineates the metaphorical from the metonymic at the moment and place of inscription. De Man is the theorist of the disjunction or cut, because he demonstrates that theory (*theoria*) and praxis (*aesthesis*) can be shown to diverge at every juncture, at every place where we might make an inquiry, or at every incision we might perform at a text's 'cornerstone'.[146] The cornerstone can be any stone of a text because textual articulation is a superimposition insofar as it can always be shown that it imposes a sacred aura on what

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[144] De Man, "Semiology and Rhetoric," 8.

[145] De Man, "Task of the Translator," 94.

[146] "'[D]efective cornerstone'… seems to neatly describe the double action of de Man's critical incisions. Like a cornerstone these episodes are seemingly unimportant or marginal, pushed to the side or hidden from view. However, the cornerstone is in fact the most important stone, the one around which all the other stones are placed, the stone which supports the entire house. Yet, this is a 'defective' cornerstone, i.e., one that will cause the house to fall down. Its position is precarious and unstable, ready to fall at the slightest push. The reader would aid the work of the defective cornerstone by exerting leverage against the entirety of the architectonic system. That is to say, the reader follows the work of the text's own deconstruction rather than pushing from the outside. For de Man, every stone is a defective cornerstone." Martin McQuillan. *Paul de Man (Routledge Critical Thinkers)*, (London: Routledge, 2001), 36.

the brute, prosaic material inscription. If the de Manian text were a body, it would consist exclusively of joints.

On the other hand, when the parsing of language serves as an instrument toward a semantic determination, then the fragmentation of linguistic structures in their potentiality is covered over by the aim of articulation. Hermeneutics may be the most patent example of this, as it ultimately attempts to do away with reading altogether. Just as poetics must "intervene... like computation in algebraic proof," reading for hermeneutics "is a means toward an end."[147] That end, in the hermeneutic process (or the commonsensical notion of reading) is to parse signifiers in the service of meaning or understanding. Thus, articulation is at the behest of meaning in Gadamer's discourse describing the act of parsing:

> It is instructive to recall what in Latin class was called "construing," an art one learned in connection with parsing Latin prose: The student must look for the verb and then the subject, and from there articulate the whole collection of words until elements that at the outset seemed disparate suddenly come together into a meaning. Aristotle once described the freezing of a liquid when it is shaken as a *schlagartigen Umschlag*, a sudden reversal that comes like a blow from without. It is like this with the blow-like suddenness of understanding, as the disordered fragments of the sentence, the words, suddenly crystallize into the unity of a meaning of the whole sentence.[148]

Although Gadamer merely describes grammatical parsing, he construes it as a description of the understanding. Words are the smallest unit, sentences the largest: articulation here signifies grammatical coherence and nothing beyond. However, the easy conflation of Gadamer's between grammar and the hermeneutic understanding evinces that indeed, as de Man observes, the grammatical model conveys unproblematically the assumption of a cognition. De Man's questioning of the problematic nature of grammar as cognition has its

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[147] De Man, "Reading and History," in *The Resistance to Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 56.
[148] Gadamer, "Text and Interpretation," 48.

predecessor in Nietzsche's own investigations, which themselves can be traced back to Eduard von Hartmann's *Philosophie des Unbewussten* (1869). However, as Christian J. Emden explains, the lineage of a critique of grammar as an explanatory model for cognition can be traced even further back:

> In his 1722 prize-winning essay on the origin of language, for example, Herder notes that grammar represents a philosophy about language—that is, that it should be regarded as a fundamental link between the internal association of mental images and the external combination of sounds that make up speech, for it explains the logical functions underlying linguistic utterances.[149]

Now Gadamer does not advance the positive claims of Herder, of course. Instead, he merely assumes that indeed the understanding is structured at the level of the *Satz*, as both grammatical sentence and theorem or statement. If grammatical articulation can be construed as understanding, then parsing will indeed only take place at the level of the word and language thereby is reduced to an instrument of meaning. The transcendental understanding necessarily conditions the parsing of signifying units.

For de Man, however, articulation, that which joints signifying units, cannot but serve as an imposition. The history of literary criticism bears this out, as it can accurately be characterized as a contention over interpretation of the consistency of a work, disagreements over competing accounts of closure to its figural systems. De Man's counter-project, as he once affirmed in an interview with Robert Moynihan, to "take the divine out of reading" seeks to demonstrate, on the contrary, that onomastic hypostases, or all conceptual canonizations falsely, insofar as metaphorically, endow literary texts with the consistency of a statement. If a statement provides a semantic determination, then it is on

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[149] Christian J. Emden, *Nietzsche on Language, Consciousness and the Body* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2005), 79.

the side of figuration; a reading, on the contrary, undoes the interpretive gesture by demonstrating the figuration (the conditioning) of the figural.

Reading thus works by a metonymic logic that opens up rather than hems in. Metonymic logic works by the opening scission in contradistinction to the closing determination of metaphor. What metonymy achieves is a delineation in place of a metaphorical determination. As Derrida writes,

> The incision of deconstruction, which is not a voluntary decision or an absolute beginning, does not take place just anywhere, or in an absolute elsewhere. An incision, precisely, it can be made only according to lines of force and forces of rupture that are localizable in the discourse to be deconstructed.[150]

For Derrida, as for de Man, the rupture that deconstructive reading enacts must occur through a precise incision that opens the border between the voluntariness of an interpretive decision and the texture of the text. There is, to quote de Man, "a difficult-to-control borderline (or lack of it) between the aesthetics of *homo ludens* and the literal incisiveness of *Wortwitz*."[151] If the intentionality of *homo ludens* cannot be distinguished from the impersonality of the tropological word as *Wortwitz*, then it is not 'man' who intends nor his semantic determinations which determine but rather tropes in their overdetermining incision which produce the illusion of discourse.

In a deconstructive reading, no imposition is made because, as we have observed in de Man's analysis of the Proustian cliché, the incision is made precisely "according to the lines of force and forces of rupture" constituted by a fabric of grammatical, rhetorical, metonymical and metaphorical patterns. These localizable disjunctions do not serve as an overlay on the text but rather constitute its very fabric. Thereby, the irrefutability of de

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[150] Derrida, *Positions*, 82.
[151] De Man, "Reading and History," 66.

Manian readings stems from the localizable encounter de Man orchestrates with a given pattern, as that which gives to be read. It is never the application of an interpretive overlay which could be identified from outside and therefore disputed on other terms; rather, it manifests an open encounter with the "lines of force" that constitute the texture of the text. Although de Man takes recourse to historical discourses in their availability (as every author must), it is instead the logical tensions thereby exposed which constitute the reading. It is therefore irrelevant the historical distinctions between metonymy and metaphor which de Man utilizes, as his argument hinges on the logical structure of the division rather than a semiotician's partisanship. As such, it remains a suspect task to historicize (away) de Man's analyses for the simple reason that they do not hinge upon a broadly historical discourse but rather on the demonstrable, logical tensions which separate out by following lines of force of discursive engagement *tout court*. The precision of de Manian reading derives from a localizable set of tensions, so that any attempt, in turn, to localize his work can at best produce a verbatim account of its operations. However, since a resolution of logical tensions does not obtain by accounting for de Man's readings, no hypostasized textual object finally results. When an aporia is registered, named as such, this does not produce a substantive object of understanding but rather a notation of its absence.

Interpretation, in its mediatory logic, requires a delimited entity, an object, which can in turn be swept up in the whirl of mediated movements. Mediation does indeed produce movement, the power to develop as *dynamos*. However, its diachronic movement obeys formal strictures that render it incapable of taking up that which cannot be reduced to a "thing" reified in its thingness. De Man enters this discourse of hypostasis of literary

works through American New Criticism. The hypostasis of the literary text as a generic "artwork" (ignoring its textual form) was initially resisted by the American New Critics. Namely, Wimsatt and Beardsley made a significant contribution by uncovering the "intentional fallacy" behind conceptualizing literary works as objects endowed from an author to an audience. Wimsatt conceives the literary work as an act (rather than as an object) which can only subsequently be hypostasized for a critical evaluation of it. However, de Man contends that even the New Critics did not interrogate the metaphor which likens the literary text to a natural object: ""Intent" is seen, by analogy with a physical model, as a transfer of a psychic or mental content that exists in the mind of the poet to the mind of a reader, somewhat as one would pour wine from a jar into a glass."[152] On the contrary, for de Man, intention itself is always an *a priori* structured entity: "The structural intentionality determines the relationship between the components of the resulting object in all its parts."[153] What de Man only suggests at the end of this essay is the nascent insight of structuralism pushed to its inevitable conclusion: that the structure is always overdetermined in such a precise way that the parts themselves split off in a "negative totalization" which he endows with the term allegory.

Allegory, Disjunction, Precision

Allegory for de Man serves as the quintessential expression of disjunction, of a splitting that does not offer itself to the exhaustive narrative of conceivable determinations.

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[152] Paul de Man, *Blindness and Insight* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1983), 25.
[153] Ibid., 25.

Developing out of of de Man's encounters in close reading, allegory's thematics can be glimpsed early on in Walter Benjamin's gloss of Baudelaire's own formulation:

> … palais neufs, échafaudages, blocs,
> Vieux faubourgs, tout pour moi devient allégorie…

Everything represented becomes something else in a disjunction that de Man cites in Benjamin's definition of allegory: a void "that signifies precisely the non-being of what it represents [italicization my emphasis]."[154] This precisely delineated split is always an unwitting one in that all texts disjoin the given aesthetic images (palais neufs, échafaudages, blocs, vieux fauborgs) from what this panorama gives to represent. Benjamin sets the stage for de Man's definition of allegory most explicitly in his work, *The Origin of the Tragic Drama*. Here he distinguishes, in a remarkably similar way to de Man, the disjunction between speech and inscription: "Spoken language is thus the domain of the free, spontaneous utterance of the creature, whereas the written language of allegory enslaves objects in the embrace of meaning."[155] What Benjamin claims for inscription is a sense of its autonomy beyond the *Lebenswelt* of speech and its "exposure, rashness, powerlessness before God; the written word [on the other hand] is the composure of the creature, dignity, superiority, omnipotence over the objects of the world."[156] While Benjamin's dialectic between speech and allegorical written language cannot be analyzed here, it also spells the "tense polarity" between that of de Man's inscription and effacement. What inscription gives to be read is precisely not what it represents. As de Man observed, the "here and now" inscribed on Hegel's piece of paper, meant to reify sense certainty, is "undeniable but totally blank" in the disjunction which "signifies precisely the non-being of

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[154] Paul de Man, *Blindness and Insight*, 35.
[155] Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, trans. George Steiner (London: Verso, 1998), 208.
[156] Ibid., 201.

what it represents." Benjamin also viewed the allegorical in the disjunction that language's

allegorical potential in its materiality gives to be read:

> Even in their isolation, the words [in baroque dramatist Gryphius' drama Calderón] reveal themselves as fateful. Indeed, one is tempted to say that the very fact that they still have a meaning in their isolation lends a threatening quality to this remnant of meaning they have kept. In this way language is broken up so as to acquire a changed and intensified meaning in its fragments. With the baroque the place of the capital letter was established in German orthography. It is not only aspiration to pomp, but at the same time the disjunctive, atomizing principle of the allegorical approach which is asserted here. Without any doubt many of the words written with an initial capital at first acquired for the reader an element of the allegorical. In its individual parts fragmented language has ceased merely to serve the process of communication, and as a new-born object acquires a dignity equal to that of gods, rivers, virtues and similar natural forms which fuse into the allegorical.[157]

If the letter, the figure for literalness itself, serves both Benjamin and de Man as the unit

before the word or 'gram,' then it is irreducible to communication and thereby threatens its

claim to language as primordially signifying, a prime logocentric assumption. We witness in

this passage of Benjamin the consolidation of a variety of de Manian themes discussed

earlier—disjunction, atomization, fragmentation—all as they function within a definition of

allegory.

As we have witnessed in Proust, even a scene of reading allegorizes the impossibility

of it, not thematically or aesthetically (for both are not only possible but also represented

in those passages of the *Recherche*) but rather in the interruption of a totalization which

would coalesce thematic, aesthetic, rhetorical and grammatical dimensions of the text. That

is, these dimensions would have to be logically consistent rather than merely ontically

present for the statement (*Satz*) to avoid being undone by the conflicting logic of its

referential performance. For de Man, inscription itself serves as the ontological opening for

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157 Benjamin, *Origin German Tragic Drama*, 208.

the ontic realm of reference and thus produces an interference (literally, a coming between its carrying) to the referential function.[158] Ultimately, inscription marks the irreducibility of language to reference. This endows allegory not with a positive statement about reference's aberration but renders the referential space itself as an effacement of the ontological precondition for its appearance. Statement is always undone by inscription.

Thus even a positive assertion about disjunction is not immune to the disjunctive movement of reading. Certainly Proust thematizes the flight of meaning, even incants it throughout the *Recherche*. De Man cites Albertine as a Proustian figure for fugitive semantics in her refusal to remain held captive for long. Yet, as we have just explained according to the ontological/ontic divide, even Proust's narrative portrayal of meaning as essentially fugitive, this theoretical statement (*Satz*) itself disjoins from his praxis of portraying it. "*A la recherche du temps perdu* narrates the flight of meaning, but this does not prevent its own meaning from being incessantly, in flight."[159] In this culminating phrase of the chapter on "Proust (metaphor)," de Man employs an asymmetrical chiasmus[160] to deny "the possibility of including the contradictions of reading in a narrative that would be able to contain them" and thereby concomitantly rejects the availability of a Proustian "negative epistemology." As we have seen with de Man's analysis of the Proustian cliché, the contradictions of reading are ultimately not totalize-able in an epistemology, let alone traceable as discrete determinations, because they cut lines of force, opening up disjunctions rather than circumscribing perimeters.

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[158] Wlad Godzich, foreword to *Resistance to Theory* ((Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), xvii.
[159] De Man, "Reading (Proust)," 78.
[160] The phrase invites the reader to perceive a chiasmus through the employment of the same vocabulary on both sides; at the same time, it ultimately denies the totalization that it gestures toward but deflects in the act.

Interpretation, in its mediating logic, requires a determined object whose borders are delimited, but a text disjoins in the non-coincidence of its theory and praxis. Every object qua object must be hemmed in by what it is not, delimited by the contradictions which give it form and thereby consistency. Pure indeterminacy, the Hegelian "night in which all cows are black" precludes identification and thus also recognition of object-ness. Interpretation, in its determinative capacity, stabilizes a text by closing off its dimensions and borders in a series of figures. In contrast, de Manian allegories narrate a deflection to the closure of interpretation, so that neither a text nor a deconstructive account of it may be hypostasized as an object but instead merely offer itself up to a subsequent deconstruction in an endless "stutter," "*piétinement*," or non-progression of reading.[161] De Manian deconstructive readings do not claim to "take up" an object (as hermeneutics postulates to do, based as it is in a phenomenology) but rather demonstrate that to read precisely results in the paradoxical production of the precise unaccountability of its determinations [*Wirkende*]. Precision thus enacts the opening up of a line, in contradistinction to a model of approaching correspondence, epistemological or intersubjective. And each subsequent reading of an initial deconstructive account, if executed with precision, splits the previous one along a newly iterative disjunction between theory and praxis.

What de Man restores to language by reendowing it with autonomy is a sense of linguistic potentiality suppressed by the contextualization of phenomenology, which places language always already within a "life world" [*Lebenswelt*] or the subset of this, the field of communicative events. Hermeneutics must "raise questions about the extralinguistic truth

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161 Paul de Man, "Anthropomorphism and Trope in Lyric," in *Rhetoric of Romanticism* (New York: Columbia UP, 1984), 254.

value of literary texts."[162] The evidence? Homer's textual reference to Achilles as a lion can only be understood as signifying his courage through the intuition that in the world, a transformation of species does not routinely occur, as it does in a metaphor.[163] Intuition based on a knowledge of the world must intervene in a hermeneutic understanding, which always transcends (i.e., ignores) the baffling overdetermination of reading an inscription. In contrast to this interventionist model of hermeneutics, de Man's autonomy of language grants itself "the potential, or power, not to relate (to something outside itself)—not to be determinable by something else, not to be ancillary to the phenomenal world."[164] Moreover, language's potential consists in more than mere autonomy (an assumption made by formalists of various stripes); it also realizes its capacity not merely to say alternative meanings but to state them simultaneously, inextricably, *in actu*. This simultaneity which characterizes the de Manian term allegory is given its full signification in Derrida's account, in which it

> represents one of language's essential possibilities: the possibility that permits language to say the other and to speak of itself while speaking of something else; the possibility of always saying something other than what it gives to be read, including the scene of reading itself. This is also what precludes any totalizing summary—the exhaustive narrative.... I have thus always thought that de Man smiled to himself when he spoke of the narrative structure of allegory, as if he were secretly slipping us a definition of narration that is at once ironic and allegorical—a definition which, as you know, scarcely advances the story.[165]

De Manian allegory never advances the story because its temporality does not develop by a mediatory logic. Disjunction always spells an interruption to mediation, a splitting of the text itself. If the "exhaustive narrative" seeks to account for the extent of all possible

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[162] De Man, "Reading and History," 56.
[163] Ibid., 56.
[164] Gasché, *Wild Card*, 133.
[165] Jacques Derrida, *Memoires for Paul de Man*, trans. Cecile Lindsay, Jonathan Culler, Eduardo Cadava, Peggy Kamuf (New York: Columbia UP, 1989), 11.

determinations, it falls under the aegis of a temporal schema of hermeneutics, which privileges the bringing to presence of contradictions at the behest of the transcendental understanding.[166] In contrast, de Man's allegory does not proceed by alternative possibilities—that is, through a logic of discrete determinations in a temporal order of succession—but by the synchronicity, the "at once" of language's essential possibility to split, to say and also give to be read *in actu*. Precision in its most literal sense is not exhaustive but disjunctive, not an ontic temporal development as Chronos but a disjunctive, ontological temporality of Kronos.

Ultimately, allegory is the utmost expression of de Manian precision. To come full circle, to both follow Derrida's prosopoeia and link it to my own, to endow de Man with an expression and a voice beyond the grave, but to refuse him the interpretation of a tribunal (for hermeneutics begins in theology) and instead grant him a reading in the justice this would entail, I will conclude with the image of the Sphinx that, to return to the topic of this investigation, offered one of his utmost expressions of precision in its etymological root of *præcidere*, "to cut off." In the Baudelaire poem, "Spleen II," de Man notes the Hegelian transformation from the mind as recollection to pyramid and to sphinx:

> [t]he decapitated painter lies, as a corpse, in the crypt of recollection and is replaced by the sphinx, who, since he has a head and a face, can be apostrophized in the poetic speech of rhetorical figuration. But the sphinx is not the emblem of recollection but, like Hegel's sign, an emblem of forgetting. In Baudelaire's poem he is not just "oublié" but "oublié sur la carte," inaccessible to memory because he is imprinted on paper, because he is himself the inscription of a sign... He is the grammatical subject cut off from its consciousness, the poetic analysis cut off from its hermeneutic function, the dismantling of the aesthetic and pictorial world of "le soleil qui se couche" by the advent of poetry as allegory.[167]

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[166] Here, we can observe Hegel's pervasive, and self-acknowledged, influence on Gadamer.
[167] De Man, "Reading and History," 70.

De Man is this figure of the sphinx. His lesson was a riddle. He slipped us a definition of allegory because that was his essential thought: that reading always gives something else, as well, to read. Reading precisely, ultimately an oxymoron, cuts off in a disjunction that is itself not immune to further, but not corrective, precision.

CHAPTER 3

...I feel no need to move. All the intensities that I have are immobile intensities. Intensities distribute themselves in space or in other systems that aren't necessarily in exterior spaces. I can assure you that when I read a book that I admire... I really get the feeling of passing into such states. Never could traveling inspire such emotions.[168]

        Deleuze, *Gilles Deleuze from A to Z*

...what matters is not at all the relative slowness of the becoming-animal; because no matter how slow it is, and even the more slow it is, it constitutes no less an absolute deterritorialization of the man in opposition to the merely relative deterritorializations that the man causes to himself by shifting, by traveling; the becoming-animal is an immobile voyage that stays in one place.[169]

        Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*

Reading with Pause and Muscles: Deleuze's Theatre of Sensation

If it is commonly recognized that the act of reading necessitates following ideas, then Gilles Deleuze must give us pause. Reading him must give us pause; in that cessation of movement, a transformation occurs. It might be called an encounter, a rencontre with the sign, though it could just as easily be endowed with some other name: sensation or the obstinacy of the thesis. Whatever term Deleuze, and we, may give to this pause, it stops us in our tracks, precisely because our tracks are what anyone might trace. If anyone might follow our tracks, then this evinces that indeed the universal has moved, not any particular. For Deleuze, reading must give pause in order to produce movement in and by us

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[168] *Gilles Deleuze from A to Z*, directed by Pierre-André Boutang (2004; Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2007), DVD.
[169] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, trans. Dana Polan (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986)

individually, to trigger thought and set alight lines of flight that reach out beyond subjectivity.

To "follow ideas" signifies more than simply the commonplace of recognizing the thrust of an argument; it implies the retracing of the idea's movement. The movement of the idea, idéo-motricité, is what Deleuze denigrates as abstract. In following ideas, the reader must recognize their movement in logic, link the logical determinations, a fourfold of mediating principles which govern the permissible moves. The idea submits itself to this government, this reigning in of movement, precisely because it remains abstract, propelled by no outside force and attaining only to the few steps logic permits it. Nothing forces it from outside, and reading the idea, following it, leads us along predictable paths. For Deleuze, then, reading, as an interpretive act, cannot proceed by such an act of recognition.

Reading cannot proceed by recognition for the same reason that philosophy should not. Deleuze manifests a strong suspicion of the notion of philosophia, of benevolence toward wisdom. Proust esteemed friendship lowly because friends agree about signification; and the most profound ideas produced by such relations could be entertained in tranquility. For Deleuze, the friend of wisdom also succumbs to the natural stupor of eternal possibility. The logic motored elenchus and the hermeneutic circle do not produce movement but leave it in centrifugal suspension.

This centrifuge provides no possibility of the fugitive, of the line of flight which might guarantee philosophy, and reading, not simply a new beginning as iteration of the form, but an entirely novel formation. "Pour moi, le système ne doit pas seulement être en perpetuelle hétérogénéité, il doit être une hétérogenèse, ce qui, il me semble, n'a jamais été

tenté."[170] Like the constellation of artistic and philosophical figures Deleuze encountered in his works, he himself gestured toward the production of novel forms of concept formation. Although he does not endorse a methodology of reading, his work abounds in the potentiality in what it might mean to read. This was an unformed concept that remains nascent in the work and requires an encounter of our own to actualize its potential.

Thus, my apprenticeship with Deleuze will seek to develop the possibility of a concept of reading that might merit the name Deleuzian. In my discussion, I will address a constellation of themes: interpretation of the sign; the point of departure in sensation and the affection image; and the theatre of reading.

The Sign

Supreme paradox: that the sign, that which gives us pause, might serve as the motor for thought! For Deleuze, thinking and reading are activities that begin when recognition ends. In some sense, this suggests a rapprochement between Deleuzian thought and deconstruction, but the differences between them are in fact significant. While Deleuze and the deconstructive projects of Derrida and de Man possess the same targets of critique, their praxes diverge.

> Quant à la méthode de déconstruction des textes, je vois bien ce qu'elle est, je l'admire beaucoup, mais elle n'a rien à voir avec la mienne. Je ne me présente en rien comme un commantateur de textes. Un texte, pour moi, n'est qu'un petit rouage dans une pratique extratextuelle. Il ne s'agit pas de commenter le texte par une méthode de déconstruction, ou par une méthode de pratique

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[170] Gilles Deleuze, preface to *Variations: La philosophie de Gilles Deleuze*, by Jean-Clet Martin (Paris: Éditions Payot & Rivages, 1993), 7.

textelle, ou par d'autres méthodes, il s'agit de voir à quoi cela sert dans la pratique extratextuelle qui prolonge le texte.[171]

Conceiving the text as a "rouage," the cog transmitting force to the wheel of movement, Deleuze views textuality itself as belonging to the explicated sign, the representation.

In Deleuze's model of the sign, there is a dynamism, a signing, an occurrence:

...nous appelons "signe" ce qui se passe dans un tel système, ce qui fulgure dans l'intervalle, telle une communication qui s'établit entre les disparates. Le signe est bien un effet, mais l'effet a deux aspects, l'un par lequel, en tant que signe, il exprime la dissymétrie productrice, l'autre par lequel il tend à l'annuler. Le signe n'est pas tout à fait l'ordre du symbole ; pourtant, il le prépare en impliquant une différence interne (mais en laissant encore à l'extérieur les conditions de sa reproduction).[172]

The sign fulgurates and, in this activity, communicates. The dynamism of the sign for Deleuze obeys a movement that he analogizes to both Leibniz and Heidegger's respective models, describing the endless "unfolds and folds" or "coextensive unveiling and veiling of Being, of presence and of withdrawal of being."[173] As Francois Dosse explains of Nietzsche's influence on Deleuze, "meaning is not part of an already present reservoir but is rather a produced effect...."[174]

It is the direct contrary in Deleuze's assessment of linguistic models:

Pour la linguistique, la langue est toujours un système en équilibre, dont on peut faire la science. Et la reste, sont mis a côté, pas de la langue mais de la parole. Quand on écrit, on sait bien que la langue est bien un système par nature loin de l'équilibre, c'est un système en perpétuelle déséquilibre, si bien qu'il n'y a pas de différence de niveau entre langue et parole, mais la langue est faite de toutes sortes de courants hétérogènes, en déséquilibres, les uns avec les autres.[175]

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[171] Gilles Deleuze, "Pensée nomade" in *L'île déserte et autres textes: textes et entretiens 1953-1974*, ed. David Lapoujade (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 2002), 363.

[172] Gilles Deleuze, *Différence et répétition* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1968), 174.

[173] Gilles Deleuze, *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*, trans. Tom Conley (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 30.

[174] François Dosse, *Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, Intersecting Lives*, trans. Deborah Glassman (New York: Columbia UP, 2010), 130.

[175] *A to Z*, Boutang.

If language manifests a dynamism, the sign has the capacity to produce movement as thought. The qualitative effects produced, however, depend on the type of sign. Since Deleuze does not subscribe to a methodology of reading, his taxonomy of signs must be understood in its service toward the development of concepts. It thus becomes instrumental for Deleuze to observe a classification of signs in Proust or to apply Peirce's semiotic taxonomy to the cinematic image.

In Proust, sign and interpretation effectuate a movement of reading. Deleuze finds a kindred thinker in Proust in that the latter develops his own antilogos of reading in *The Recherche*. If the logos proceeds by explicit determinations, Proust's characters are forced to interpret silently. Where the logos assumes that interlocutors possess a good will to truth, Proust's characters are driven to knowledge by an unwilled jealousy or paranoia, a misosophy as virulent as Hamlet's. Where logocentric philosophy circulates interminable possibilities for thinking, the Proustian sensation assaults the hero and effects an inescapable painful or joyous thought. Whereas the Platonist idea inhabits a transcendent realm, the Proustian artistic essence awaits the unfurling of the immanent folds of the *petits papiers japonais*.

Proustian signs of all types—love, worldliness, sensation and art—give food for thought and thus provoke an interpretation. The emblematic interpreter is Proust's spider-Narrator, on watch ("aux aguets") for the sign and driven to displacement by the slightest disturbance of his web. However, the spider-Narrator is also conceived of as a Deleuzian body without organs,[176] and what most moves such an interpreter is the sensory sign. The

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[176] Marcel never possesses the *right* organ, for instance, to kiss Albertine's cheek and simultaneously take in—visually, without the obstructing nose—the full experience promised by its anticipation.

sensation is the only sign that can dis-organize the interpreter insofar as it reveals that the faculties were never coordinated in such a way as to make reading a cognitive activity, any more than the diversity of sense experience could be synthesized under a single subject.

Sensation as the Point of Departure to Reading

The sensory sign possesses the unique capacity to disarticulate the coordination of the faculties implied in subjectivity. As the sensation addresses a single faculty, it does not limn the subject and an object but rather disarticulates subjectivity in an encounter. Reading, as interpretation, also has the potential to induce a non-recognition that deprives subjectivity the illusion it normally entertains in tranquility. This capacity of the sign was noted by Nietzsche, who applied the name of aesthetic to what Deleuze terms sensory. If the aesthetic-sensory sign communicates, it does so by de-individualizing the faculties to the point where they become indiscernible.

> The aesthetic state possesses a superabundance of means of communication, together with an extreme receptivity for stimuli and signs. It constitutes the high point of communication and transmission between living creatures—it is the source of languages. This is where languages originate: the languages of tone as well as the languages of gestures and glances. The more complete phenomenon is always the beginning: our faculties are subtilized out of more complete faculties. But even today one still hears with one's muscles, one even reads with one's muscles.[177]

For Nietzsche, the faculties, even one as putatively cognitive as reading, derive from the physiological stimuli of signs. The coordination of the faculties, itself under examination by Deleuze, finds a forerunner in Nietzsche, who conceives the act of reading thoughts as a

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[177] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, ed. Walter Kaufmann, trans. Walter Kaufmann and R.J. Hollingdale (New York: Vintage Books, 1968), 427-428.

retroactive and false movement: "One never communicates thoughts: one communicates movements, mimic signs, which we then trace back to thoughts [Man teilt sich nie Gedanken mit: man teilt sich Bewegungen mit, mimische Zeichen, welche von uns auf Gedanken hin zurückgelesen werden]."[178]

Just as reading thoughts is always a retracing [*zurückgelesen*] for Nietzsche, following the logical, semantic determinations of the idea remains secondary for Deleuze. When the sensation gives pause, this results not from a baffling of cognition in the way that reading exposes logical aporias for a deconstructionist of de Man's ilk. Though Deleuze possesses an analogous figure (in the "coexistence of contraries") for the sign, his concept of sensation uproots subjectivity as a consequence of disarticulating object-ness. The real power of sensation for Deleuze consists in its capacity to give way to a moment where the consistency of the objective world dissipates and a concomitant disorganization of the faculties ensues. In that moment of sensation, one reads with pause, with muscles.

On the other hand, object-ness for Deleuze remains impossible to extricate from an ideology of subjectivity predicated upon the coordination of the faculties, which ensures a common object and, in turn, a universalizable subject. The limning of this triad—object, faculties and subject—is explained by Deleuze as follows.

> [C]haque faculté a-t-elle des données particulières, le sensible, le mémorable, l'imaginable, l'intelligible..., et son style particulier, ses actes particuliers invesitssant le donné. Mais un objet est reconnu quand une faculté le vise comme identique à celui d'une autre, ou plutôt quand toutes les facultés ensemble rapportent leur donné et se rapportent elles-mêmes à une forme d'identité de l'objet. Simultanément la récognition réclame donc un principe subjectif de la collaboration des facultés pour "tout le monde", c'est-à-dire un sens commun comme concordia facultatum....[179]

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[178] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Der Wille zur Macht* (Leipzig: Alfred Kröner Verlag, 1930), 545.
[179] Deleuze, *Différence et répétition*, 174.

Object-ness remains a tenacious doctrine precisely because it insulates us in an insidiously commonsensical subjectivity. Although each faculty manifests a qualitative difference from the others, the presumption of a homogeneous object form binds them in a subject rather than leaving them differentiated and thus subject-less, particular to a singular rapport in an encounter. Thus, for Descartes to recognize wax as an object, he had to presume that the qualitatively distinct faculties of sight, touch, and imagination seize the same entity that he, as subject, presupposed from the beginning. The common object ensures the existence of a subject, and a universalizable one at that.

The circular movement of recognition is just as operative in Kant's first version of the transcendental deduction. While apprehension and reproduction synthesize a multiplicity into perceptible parts, perception must finally intervene in order for the recognition of an object to obtain. This is because, by themselves, sensations remain incapable of synthesizing an object. "It is rather perception as such that is constituted in such a manner that a sensible diversity is related to the form of an object (recognition)... In other words, it is not so much that I perceive objects; it is rather my perception that presupposes the object-form as one of its conditions."[180] That the act of presupposition serves as the foundation for philosophies of recognition can be observed as well in its role in the hermeneutic tradition.[181]

The sensation serves to countervail the commonsensical faith in object-ness, and its corollary, the act of recognition. The Deleuzian encounter consists in this unhinging, and

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[180] Daniel W. Smith, introduction to *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*, by Gilles Deleuze, trans. Daniel W. Smith (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), xvi.

[181] "[The hermeneutic] understanding, structured as ahead-of-itself, is nothing other than "presupposing."" Werner Hamacher. *Premises: Essays on Philosophy and Literature from Kant to Celan*, trans. Peter Fenves (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1996), 26.

the sign or sensation are the agent-provocateurs which force the rencontre. The two artistic models for Deleuze's sensation are Francis Bacon and Proust.

Sensation in Bacon

Bacon's contribution to the Deleuzian encounter is to conceptualize and incarnate a logic of sensation that eschews recognizable feelings for the affect, in which the representation of emotions are abandoned for the direct, unmediated shock of Figure on the nervous system. Bacon characterized modernity as valorizing "sensation without the boredom of its conveyance,"[182] thereby excising mediations in service of an immediacy of affect. For our purposes, Deleuze's characterization of Bacon's sensation corresponds with the encounter's disruption of a movement of consciousness. For Bacon, this disruption occurs in and by the image of immobility, a "movement "in-place," most emblematically portrayed in the spasm."[183]

"Movement "in-place"" is a term invoked in Deleuze's reading of Francis Bacon, whom he considers in rapport with the Proustian sensation. For Deleuze, the movement triggered by the sensation in both Proust and Bacon can best be characterized by the term "resonance." The image of two wrestlers, common to both Bacon and Eadweard Muybridge, emblematizes the struggle, as resonance, between two sensations wrestling each other in a Figure that consists in the irreducibility to either identity. Resonance is conceived by Deleuze as eschewing narrative or story, in the same way that Proust sought to erect a

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[182] *Francis Bacon*, directed by David Hinton (1985; Halle, Germany: Arthaus Musik GmbH, 2009), DVD.
[183] Gilles Deleuze, *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*, trans. Daniel W. Smith (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), 36.

Figure of figuration rather than narrate a series of characters in a novel. Bacon accomplishes an analogous goal with his tryptich that, for Deleuze, realizes this resonance in its alternative to narration:

> The triptych is undoubtedly the form in which the following demand is posed most precisely: there must be a relationship between the separated parts, but this relationship must be neither narrative nor logical. The triptych does not imply a progression, and it does not tell a story.[184]

Bacon's triptych, by adding an image of an attendant, complicates any narrative that might be establish between two of the figures; the third, possibly an observer, cannot however be identified as merely observing, as his status remains ambiguous, thereby dethroning the role of identities for the apotheosis (or fall, as it may be) of an autonomous rhythm. Deleuze's description of the phenomenon of the triptych resembles his discussion of the Proustian involuntary memory in the latter's divestment of identities for the productive character of time in its pure state.

> With the triptych, finally, rhythm takes on an extraordinary amplitude in a forced movement that gives it an autonomy and produces in us the impression of Time: the limits of sensation are broken, exceeded in all directions; the Figures are lifted up, or thrown in the air, placed upon aerial riggings from which they   suddenly fall. But at the same time, in this immobile fall, the strangest phenomenon of recomposition or redistribution is produced, for it is the rhythm itself that becomes sensation...[185]

Deleuze reads Bacon's triptych as manifesting a forced movement, an autonomous one, divested of a narrative productive of it: sensation without the conveyance. Figuring motion in rhythm without narrative movement, Bacon's sensation forces thought rather than follows it in a development of consciousness. Deleuze valorizes an impression, the sensation, of Time that eschews all indices of temporal movement. It is no longer about

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[184] Deleuze, *Logic of Sensation*, 58.
[185] Ibid., 61.

reading time in the abstract movement of narrative but being transported to a zone of indiscernibility.

Sensation in Proust

Proust provides Deleuze with an additional artistic proponent of *sensori-motricité*. Again, Deleuze will theorize the resonance in sensation in order to oppose it to the abstract movement of narration. Reading Proust, for Deleuze, does not consist in following a subject but instead submitting to the machinic order of intensities. In particular, sensation for Proust himself serves to obstruct readings that would proceed through a secondary movement of *idéo-motricité*. Proust's rejection of fin-de-siècle critics Goncourt and Sainte-Beuve provides an analogue to Deleuze's refusal to admit Hegel a mediation that might preserve a subjectivity communicable in universal terms. Kierkegaard offered a similar critique of Hegelian objective speculation that traffics exclusively in the static results which neglect an inward becoming.

In *Contre Sainte-Beuve*, a polemic against criticism's attempt at reconstituting the private writerly self of the author through accounts of his social persona, Proust privileged the insularity and incommunicability of sensation: "L'objet où elle se cache—ou la sensation, puisque tout objet par rapport à nous est sensation—, nous pouvons très bien ne le rencontrer jamais."[186] Proust provides a formative model for Deleuze's affront against the identitarian impulse to establish a shared object of recognition for a universalizable subject. He thereby also implicitly rejects the concept of a hermeneutic subject for whom

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[186] Marcel Proust, *Contre Sainte-Beuve*, in *Sur Baudelaire, Flaubert et Morand* (Brussels: Editions Complexe, 1987), 29.

the coordinated faculties reach consensus in the identification of a recognizable object of understanding. To reiterate, for Proust, our only rapport with the world ("objet matériel") exists through an incommunicable sensation.

In contrast, a phenomenological models, and phenomenologies of reading, conceive of rapports with an objective world consisting of objects that can be commonly perceived. For Deleuze, however, to presume that an object attains to an identity, fixed by the coordinated faculties, ignores that sensation, as our most direct rapport with the world, cannot on its own synthesize a sensible diversity. The sensation is privileged by Deleuze not because it accesses the object form but rather because it reveals object-ness itself as an abstraction from our sole rapport with the world, the diversity of sense experience which refuses the subjugation of its difference to the homogenizing act of recognition. The Proustian sensation does violence by undermining the presupposed coherence of the object, this for the sake of a *devenir-fou*. That transport ensues after the involuntary memory has broken Marcel's stupor of Habit. The "coexistence of contraries" which Deleuze theorizes in the cinematic affection image finds its Proustian analogue in the *devenir-fou* of the involuntary memory, triggered by sensation to reach beyond to what hides itself. The Proustian sensation serves not as a rapport with a delimited object but rather breaks with the limiting function of recognition altogether.

For Deleuze, neither the identities nor the resemblances of the madeleine episode offer a glimpse into the *puissance* of the experience because, as representations, they still obey the movement of logical contradiction that remains powerless to trace the genesis as force of production. On the other hand, difference as the productive genesis for the involuntary memory places the two temporal identities in a coexistence, a resonance, that

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only appears contradictory when judged by the criterion of the Same and the Similar, whose logic limits the *devenir-fou* of the rencontre. The Proustian encounter is motored by difference and thus allows for a coexistence of contraries that eschews the logical determinations of development and instead produces a "movement "in-place.""

The Affection Image

That movement can occur "in-place" may initially appear paradoxical, but it remains a figure for Deleuze, precisely in its potential to short-circuit the abstract development of narrative, as we have already witnessed in Bacon and Proust. If for Deleuze, resonance characterizes sensation in both Bacon and Proust, the cinematic affection image provides another figure that halts the identification of narrative, this time the narration of consciousness.

Perhaps the most illustrative example of the sign's immediacy as a counterpoint to dialectical mediations resides in Deleuze's cinematic reflections. In particular, Deleuze's insistence on the stubborn immediacy of the thesis finds an apt analogy in the affection image; while dialectical, abstract movement can be viewed in the montage that Eisenstein establishes in the 'pathetic'. The contrast lies between that image of emotion—the affect—which refuses the recognition of a particular emotional state and its contrary—the pathetic—which follows a recognizable progression of opposites toward a distinct reaction, a pathos. That distinction, between the affection image as sign on the one hand, and the montage of dialectical progression on the other, offers a sharp illustration of the differences

between Deleuze's valorization of real versus abstract movement, of immediacy versus mediation.

The affection image as close-up shot, in Bergman's "nihilism of the face" for instance, mimics the sign's disturbing unfamiliarity. Thus, Deleuze writes that in Bergman's *Persona* "the close-up does not divide one individual any more than it reunites two: it suspends individuation... At this point it no longer reflects nor feels anything, but merely experiences a mute fear."[187] The affection image's suspension of a recognizable feeling poses exactly that uncertainty which corresponds to the stubborn perseverance of the immediate in face of the negative. In this, the affection image resembles the sign's own disturbing unfamiliarity. In direct opposition, the Soviet montage of Eisenstein follows a mediated movement of oppositions in identifiable emotions: "From sadness to anger, from doubt to certainty, from resignation to revolt... The pathetic, for its part, involves these two aspects: it is simultaneously the transition from one term to another, from one quality to another, and the sudden upsurge of the new quality which is born from the transition which has been accomplished."[188] While the affection image persists obstinately in its immediacy by refusing to follow in the movement but rather violently suspend it, Eisenstein's 'pathetic' transitions through a series of oppositions of identifiable emotions, culminating in a recognizable trajectory that ultimately passes to "higher powers."

Thus Deleuze observes, "[i]f the pathetic is development, it is because it is the development of consciousness itself: it is the leap of the organic which produces an external consciousness of society and its history, of the social organism from one moment

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[187] Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 100.
[188] Ibid., 35.

to the next."[189] It is precisely in this relation that Deleuze's formulation of the pathetic

follows the Hegelian movement of Spirit.[190] In this, the pathetic manifests a resemblance to

an abstract movement in contradistinction to the real movement induced by the sign's

violence to thought. The affection image forces thought precisely to the extent that it

disrupts the predictable movement which the pathetic follows. Insofar as the affection

image refuses to be subsumed in the development and mediation of montage, it

simultaneously triggers thought, as opposed to simply following the logical movements of

consciousness (as the Hegelian *thèse* becomes swallowed up by the motions of *antithèse*

and *synthèse*). We therefore witness an essential contrast in Deleuze between thought and

consciousness, the former induced by the involuntariness of the sign and the latter

following the logic of oppositions embodied in concepts.

What the affection image effectuates is precisely the stubbornness that prevents it

from being swallowed up by a movement of concepts. The affection image as sign thus

provides for a beginning, a genesis, for thought in a way that the Hegelian movement of

contradiction does not. This genesis, or point of departure, that the sign inaugurates thus

provides a counterpoint to the opposition of recognizable identities of the Hegelian and

cinematic Soviet dialectic. If the pathetic, as dialectical montage, follows a movement of

transitions and development from one emotion to another, the affection image, like the

sign, halts that very motion because it refuses to proceed from one discrete identity to

another. Instead, the sign unhinges the chain of movement and, like the affection image,

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[189] Deleuze, *Movement-Image*, 36.
[190] "We have seen how Eisenstein, like a cinematographic Hegel, presented the grand synthesis of this conception: the open spiral with its commensurabilities and attractions. Eisenstein himself did not hide the cerebral model which drove the whole synthesis, and which made cinema the cerebral art par excellence, the internal monologue of the brain-world...." Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 210-211.

eliminates oppositional logic altogether. Thus, Deleuze writes that "[c]'est … la coexistence des contraires, la coexistence du plus et du moins dans un devenir qualitatif illimité, qui constitue le signe ou le point de départ de ce qui force à penser."[191] If thought derives its source from an outside force, then so must the act of reading.

The Movement of Reading: A New Point of Departure

Deleuze insists that movement must not only be reformulated but also reenacted in its very performance. This necessitates not only divesting movement of its abstract configuration as *idéo-motricité* but also reinvesting it with *sensori-motricité*. What implications does this have for the field of reading? I would suggest that it poses a problem with an immense potential for establishing a new concept of reading. This is because a Deleuzian reading would evade the reigning conceptual models we have as yet had at our disposal, be they phenomenological or deconstructive in orientation. As we will see, the privileging of *sensori-motricité* voids the possibility of establishing a phenomenology of reading, even as signs emerge from an extra-textual realm. However, simply because it resists phenomenologization does not imply that a Deleuzian reading would obey the purely textual determinations leading to the aporias of deconstruction. A Deleuzian reading would thus fall outside the scope of both phenomenologies of reading as well as of deconstruction.

Let us first address how, for Deleuze, reading contradicts the model at work in the phenomenology of reading. Deleuze shares with the phenomenology of reading an analysis

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[191] Deleuze, *Différence et répétition*, 184.

of extra-textual forces but denies the cognitive model that it installs and the abstract movement implied in its methods. To take perhaps the most illustrious example of a phenomenologist of reading, Georges Poulet subscribes to the general assumption that the reader could retrace the movement of the author's Cogito. For Poulet, we possess direct access to the author's thoughts as evinced in the œuvre. Hence, Poulet explains that the "la pensée critique devient la pensée critiquée."[192] A phenomenological reading can only merit the name if "elle réussit à re-sentir, à repenser, à re-imaginer celle-ci [la pensée critiquée] de l'intérieur."[193] As such, one must follow the "mouvement de l'esprit... car ce qui doit être atteint, c'est un sujet, c'est-à-dire une activité spirituelle qu'on ne peut comprendre qu'en se mettant à sa place et en lui faisant jouer de nouveau en nous son rôle de sujet."[194]

The Geneva School phenomenology of reading differs only in the details from *fin de siècle* critics Taine or Sainte-Beuve. Both schools place faith in the capacity to rethink, even "re-play" according to Poulet, a subjectivity represented in words, culled from a variety of textual sources, creative or biographical. The phenomenology of reading thus manifests a rigor insofar as it seeks textual evidence for its reconstitution of a subjectivity. However, how does a critic reconstitute the subjectivity of an author who, like Proust, in his polemic and fiction, asserts the impossibility of finding the single biographical key to a character or the source of a sensation? Does reading about the narrator's sensations effect the same ones that Proust himself experienced? The phenomenology of reading adheres to the dangerous assumption that a retracing (*zurückgelesen*) of explicated thoughts corresponds to an experience of their implicated source. Here, thinking and its source are conflated, an

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[192] Georges Poulet, *Les Lettres nouvelles*, 24 juin 1959, quoted in Gérard Genette, *Figures: essais* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1966), 158.
[193] Ibid., 158.
[194] Ibid., 158.

identification that Deleuze's philosophy insistently contests in his formulation of the outside forces "which give food for thought."

The word 'sensation' is the least of sensory terms, but it may prove the most sensational. If the sensational is always a mediated distancing from sensation, then how can reading about a touch, taste or smell provide the immediacy of experiencing it? Deleuze provides an answer and counters the phenomenology of reading by conceiving the literary text not as the portrayal of a subjectivity—accessible through the representative form of thoughts in their static explications—but as a productive machine of dynamic effects. Interpretation for Deleuze thus diverges from a phenomenology of reading in that the latter traffics in the mediated development of consciousness, a retracing (*zurückgelesen*) of thoughts in the synthesis of a subjectivity.

As we have seen with the development of consciousness in Eisenstein, a single affection image becomes contextualized within a montage that advances it beyond the stubborn unreadability of its thesis. Or, conversely, the affection image "reads" the whole film and thereby anchors it from a "point of view" which does not differ from director to character to viewer. Deleuze explains that "according to one of Eisenstein's instructions, each of these movement-images is a point of view on the whole of the film, a way of grasping this whole, which becomes affective in the close-up, active in the medium shot, perceptive in the long-shot — each of these shots ceasing to be spatial in order to become itself a 'reading' of the whole film."[195] Whether the affection image becomes mediated in the montage for a development of consciousness or, alternatively, offers the point of view from which to read the whole film, it becomes subjugated to a narrative.

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[195] Deleuze, *Movement-Image*, 70.

However, for Deleuze, it is a fundamental mistake to assume that narrative inheres in the imagistic itself. It is rather the sensory realm—the signs of the imagistic—which allow for the limning of a semiotic narrative to the image.

> [T]here is no narration (nor description) which is a as 'given' of images. The diversity of narrations cannot be explained by the avatars of the signifier, by the states of a linguistic structure which is assumed to underlie images in general. It relates only to perceptible forms of images and to corresponding sensory signs which presuppose no narration but from which derives one narration rather than another. Perceptible types cannot be replaced by the processes of language.[196]

Endowing the image itself with an autonomy has at least two consequences. First, it places the experience of reading outside that of a phenomenology in which the perception of images and linguistic narrative are assumed to be naturally bound together: a description of the phenomenal world is an imposition of language structures onto visible ones. Second, it reveals semiotic structures themselves as insufficient components in what it means to read, insofar as visual (and other) perception is always constitutive of linguistic narrative. Whereas the first consequence undermines reading as a phenomenology, the second eschews the point of departure of a linguistic analysis operative in semiotics.

Similarly, the points of departure of Deleuze's reading and that of deconstruction remain radically different. If deconstruction seizes upon the uncomfortable, baffling moments unveiled in a textual reading, Deleuze does not follow. An undecidable situation assumes that a decision were in fact mandated by textual signification. In Deleuze, however, a zone of indiscernibility does not start from the oppositional logic of representative language but rather assumes that the explications of the sign are the product of extra-textual forces. Hence, Deleuze theorizes resonance as a dynamic textual

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[196] Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 137.

production, where de Man exposes the bafflement of cognition in a text that possesses a pure ontological potentiality, an *adynamia*.[197] If anything can be gained by this distinction between Deleuzian reading and deconstruction, it would be to demonstrate that both conceptualize a baffling of cognition, but whereas de Man cannot conceive of a logical aporia as determining any direction for the continuation of thought (as reducible to language), Deleuze's figures—such as the coexistence of contraries—retain just enough sense to lead to a point of departure, or a line of flight beyond signification.

The zone of indiscernibility will also prove instrumental in thinking about Deleuze's idea of a movement of reading, one that transitions between different faculties. One way to conceptualize this movement is to demonstrate the potential in a Deleuzian "theatre of reading" which would engage the faculties in such a way as to render them indiscernible.

Theatre of Philosophy

For Deleuze, as for Nietzsche before him, philosophical concepts are the outgrowths of a material foundation rooted in an historical problem. "Every truth is a truth of an element, of a time and a place."[198] In this sense, philosophical concepts are always the products of a mobilization. The Theatre serves as a figure for Deleuze when he imagines a new movement of philosophical concepts, and it will also appear as the space for a new possibility for reading itself.

Before engaging the possibility for a theatre of reading, let us first examine the philosophical context in which Deleuze imagines it. The two senses of theatre—

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[197] Gasché, *Wild Card*, 133.
[198] Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson (New York: Columbia UP, 1983), 110.

philosophical and readerly—are related but distinguishable. In philosophy, the opposition

between, on the one hand, the theatre as a space for a Dionysian flux, and on the other, an

emergence of dialogical consciousness was initially diagnosed by Nietzsche in The Birth of

Tragedy, which Deleuze cites in his introduction to *Différence et répétition* as providing "la

fondation pratique d'un théâtre de l'avenir."[199] For Nietzsche, the Attic tragedy's Greek

pessimism devolved into a theatrical form which subjugated the mythical, abyssal aspects

of the Dionysian and Apollonian drama to a logical schematism which considered all poetry

ancilla.[200] Plato's Socratic dialogue, with its motor in conversation, found an emblematic

tragedian in Euripides, whose representation of psychological impulses justified the

causality of tragedy. With the foregrounding of explicit communication over the implicit

portent of signs, the momentous encounter of Oedipus is replaced by arguments and

counterarguments that represent an abstract movement of understanding.

Nietzsche thus provides one inspiration to Deleuze's theatre of philosophy future by

diagnosing Socratic subjugation of the "alogique" or "supralogique" essences of art to the

logical mediation of identities inherent to representation:

> Here philosophic thought overgrows art and compels it to cling close to the
> trunk of dialectic. The Apollinian tendency has withdrawn into the cocoon of
> logical schematism; just as in the case of Euripides we noticed something
> analogous, as well as a transformation of the Dionysian into naturalistic
> affects. Socrates, the dialectical hero of the Platonic drama, reminds us of the
> kindred nature of the Euripidean hero who must defend his actions with
> arguments and counterarguments....[201]

Although Nietzsche critiques the optimistic element of the Socratic endeavor, he does not

abandon a faith in a different kind of theatre. Whatever form that theatre would take, it is

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[199] Deleuze, *Différence et répétition*, 17.
[200] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy, in The Birth of Tragedy and The Case of Wagner*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Random House, Inc., 1967), 91.
[201] Ibid., 91.

clear that it necessitates a movement by *sensori-motricité*, a rencontre with the sign and a dis-organization of the faculties. Such a theatre would unleash pause into our reading, admitting the unthinkable in thought.

There is a significant way in which, for Deleuze, a theatre of philosophy would need to re-conceptualize the act of reading and language itself. He thus imagines a theatre of repetition in which "language" speaks before words and extra-textual forces achieve immediate impact before concepts intervene:

> Dans le théâtre de la répétition, on éprouve des forces pures, des tracés dynamiques dans l'espace qui agissent sur l'esprit sans intermédiaire, et qui l'unissent directement à la nature et à l'histoire, un langage qui parle avant les mots, des gestes qui s'élaborent avant les corps organisés, des masques avant les visages, des spectres et des fantômes avant les personnages....[202]

The opposition Deleuze foregrounds in the theatre is that of different identities (mots, corps ogranisés, visages, personnages) versus a repetition of differences (langage, gestes, masques, spectres, fantômes). What an encounter with the sign reveals, and which remains concealed in explicit conversation, are precisely those forces conceived of as a language which acts before intermediaries of representation.

Such a language would have to communicate at a level which all but neutralized signification in order to inhabit a zone where sonority, visuality and legibility became conflated, thereby sending the act of reading on a line of flight beyond the ken of recognition. This would produce a true dynamism of reading unhindered by the premeditated movements of conceptual mediation. The emergence of the pause of reading in Deleuze initiates a becoming-animal where the faculties devolve into suspect and

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[202] Deleuze, *Différence et répétition*, 19.

indiscernible zones of intensity. Reading would thus proceed by *sensori-motricité*, a movement induced by intensity rather than signification.

Theatre of Reading

If we recall that Nietzsche conceived the reading of thoughts as a retracing (*zurückgelesen*) of more primary forces, then we will be on our way to considering the possibility for an alternative in Deleuze. We have seen how for Deleuze, Eisenstein viewed cinematic montage as the means by which a development of consciousness could proceed; alternatively, the affection image, on its own, could serve as a 'reading' onto the whole of the film but never retain its blunt immediacy divorced from relations with perception and action. In Eisenstein, as in Hegel, the development of consciousness ensures that reading signifies the thinkable. On the other hand, for Deleuze, reading does not concern the demonstration of the thinkable, as that would endow ideational thoughts with a power of determination which extra-textual conditions alone possess. Conditions serve as the element in which thoughts, truths, and finally concepts develop. Thus reading and symptomatology are synonymous for Deleuze. Reading and retracing the movement of thoughts are antonymous.

> Reading does not consist in concluding from the idea of a preceding condition the idea of the following condition, but in grasping the effort or tendency by which the following condition itself ensues from the preceding "by means of a natural force."[203]

To read signifies not the secondary movement of retracing ideational thoughts but rather in staying "on watch" for the transformational forces which condition them. The act of

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[203] Deleuze, *The Fold*, 72.

reading itself is transformational to the degree that it engages with forces whose tensional character demonstrates thought's "impower."[204] That there is a powerlessness at the heart of thought—a view attributed by Deleuze to Artaud's reflections on cinema—does not mean that reading abandons thinking altogether. Rather, reading must reengage the force in thought as what conditions it.

We have discussed the sign as what gives food for thought, and the sensation as the dis-organizing force which conditions thinking. The sign, and especially sensation, is transformational because it pauses the development of consciousness and complicates thought in both its ideational form and its materiality. The faculties of imagination and vision become indiscernible, or there ensues a transition between one and the other which establishes a resonant relation between ideality and materiality. Abandoning a purely ideational movement that would follow concepts or narrative development, reading would engage with forces which transition between conditions.

It is thus, for Deleuze, the *entr'expression* in Leibniz that transitions from visibility to legibility in a "theatre of reading." Analogously, Deleuze conceives of a "mental theatre" in the cinema (of Resnais especially) which complicates, enfolds, the materiality of the brain and the mentality of thought. In both instances, there is a common movement: Thought, divested of subjectivity, becomes the locus for an activity which we call reading but which does not adhere to a unique subject nor a single identifiable faculty.

If we have elsewhere witnessed reading ascribed to the activity of consciousness in the Geneva phenomenological school and Eisenstein's montage, it abandons these for a wholly different movement in Deleuze. If reading cannot proceed by the development of

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[204] Deleuze, *Movement-Image*, 166.

consciousness, it nonetheless retains a strong notion of the mental. Deleuze's mentality, however, resists the systematization of a phenomenology of reading, on the one hand, and the methodological demonstrations of deconstruction, on the other. In Deleuze, there exists a phenomenal dimension to reading, exceeding textual confines, in the ultimate movement of mental complication, an enfolding of sheets of temporality and a tension between legibility and visuality. "Thinking" for Deleuze complicates both cognition and materiality itself, producing readings which engage both the legible and the visible, the signifying and sonorous, ideational thought and the material brain. Ultimately, a theatre of reading would serve as a resonant model in which legibility, visibility, sonority, signification and temporality escape a theorized harmonization for an instantiated *devenir-fou*.

Reading beyond mere signification? Such an activity proposes an analogous liberation to philosophy's flight from the regime of recognition. The recognition of a signifying language proceeds by the cognition of signifiers. In linguistic models, even deconstructionist, reading always begins by engaging with signification, perhaps awaiting a moment where the signifying function reaches an aporia or becomes baffled, preventing coherent expression in an identifiable "experience" (a word belonging to the province of phenomenology, as Derrida will note). For Deleuze, it is misguided to look for "a structure with formal oppositions..." "as long as one doesn't see where the system is coming from and going to, how it becomes...."[205] Whatever the specific method, linguistic readings must always take first and last recourse in the text as *adynamia*, a reservoir of meaning, of

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[205] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, trans. Dana Polan (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 7.

shareable data or reproducible iterations.[206] In contrast, for Deleuze, "[t]here is nothing more false than the idea of "founts" of truth,"[207] and "Method in general is the means by which we avoid going to a particular place."[208]

For Deleuze, reading cannot proceed by a method—phenomenological, linguistic, even deconstructive—because the readerly encounter transitions between faculties, where the sensation of the words takes flight from signification for either an auditory or visual phenomenon. This is why, for Deleuze, literary style is foremost a question of the sonority—the stutter or stammer of language[209]—and reading begins with perception and can just as easily become indiscernible from it. We must return to Deleuze's critique of linguistics as systematizing language in its equilibrium. In contradistinction to deconstruction, he asserts that there is no essential difference between la langue et la parole; pace phenomenology, both are productions of a more primary language, that of signs in their pre-explicated form. Reading therefore is the locus of an immanent transformation, a movement of explication and implication following the fulgurations of the sign. In Leibniz for example, there exists a fluidity in transformation from the act of perception to that of reading. The faculties are not only diffuse, they can, and do, become confused: disequilibrium is the zone in which expression takes place, and literary language breaks down syntax while words approach a limit between signification and musicality.

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[206] As de Man observes, "Technically correct rhetorical readings may be boring, monotonous, predictable and unpleasant, but they are irrefutable." De Man, "Resistance to Theory," 19.

[207] Deleuze, *Nietzsche*, 110.

[208] Ibid., 110.

[209] *A to Z*, Boutang.

Entr'expression: Visibility and Legibility in Leibniz, the Cinema and Mallarmé

A theatre of reading not only engages multiple faculties, but it disengages the limit which separates them. This is why Deleuze privileges the *entr'expression* of the Baroque Leibniz, who also conceives of a theatre of reading. Describing the passage from a material vision to a legibility of the soul in Leibniz, Deleuze poetically describes perception transforming into reading:

> on one side there are all these creases of matter following which we   behold living matter in the microscope, collectivities through the folds of dust that they are stirring up, armies and flocks, greenery seen through blue and yellow dust, inanities or fictions, swarming holes that endlessly feed our disquiet, our boredom, or   our giddiness. And then, on the other side, there are these folds in the soul where inflection becomes inclusion (just as Mallarmé writes that folding becomes a layering): we're no longer seeing, we're reading. Leibniz begins to use the word "to read" at once as the inner act in the privileged region of the monad, and as the act of God in all of the monad itself.[210]

There is a transformation that takes the Leibnizian monad from microscopic perceptions to the macroscopic level of reading. The microscopic perceptions are the "tiny pricklings" that have not yet been integrated into a conscious perception and thus cannot evoke a reading but prepare it by producing "disquiet."[211] We can return to Proust's sign as it assaults the Spider-narrator's stupor, paving the way for the Intelligence to interpret the force which disturbed his web. Thus we observe an analogous movement in Deleuze's reading of Leibniz: "the task of perception entails pulverizing the world, but also one of spiritualizing

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[210] Deleuze, *The Fold*, 31.
[211] Ibid., 87.

its dust."[212] The spiritualization of dust, of micro-perceptions, leads to the conscious, the clear and the distinct, the intervening Intellect of interpretation.

However, Deleuze is careful to observe that for Leibniz, the relation between the micro-perception and the macro-perception does not consist in totalizing the particles of dust into a whole. Instead, the transition between micro and macro-perception turns on the threshold which constitutes the 'remarkable': "a conscious perception is produced when at least two heterogeneous parts enter into a differential relation that determines a singularity."[213] If all of consciousness is a matter of threshold,[214] this applies equally to the act of reading. Thus, in Leibniz, one begins to consciously perceive during the transformation from the "ordinary to what is notable or remarkable"[215]: just as in Proust, the sign only startles one in its foreignness because of the numbing familiarity of Habit; or in the cinematic image, the readable emerges most distinctly upon the sudden rarefaction or saturation of visible elements.

For Deleuze's Leibniz, it is not that perception always precedes reading, or that either succeeds the other. Rather combinations of the two constitute a theatrical space that complicates, renders implicit, both:

> The visible and the legible, the outside and the inside, the façade and the chamber are... not two worlds, since the visible can be read (Mallarmé's journal), and the legible has its theater (both Leibniz's and Mallarmé's theaters of reading). Combinations of the visible and the legible make up "emblems" or allegories dear to the Baroque sensibility.[216]

Although in Leibniz certain transitions become notable between micro- and macro-perception, the two orders of low and high themselves "must go as far as

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[212] Deleuze, *The Fold*, 87.
[213] Ibid., 88.
[214] Ibid., 88.
[215] Ibid., 88.
[216] Ibid., 31.

indiscernibility."[217] We thus are presented with a figure of reading that produces phenomena of indiscernibility, which cannot be reduced to the legible or the visible alone.

Despite Deleuze's attribution to the Baroque of this transition between seeing and reading, or the indiscernibility between visibility and legibility to Leibniz and Mallarmé, it recurs elsewhere and consistently in his philosophy. Thus, he points us to the coterminous act of reading and seeing in the cinema.

> [F]rom either side – whether rarefaction or saturation – the frame teaches us that the image is not just given to be seen. It is legible as well as visible. The frame has the implicit function of recording not merely sound information, but also visual information. If we see very few things in an image, this is because we do not know how to read it properly; we evaluate its rarefaction as badly as its saturation.[218]

Rarefaction in a frame presents the viewer with an image bereft of phenomenal objects. However, just as in Eisenstein a 'reading' occurs when a given film image ceases to function spatially, so in the cinema in general, rarefaction or conversely, saturation with many objects, makes the legible remarkable as a phenomenon to be read rather than to be seen. Perception at the level of reading also serves as a threshold. Deleuze emphasizes that the visual can just as easily be reduced to the metaphor of a data stream as the audible can. The recording of silence does not consist in an absence of audible data (for the stream remains consistent), just as a frame devoid of phenomenal objects does not negate the repleteness of signs to be read.

To become a good viewer ultimately means apprenticing as a reader, and approaching the threshold between the two faculties makes us question how perception constitutes the act of reading.

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[217] Deleuze, *The Fold*, 35.
[218] Deleuze, *Movement-Image*, 12-13.

> At the same time as the eye takes up the clairvoyant function, the sound as well as visual elements of the image enter into internal relations which means that the whole image has to be 'read', no less than seen, readable as well as visible. For the eye of the seer as of the soothsayer, it is the 'literalness' of the perceptible world which constitutes it like a book.[219]

Here the cinema functions not unlike the *entr'expression* of the Baroque Leibniz or the Book of Mallarmé, suggesting that the recurring coalescence between the visible and the readable is a central Deleuzian emblem. However, the coterminous act of reading and seeing in Deleuze becomes an even broader speculation on the coalescence between the readable and the perceptible.

For Deleuze, what we call reading the visual image consists in perceiving our individual perceptions but in such a way as to reconstitute the linkages between them.

> [R]eading is a function of the eye, a perception of perception, a perception which does not grasp perception without also grasping its   reverse, imagination, memory, or knowledge. In short, what we call reading of the visual image is the stratigraphic condition, the reversal of the image, the corresponding act of perception which constantly converts the empty into full, right side into its reverse.[220]

The stratigraphic condition of reading does not simply reconstitute the links of a narrative. On the contrary, "it is to turn, and turn round, instead of to follow on the right side: a new Analytic of the image."[221] Because reading as the act of perceiving perception must pass through the mediations of the imagination, memory or knowledge, it is an analytic that produces a conflation of the faculties. "...[T]here is produced a whole 'coalescence' of the perceived with the remembered, the imagined, the known."[222] This coalescence demonstrates, as Nietzsche remarked, that our faculties are subtilized out of more

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[219] Deleuze, *Time-Image*, 22.
[220] Ibid., 245.
[221] Deleuze, *Time-Image*, 245.
[222] Ibid., 245.

complete ones. Deleuze, like Nietzsche, asserts that the faculties intermingle, rather than remain contained as in a model of subjectivity, in a stratigraphic condition possessing "the lacunary layers ... juxtaposed according to variable orientations and connections."[223]

If the cinema and Leibniz's theatre of reading makes us aware that legibility and perceptibility or visibility are constitutive of one another, Mallarmé's fashion journal stages just such a theatrical performance where costumes, descriptions, and even an audience are inscribed in a magazine that serves as both a coffee-table visual spectacle and a text with images for perusal.

> *La Dernière Mode* was not just a publication to which the poet contributed individual articles; it was a magazine that he took over completely, inhabiting it from the inside, essentially "performing" the entire publication, start to finish (including attendant administrative duties, even the letters to the editor). *La Dernière Mode*, therefore, provides Mallarmé with more than discrete opportunities to alter his identity; it grants him a whole series of theatrical, textual costumes, which he dons and removes with great aplomb, one of those costumes being the whole magazine itself. Rather than any one mask, it is this alternating series of fictive identities that comprises the performance here.[224]

The visible can be read in Mallarmé's journal, but how precisely? The theatricality derives not simply from the seemingly parodic illustrations of costumes but in the staging of an entire discourse of the advertisement, making the act of reading a question not of grasping intentionality—here, authorial dispersion spreads across image, description, epistle—but of interpretation itself. The theatre of reading in Mallarmé is one where masks proliferate and where a staging of interpretation is *mise en scène* as a transformative act. The newspaper—consisting of the "dust or mist, inanity" which we pulverize in a series of

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[223] Deleuze, *Time-Image*, 244.
[224] Rhonda K. Garelick, *Rising Star: Dandyism, Gender, and Performance in the fin de siècle* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1998), 62.

visible micro-perceptions—is "the fold of circumstance."[225] Nevertheless, Deleuze insists that in Mallarmé, just as for Leibniz, legibility and visibility "are not two worlds." Mallarmé's Book of reading the "plis jaunes de la pensée" remains inseparable from "the matter through which we see."[226] Mallarmé's journal serves as a conduit that complicates the visible and legible in its movement of reading.

Kafka and Sonority

While we have thus far discussed the ways in which the visible and the legible become complicated, the audible remains perhaps the most emphasized of all the faculties by Deleuze. Kafka serves as a primary figure for Deleuze's sonic deterritorialization of meaning (*sens*), as the author of minor literature "will abandon sense, render it no more than implicit; he will retain only the skeleton of sense, or a paper cutout." He does this, according to Deleuze, because he conceives language as not deriving primarily from Sense as meaning but from sensation. Thus, to employ language—"to speak, and above all to write"—"is to fast." That is, making sense for the mind is a diversion from making sounds from the body. Just as reading the soul begins with the perception of matter in Leibniz, so writing or speaking consists in transitioning from a somatic language to a cognitive one. Taking de Man's claim that there is an imposition of meaning on the materiality of language even further, Deleuze identifies signifying language itself as a compensation for a more

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[225] Deleuze, *The Fold*, 31.
[226] Ibid., 31.

"primitive territoriality in food."[227] Thus, Deleuze asserts that "each language always implies a deterritorialization of the mouth, the tongue, and the teeth."[228]

One result of the emphasis on the primitive somatic origin of language is that the sentence—that which conveys narrative to its completion—defers precedence to the word. Now, we can witness this privileging of the word not only in Deleuze but also in such disparate theorists as de Man and Walter Benjamin. Deleuze himself, in his reading of Kafka's somatic language, references Wagenbach, who explicitly asserts, "The word is master; it directly gives birth to the image." In addition, Deleuze cites Kafka emphasizing the atomization of the word, the discrete existence of syllables as they announce their own stubborn sonic autonomy from their neighbors: "Almost every word I write jars up against the next, I hear the consonants rub leadenly against each other and the vowels sing an accompaniment...."[229] If language's representative function has been abandoned in Kafka, this derives not only from the difficulty of reconstructing sense out of a staccato of sonic connotations but also because the atomization of signifying units divides its materiality to the point where recognition of any individual one becomes a moot endeavor.

Let us return to Deleuze's claim that linguistics takes as its point of departure a system in equilibrium. Kafka, writing in a Prague German that manifests a deterritorialized hybridity, provides a counterpoint to such an equilibrium with the writing of metamorphosis that eschew the classifications of linguistics: "There is no longer any proper sense or figurative sense, but only a distribution of states that is part of the range of the word.... It is no longer a question of a resemblance... it is even less a question of simple

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[227] Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka*, 19.
[228] Ibid., 19.
[229] Kafka, Diaries, (15 December 1910), 33, quoted in Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, trans. Dana Polan (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 23.

wordplay."[230] Wordplay, metaphor, and linguistic figures constitute classifications within an established system in equilibrium. To metaphorically compare a man with an animal assumes that the static character of these two signifiers extends to the beings themselves. In analyzing a fixed language, linguistics can thereafter systematize, phenomenologize or deconstruct it precisely because of its *adynamia*, ontological potentiality, for a reading. For linguistics, language exists as a reservoir, an object for analysis of its structural elements. In contrast, as Deleuze observes, "Kafka deliberately kills all metaphor, all symbolism, all signification, no less than all designation. Metamorphosis is the contrary of metaphor."[231] Reading, in this view, cannot consist in a classificatory act because Kafka's—and all minor literature's—emphasis on the word, even the syllable, reendows language with its original alimentary, somatic materiality. It is the reterritorialization of language to meaning that gives a reading its form in linguistic analysis. Similarly, when it is claimed that a deconstructive approach "must begin with an act of positing that is the main target of the undoing,"[232] the unexplored assumption is that the proper object of reading consists in the linguistic positioning and that there is not a more primary dynamic operative in the very appearance of a signifying text.

As we have witnessed with Deleuze, however, as long as language adheres to meaning, it has always already been positioned, reterritorialized from its original a-signifying garble of sounds. This is why, for Deleuze, the novelty of literary style consists in producing a language that would deterritorialize the regime of Sense by approaching the limit between music and signification.

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[230] Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka*, 22.
[231] Ibid., 22.
[232] J. Hillis Miller, *Ariadne's Thread: Story Lines* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1992), 53.

> Ordinarily... language compensates for its deterritorialization by a reterritorialization in sense. Ceasing to be the organ of one of the senses, it becomes an instrument of Sense. And it is sense, as a correct sense, that presides over the designation of sounds (the thing or the state of things that the word designates) and, as figurative sense, over the affectation of images and metaphors (those other things that words designate under certain situations or conditions).[233]

Reading in its reterritorialization of Sense follows the same movement as philosophy in its submission to the regime of recognition. To free both reading and philosophy from a mere iteration of the form, the reader would need to abandon the regime of Sense for a sensory-motor collapse in a new theatrical space of thought. This new space would have to correspond to a reconceptualization of the cerebral model itself.

Lectosign and a New Reading for a Different Brain

Deleuze conceptualizes reading according to a fundamentally different cerebral model than that which is operative in a phenomenology of consciousness or in linguistics. The classical cerebral model could allow for a conceptualization of reading that imagined the movement of the concept and a psychology of associations. As such, reading under this model naturally followed a concept or the imagistic associations that linguistic units could evoke. Reading has always, under this cerebral model, asserted the localizability of the relations between concepts and corresponding images. This is what Deleuze refers to in a cinema as a juxtaposition of "one image *after* the other" (my emphasis), where the temporal linkage occurs in a rational or associative limning. For the same reason, a phenomenology of reading, such as that of Poulet, could find recourse to this model, since it

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[233] Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka*, 20.

asserts the identity of linguistic concept and visual image in the thoughts of a Cogito. Finally, linguistic models of reading also "maintained the classic cerebral model, both from the point of view of metaphor and metonymy (similarity-contiguity) and from the point of view of the syntagm and paradigm (integration-differentiation)."[234] Reading, insofar as it mobilizes the methodological possibilities operative in the classical conception of the brain, imagines an organic process that is localizable in its relations. There is ultimately a harmonious totality to this classic cerebral model which explains lacunae rather than becoming subject to them as a (dis)organizing principle.

In what Deleuze assesses as a new conceptualization of the brain, there is a rejection of the two axes which regulated this harmony of the classical cerebral model:

> We no longer believe in a whole as interiority of thought—even an open one; we believe in a force from the outside which hollows itself out, grabs us and attracts the inside. We no longer believe in an association of images—even crossing voids; we believe in breaks which take on an absolute value and subordinate   all association.[235]

The brain itself has become "an acentred system"[236] that works according to probabilistic relations (of uncertainty) and a topography which replaces localizable relations by a membrane whose outside is the obverse, the unthinkable, in thought. These relations of uncertainty produce not one image after the other—as in a synthesized temporal schema—but, more modestly, "one image *plus* another." In the cinematic non-development which ensues, "each shot is deframed in relation to the framing of the following shot."[237] Reading in this model mirrors the movement of sensations devoid of a mediating principle that motors the dialectic of Hegel and the cinematic narrative of Eisenstein.

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[234] Deleuze, *Time-Image*, 211.
[235] Ibid., 212.
[236] Ibid., 211.
[237] Ibid., 214.

If signs give food for thought, then certain ones are adept at producing readings. For Deleuze, in postwar European cinema, it is the temporal sign which "puts thought into contact with an unthought" and induces reading itself to follow the same acentred movement. For Deleuze, temporality's disjunctive character can itself trigger a reading. In the films of Antonioni, for instance, Chronos is caught between a past already determined and a dead-end future and thus embodies "sickness itself"[238] which, as a sign, induces a reading:

> ...chronosigns are inseparable from lectosigns, which force us to read so many symptoms in the image, that is, to treat the optical and sound image like something that is also readable. Not only the optical and the sound, but the present and the past, and the here and the elsewhere, constitute internal elements and relations which must be deciphered, and can be understood only in a progression analogous to that of a reading....[239]

In contrast to reading as the development of consciousness, there is a progression from one internal element or relation to another. Temporality and space themselves have become readable rather than merely perceptible in the cinematic image. This could happen because the brain was no longer conceived as the locus of consciousness. The theatre of reading that Deleuze conceptualizes does not produce a development of consciousness but instead creates a topography of thought in which relations are no longer localizable because there persists the unthought as the obverse of thought. "There is thus no longer association through metaphor or metonymy, but relinkage on the literal image; there is no longer linkage of associated images, but only relinkages of independent images."[240] Thought itself has become unlinked from the chain of synthesis, and therefore reading can attempt to relink a succession of images no longer limned to concepts and their development.

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[238] Deleuze, *Time-Image*, 24.
[239] Ibid., 24.
[240] Ibid., 214.

If, as Deleuze suggests, we now believe in a "force from the outside" that induces thought, we no longer necessarily subscribe to a localizable subjectivity. The lectosign triggers a process by which the reader becomes a sheet of transformation in which subjectivity gives way to transversality. Reading has the potential to unleash a transversal subjectivity as if Thought itself were the theatrical space rather than a single reader. This concept of Pure thought and feeling—disjoined from the individual subject—finds two of its artistic exemplars in Alain Resnais and Proust.

For Deleuze, one of Resnais' singular contributions to the cinema is to have portrayed a feeling that could no longer be attributed to a single individual but that made Thought itself an autonomous character. In the same way, Brian Massumi imagines an aesthetic—rather than cognitive—Cogito which would exist on the transversal level and rewrite the Cartesian ego as oriented by sensation rather than thought.

> If there was an aesthetic "cogito," this-that would be it. But it is a "cogito" that is a "sentio": I feel. Although it is "I" who feel, the existence the feeling verifies is not "mine." It is immediately the world's. "I feel, therefore everything is." Everything that is felt is: that. Differs. Which is why I also am, in this feeling. The world and I exist, in difference, in the encounter. In the feeling. Being is in sensation.[241]

Deleuze does not subscribe to a phenomenology and therefore neither to one of reading. Instead, as we have witnessed, *sensori-motricité* makes reading and feeling occur not in a localizable subject but in an encounter, or rapport, with the world. The aesthetic state of communication that framed our discussion finds an elegant variation in Massumi's rewriting of the cogito as sentio. What he adds to Nietzsche's observation regarding the pliability of the faculties, including that of reading, is that feeling does not belong to the

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[241] Brian Massumi, "Deleuze, Guattari, and the Philosophy of Expression," *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature* 24, no. 3 (1997): 762-763.

individual any more than it does to the reader. Rather, it is in reading and encountering sensation that one realizes a subjectless Being.

Such a model of sentio and sensory-motor collapse is dramatized in the cinema of Alain Resnais. In a film such as *Providence*, we have what ostensibly serves as a single subjectivity, Clive Langham, debilitating author. However, as he dreams feverishly in bed or stumbles around his bedroom for another glass of wine, we witness a portrayal of an author who does not merely create characters in the image of his family but, from the obverse side, sees and hears them as they, independently, turn around to read him. On the visual level, the languid tracking shots of Resnais reach up into the boughs and tendrils of a tree, or the ivy clinging to the Langham house. The tree and its roots and branches establish a network, but as soon as we follow them up to the summit of the bough, a cinematic cut to a different age and a different arboreal scene ensues. A shot of guerrilla warfare in a forest simultaneously hearkens back to an age before modern weaponry and to an evolutionary stage where the sickly war victim, a double for Langham himself, evinces as much animality as humanity, not a metaphorical transformation but an actual metamorphosis where the creature's facial hair resembles the moss clinging to the tree. Here we have a network of internal relations, non-localizable in their distribution not only across individual characters but also across sheets of time, "states of body (organic rattlings)," "states of world (storm and thunder)," "states of history (bursts of machine-gun fire, bombs exploding)."[242] The cinematic constructions themselves ultimately unleash distributions rather than establish continuum. "As in mathematics, cuts no longer indicate continuity solutions but variable

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[242] Deleuze, *Time-Image*, 121.

distributions between the points of a continuum."[243] This is the conceptualization of a brain which no longer reads continuum but is subject to the gap. "Instead of one image after the other, there is one image *plus* another and each shot is deframed in relation to the framing of the following shot."[244] In place of reading as a cognitive encounter, we are putting thought into contact with an unthought; instead of synthesizing a series of shots, the film enumerates the inexplicable, the incommensurable, the transversal movement in the act of thinking.

What Resnais erects in the "cerebral game" of the "organic-cosmic bomb" that is Providence, Proust portrays in his transversal distribution of jealousy or paranoia from the spider-Narrator's interpretations to Albertine or Charlus. If in Proust the interpretation of signs of jealousy become indistinguishable from a profile of the narrator's own, in Resnais' Providence, this identification "goes back to the animal and extends to the edges of the world."[245] When Proust's narrator observes Swann in love, the distribution of intensities extends inward toward Marcel and outward toward the reader. In Providence, a scene featuring the superimposition of Langham's voice onto his daughter Sonia's speech endows the words themselves with a subjectivity ascribed to one, both or some altogether transversal being, Thought itself. "Throughout Resnais' work we plunge into a memory which overflows the conditions of psychology, memory for two, memory for several, memory-world, memory-ages of the world."[246] Both the *Recherche* and *Providence* dramatize the act of reading and that of authorship, this distinction ultimately moot, since thought itself, pure feeling, has taken center stage in a transversal theatre of reading.

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[243] Deleuze, *Time-Image*, 121.
[244] Ibid., 214.
[245] Ibid., 124.
[246] Ibid., 119.

Perhaps, when we read a book, watch a show, or look at a painting, and especially when we are ourselves the author, an analogous process can be triggered: we constitute a sheet of transformation which invents a kind of transverse continuity or communication between several sheets, and weaves a network of non-localizable relations between them.[247]

Deleuze never explicitly advanced a concept of reading, yet his philosophy gave ample indications of a nascent theory of what occurs in the act, or rather during the encounter, for what ensues consists not in the effects on a subject but in those stirrings of an organ-less body. A Deleuzian reading eschews methodological definitions, just as for Deleuze, philosophy cannot rest tranquilly as a mere iteration of the form. A Deleuzian reading instead conceptualizes a distribution of so many intensities, across individual subjects and temporal ages. The rencontre gives pause so that a veritable transformation of reading may move the reader and ultimately, instigate Thought or Feeling, the distinction between them indiscernible. That this movement occurs in place, in a theatre of reading, does not preclude its status as a transformative encounter that merits the name Deleuzian. "...[T]he becoming-animal is an immobile voyage that stays in one place."[248]

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[247]Deleuze, *Time-Image*, 123.
[248] Kafka and Guattari, *Kafka*, 35.

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