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DERRIDA AND HIS SHADOW

ABSTRACT

Rerouting the tradition of defiant putdown, his name is a shibboleth for troubled intervention, still unearthing values stubbornly uninterrogated by other branches of philosophical enquiry. He drew from Carl Schmitt the persistent atmospherics of hostility to politicize social aspects of aggregation and *Mitsein*. The oeuvre of Jacques Derrida thus continues to stir hostility, generating implications of seething mistrust for the textual and institutional strategies of a "Derridean" workspace. This is not the first time that philosophy has been exposed to bad faith or phobic taunts. Since Socrates's countdown, we know, as Arendt alerts us, that philosophy continually faces state hostility. What provokes different types and gradations of philosophical hostility, prompting a perceptible level of anger—to this day, dispensing the calculated dosages of mistrust that issue from other philosophers and civic cohorts? Or is hostility—and the anger that it breeds, whether historically latent or effective, part and parcel of the philosophical profile—a course of action? Are philosophers, while rhetorically armed to the teeth, basically unarmed warriors, politically hungry, as in the differently deposed cases of Plato and Heidegger? It could certainly be the case that what attracts hostility is mainly a question of the objects that are brought into play. But there's something more at stake.

To a large degree, the themes handled by Derrida were fuelled by pathologies and repetition compulsion, continually running up against a politics of disavowal. Sometimes the themes he'd chosen were exposed to critical belittling, seen as beside the philosophical point, "trivial" or aberrant, like Nietzsche's forgotten umbrella or Genet's floral perversions. Other times, the themes one chooses become contagious or form the groundwork for an autoimmune attack on its premises. One's own work flares up against itself or succumbs to medico-philosophical disruption when it names a symptomatology that attacks the host-work. The constitution of a text is involved in the vulnerability it uncovers and pursues, never safely aloof from its encroaching object. Drawing on unconscious strata of his influence and invasive attachments, including the unfurling of dream-logic, the essay seeks to locate the overall tone of Derrida's provocation, sounding a non-thematic instance hard to pin down, as in Kant's apocalyptic tone, of which he wrote.

KEYWORDS

Hostility, political catastrophe, destructive pathologies, *destinérance*, good breast, Friedrich Kittler, Sandy Stone, mimetology, Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, paleonymic stagnation

Last night he appeared in a dream, walking down a rainy street. I recognized him from the back. Besides his shaded silhouette, there was also the matter of the fabled hair, the gait—easy enough to identify, even from the back. Repelling its unavoidable fadeout, the dream required a hermeneutic assist, a touch of reason to make it exist into daylight. Grazing against my awakened state, the stubborn latency of dreaming asks me to drum up some sense, bring an explanation. By mid-morning, I am still fuzzy, stalled as I seek to rev up my engines for the day ahead. I needed to find a mortal frame, maybe a narrative. Many of my friends, writers and wide-ranging artists, try to register a counter-existence in the evasive clutches of the unsharable yet communicable regions of dream, where taboos are lifted and trespass becomes the law, providing a platform for the unlanded phantom. At the dawn of philosophy, Plato worried about what happened at night in the freefall of the dreaming citizenry, when all bets are off and no one could be sure if the polis would adhere to the responsible wake-up call of political virtue (Plato 2000). Would the citizens turn in their free pass, shake off the freedom for which night covers, willing to adjust their political straightjackets? Would the lawgivers return to their diurnal positions and legitimate positings? For my part, I was clean last night, taken off Plato's to-do list, just witness to a sighting, left stranded with political leashing intact. There was nothing immediately insurgent in my dream clip, no overthrow to report or moral roguery to reprove at sunrise. No hint of libidinal overreach—supposing that merely skimming surface themes tells us much about unconscious treachery and nocturnal romps, un surveilled. I go easy on myself. Weighing what it could mean to walk or stand (or run) behind Derrida, *derrière* Derrida, I wanted above all to understand something of its felt import, to slide down the signifier linking “hair” and “heir,” tapping the ghostly Shakespearean “air,” the element of address for an “heir” —a “her.” *Ach! A grrl can dream!*

I'd been pondering what it means to be a “Derridean” on different levels of inscription or accepted usage. Sometimes I take an off-ramp to gain on the inaccessible parts of what it has cost to take Derrida seriously (*cost*: a Nietzschean notion, involving the price paid for being Wagner's disciple), a cost incurred without rancour or a former disciple's bad faith (a common symptom in Derrida studies). Reverting to overtime on different spheres of knowledge, frequently in excess of understanding, or simply stumped by the exigencies of reading, I find myself dimming the lights and subjecting him to a diverted round of pressure, para-critical by nature, in the form of dream logic. It is as if to this day he were hovering in another corridor of being to which I lack the access code. Perhaps wanting in analysis, Jacques remains fixed in my spirit as inappropriable, a sheer windfall. Or maybe, in a singular stance, the weight of his waiting is meant just for me (“nur für dich bestimmt,” Kafka), as an insistent yet traumatic remnant in my life, still evading my ability to grasp the receded edges of his significance, his force and range of motion for the project of constituting his legacy. The dream. *He's slipping away from me, turning his back.* At first, I line up with the way he read his name on more than one occasion. For the most part, my unconscious tells me only this: He was

back, and I was trailing behind. In terms of a classical Freudian lexicon, I was handed, for the most part, a wish-fulfillment; namely, to have Derrida back, or to tender the promise of having his back as he disappears around a bend, passing from sight; “the ghost walks,” leaving on every curtained day anew. Or maybe the dream reminds me that I was late in following him, given what “following” means on his playlist: the animal that I follow/am, as he writes. I’m to follow, but at a specified cadence (another philosophical instruction, issued by Nietzsche: “Mind your cadence!”). Or, I missed my cue. Maybe the dream genie reproaches me for having tripped up, breaking with the rule of rhythm—a primal philosophical misstep. Heidegger agrees with Nietzsche’s condemnation of Wagner for failing to keep pace, respect rhythm, a fateful failure which the thinker registers as part of an *historial* breakup, still impinging on us moderns. We continue to twist according to Nietzsche’s breakup with his mentor. So Heidegger.

Early on, in terms of the final cadence, trying to cope with Derrida’s departure, I was held back by an undertow of simple survivor’s guilt, assuming falsely that I *could* survive his *disparition* or claim a piece of the heritage.

In one passage of his work, Derrida writes that he had spied his name behind a curtain, an association that intrigued me: I thought, “*Curtains!*” A name for the end, closing a sector of being by fencing for acts of concealment. On another occasion, he offers that a set of curtains in a room had been green: After suffering a miscarriage, Derrida’s mother contracted a fear of the colour green, combined with a sense of foreboding that she passed on to her children. You never saw him wearing green. Out of respect, I never donned green in his presence. He was superstitious. I caught the drift of his dread, and needed to steer clear of triggering codes. Still, he wrote that his name meshed with the flutter of these curtains. Were they dyed in the shades of misfortune, according to the phobic decree of the maternal in Derrida? I would not presume to analyze the heritage of family dread by going into a recondite *Farbenlehre*—the doctrine of a death-driven palette that captured his unconscious, before it spread to others. If I were still working with Maria Torok, I would sign up for a guided visit to the family crypt. I come to a point: Like other strong teachers whose supply line is not limited to conscious deliveries or archival depôts, he transmitted unconscious prompts to those who studied under him. For this assignment, handed down gently by Andrea Perunović on the anniversary of Jacques Derrida’s improbable passing, it is perhaps not surprising that I am sensitive to the signifying pressure of curtain calls, the way they fall open or come down.

Part of any modern reading repertoire, *Hamlet* raises the curtain on punishing consequences that can accrue when listening in on private conversation. The motif of an early curtain falls to Polonius, the rascal version of Father, who gets mortally struck for overhearing a lover’s discourse between his daughter and Hamlet. Hiding behind the drapes, Polonius falls against these translucent membranes, shaped like a hearing organ. Shakespeare’s tragedy begins with, “As the whisper goes,” a poison in the ear, the rumorously drip of a paternal death

and the visored being's return. Hamlet, who was thought to be blocked by hesitancy, sticks it to the snooping eavesdropper. Maybe the dream was trying to announce the rumor of Derrida's return, pointing to the furtive trajectory of a prized revenant. In the dream I'm fast-paced in pursuit, nearly running after Derrida, though I now remember that I fumbled along the way. Wasn't there the vague scene of a stumble?—due, as I recall, to an untied shoelace, as in the Van Gogh piece he renders. Tying them up, he muses, “What constitutes a pair of shoes?” He was stepping up the stakes in a quarrel between Shapiro and Heidegger, thinking about ground, support, foundation, among other well-known terms and enframing holds. Upon seeing him, I walk at a clip, rounding a corner. *Clip clop*. In the dream, I was surprised that he was still around. Why had I missed that?—*Pourtant*, I usually have my ear to the ground.

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Since he continues to attract hostility, a directed shaft of thermal dream logic tells me that the heat is on: He *must* be alive in some ways, sparking a live wire.

Dispatching contention and rerouting the tradition of defiant putdown, his name is a shibboleth for troubled intervention, still unearthing values stubbornly uninterrogated by other branches of philosophical enquiry. He drew from Carl Schmitt the persistent atmospherics of hostility to politicize social aspects of aggregation and *Mitsein*.

This is not the place for a dialectical summation of Derrida's oeuvre, though the epiphanic difficulty of the work deserves volunteers of every conceivable philosophical affiliation, even those most aporetically applied. I am interested here in the *hostility* the oeuvre continues to stir, and the implications of seething mistrust for the textual and institutional strategies of a “Derridean” workspace. Since Socrates's countdown, we know, as Arendt alerts us (Arendt 1958), that philosophy faces state hostility. What provokes different types and gradations of philosophical hostility, a perceptible level of anger—to this day, dispensing the calculated dosages of mistrust that issue from other philosophers and civic cohorts? Or is hostility—and the anger that it breeds, whether historically latent or effective, part and parcel of the philosophical profile—a course of action? Are philosophers, while rhetorically armed to the teeth, basically unarmed warriors, politically hungry, as in the differently deposed cases of Plato and Heidegger? Or is what attracts hostility mainly a question of the objects they bring into play?

To a large degree, the themes handled by Derrida were fuelled by pathologies and repetition compulsion, continually running up against a politics of disavowal. Sometimes the themes he'd chosen were exposed to critical belittling, seen as beside the philosophical point, “trivial” or aberrant, like Nietzsche's forgotten umbrella (Derrida 1981) or Genet's floral perversions (Derrida 1986). Other times, the themes you choose become contagious or form the groundwork for an autoimmune attack on its premises. One's own work flares up against itself or succumbs to medico-philosophical disruption when

it names a symptomatology that attacks the host-work. The constitution of a text is involved in the vulnerability it uncovers and pursues, never safely aloof from its encroaching object. Let me tighten the focus, however, to the overall tone of Derrida's provocation, sounding a non-thematic instance hard to pin down, as in Kant's apocalyptic tone, of which he wrote. At the same time, I should state that my loyalty remains with getting the initial dream analysis off the ground as I review the ongoing effects of his work.

As it turns out, we have hints of a regulatory ideal, what made him tick, from his store of readings and the problem sets he went after. As philosopher and surveyor, he was a thoroughbred investigator, unleashed from the crew of Poe's poet-mathematicians, one capable of out-maneuvering the accepted philosophical police force when called upon to crack a case. Or even to *find* a case where none was pending. Close in practice to the feints of strong-willed detectives and other agents subleased to the law, he often enough went rogue (an anagrammatic condensation of the "rue Morgue" in Poe), even in my dreamscape. Wait. Maybe it's not a matter of *having him back*, I'm thinking, but of knowing how to lose him, as Heidegger said of Nietzsche; well, as Nietzsche said of Nietzsche in a postcard quoted by Heidegger in *Was heißt denken?* (Heidegger 1968: 52-53) or, rather, of Zarathustra, when he tells his disciples to get lost and don't come back (Nietzsche 1917: 65-68), kicking us once and for all to the curb, breaking lineage and a piece of genealogy. With all the admonitions to forget a philosopher—I'm thinking here of the slogan and title "Forget Foucault" (Baudrillard 1998)—maybe we haven't learned how to do that, so we could get them back fort/da style, managing an irreparable disappearance, playing out a scenario, as if loss of that magnitude were from the start booked on a return trip. Everyone has been jumping on that shuttle. Judging from the literature and film archive on phantom itineraries, the rally for revenants is ever back by popular demand. "Get back to where you once belonged." Regarding phantom returns, I would petition for a different hack in this phrasing, retroactively getting Celan on the page: "Get back to where you once *Unbelonged*."

Even though he belongs to us, if only as a legacy yet to be constituted, Derrida did not belong. His difficult coexistence with everything that claims him is part of his brand. Before that (but not that far away), in terms of a history of spurning philosophical and national adherences, Nietzsche drops away from every identificatory stopover, no matter how naturally conferred, such as place of birth. For Derrida, clear-cut disavowal is not an option, given the sure-fire return of residual violence and other unavoidable distortions. He went *both/and* in terms of overturning inherited or conventionally-coded identities. So, for instance, he was French, but not French; Jewish, but not Jewish, as far as substantiating passports go. He patrolled the margins of potentialized identity. The spurred disidentification with entity, nation, gender/genre, ethnicity, and histories, covert or materialized, came at great cost, revealing a motif that fills pages of wounded humiliation. Nonetheless, his stand-alone place of asserted *Mitsein* did little to stop or deter him in terms of the fever of monolingualism

or archive. In the dream, when I saw him from the back, I think we were on a street in London. My heart told me that he was slipping away.

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His tendency in life was to a large extent tuned to a *welcoming* tone. At times he turned toward one on the edge of need, theirs or his, shaping a subtle *demande*, somewhat withholding and powerful, coming from a suspicious stance, openhearted, prepared to laugh, and for the most part able to grant one clemency for a clumsy wrongdoing. Sometimes, though, he was shut down, inviting a fit of subtle shakes on my part when he remained locked away and inaccessible. I've also seen him in the grips of severe depression. No psychic safecracker could get in. I'd sit across from him at the breakfast table, swallowed by anguish. Marguerite darted in and out the kitchen, followed by the cat. My habit was to lean quietly into the silence, show ease at the abyss of wordless despair. At those times discretion took the lead. I wanted to leave, but Marguerite told me I should stay, don't go, he mustn't be left alone. I became an animal, like one of Haraway's companion species, able to slip into the vacantness that bound us. When things came to the finality of a close, I wanted to be de Quincey to his Emmanuel Kant. More awkwardly, assuming the mantle of resident misfit, I tossed my hat into the ring in the hat for the schizonoic place of Eckermann to his Goethe, Echo to Narcissus. I had a lot of support from literature to recede into a draft of friendship with the philosopher as a morph of bounded emptiness.

Then, before the somber slowdown, there were the more socially braced encounters, his wide-open office hours for philosophers, psychoanalysts, poets, artists, filmmakers and scholars, groupies and standout disciples, the curious or oppressed. They were in need of a word. Others showed up to surrender language and keen observation. Jean Genet came over after Jacques was sprung from prison in Prague to discuss the thrill of lockup and the ensuing suspicion cast on all human contacts outside the penal system. Anyone can denounce you, flip on you, declared Genet, and create the impression that you were all along in their sights, perniciously set up. In other social spaces like restaurants, no matter how many appeared at table, he always picked up the bill. There were the takers among his colleagues, and those who took advantage of his nearly out-of-control generosity, especially among American professors, who only rarely countered his offer to settle the tab. I'd think, he hasn't learned his Nietzschean lessons or those doled out by Frau Melanie Klein. The humans all too humans among us repay kindness, even when cheerfully uncalculated, mostly with *ressentiment*, in French currency, and build up a secret envy account. We know this much about human transactional tendencies: "No good deed goes unpunished," etc.

Upon awakening, I jam in my bewildered head on the large-scale psychosemantic range of running behind Derrida, not ruling out the Oedipal limp and other pathetic hobbles or inflections of the lame genre. I spare myself nothing.

Reaching for the possible meaning of “back” in his corpus (for I had seen Derrida from the back of his nameplate), I am scoping for temporal implications of returns in the form of a Comeback, or what happens to us as legatees of Western metaphysics when Socrates turns his *back* on Plato, parrying the story of his nonwriting with a chisel-plume, as represented on the cover of the *Carte postale*. Jonathan Culler and Cynthia Chase had brought him to see the original post card featured in a glass case at the Oxford University Bodleian Library. In any case, Derrida was back, averting his gaze, set on his way, out of reach, fodder or father for “Queer Derrida” analysis en route in terms of his back flips or tropes of the backside turn.

The dreamscape sketched an oblique reunion, if it was at all that, an encounter, with the emphasis on *counter*, as articulated in Paul Celan’s clip on *Be-gegnung* (Celan 2011: 132-148); he was nearly *gegen* me, I’d say, maybe in the senses of “against” me, maybe more like almost leaning on me yet also turning away. He kind of shook me off, kept going—without me. In terms spelled out by last night’s dream logic, this was rather a good sign, despite my inevitable egological deflation upon awakening. He had taken up a robust pace of *überleben*, the *sur-vie* that we counted on, to the extent that survival is calculable in his life-death analyses. Even so, when I woke up I clutched my heart-space, feeling bereft. During his lifespan, in the vibrancy of encounter, he had a way of keeping in reserve a dimension of non-presence. He was more present, acutely on point, paradoxically, when things were winding down, and I had come to accompany him, to the meager extent that one can in days of diminishment. At the time I moved to Paris to help his wife Marguerite and him with the last months of his measured existence. Having spent a good part of my academic career in Berkeley, I was seasoned in all sorts of healing arts that we in turn practiced, including visualizations and meditation—though, to the end, he preferred Descartes’s *Meditations*.

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I am a haunted Dasein, daughter of German-Jews and decimated family trees, stumps, a European runaway, continually stumbling into new crosswalks of unBelonging chalked by Celan and, in kindred attunement, by Ingeborg Bachman and Kafka. The corridors of Derrida’s haunting are more benevolent than facets of nearly un-lived history or a poetic clinch, surpassing whatever hounds me about what was not said or nurtures expressions that have stayed with the taut anxiety of the unsaid. In full benevolence, he’s bound to show up when I’m in deep yogurt, as we used to say in Berkeley—when I’m strained by circumstances, waiting mirthlessly to see how things shake out, or at the writing desk. I continue to consult him when I’m reaching for a spiritual GPS, connecting on the fly. This may not be as ungrounded or spooky as it sounds, indicating, instead, a trove of *spookulations* that date in the West from the times and writs of Shakespeare, Swedenborg and Kant to spectral Goethe, Hegel, Marx, Emma Goldman, and their political beyond. All I’m saying is

that I am not the only ghost chaser in the burdened vicinity of bereavement. Plus, I am not the only landing pad. He has a way of squatting in troubled and abandoned people. Sometimes he takes calls that others overhear. Often enough he appears, if invasively and by displacement, as a subtle adhesive to human forms still roaming the earth, or as a furtive point of attack, a moveable target zone. Not only was he a great mentor and unsurpassed interlocutor, but, for my cohorts and me, given the aforementioned riposte of hostility aimed at his philosophical service, he is still in need of a human shield: it seems inevitable for his survivors routinely to take hits that are said to be meant for him. Some of the smackdowns I've endured as a micro-satellite in his orbit were dealt out as a love letter to Derrida, booming with effects of malice, summoning the real, residing temporarily in wandering and scholarly Daseins associated with this name.

I'm thinking that one can pin the blame on his still troubling breakthroughs. Regarding my part in the orbital path, I'm content to be situated as a sentinel or alias, but, more to the point, I, like the others in the line-up, appear to take a place according to the schedules of shifts marked out by the *Carte postale* (Derrida 1987). "Destinerring," by intent or material necessity, sometimes I, too, seem to be stamped as a wayward envoy of the corpus from which I've sprung. For many of us, no matter how seceded, it seems evident that Derrida has proven hospitable during his withdrawal to a number of rotating surrogates, host bodies and substitutes, but no one really presumes to match his singularity for long, or to catch up with the massive range of his philosophical outreach programs, as astonishing as ever, or with the long distance missives and missiles, their ongoing capacity to upturn established tropologies while exposing political presumption, poetic audacity, the different levels of "economimesis," architectonic sketches, axiomatic and violent incursion that he scales with subtle command. He continues to provide the impetus for interpretive rigor when it comes to sizing political catastrophe and to revealing the hidden log of destructive pathologies that contour our mutating epochality.

In terms of travel plans drawn up by his own destinérance and legacy, apart from the blinking satellites, it is worth noting that Derrida, to the extent that he still accumulates censure, is prone to a second death syndrome characterized by Lacan. Psychoanalysis has observed that, sometimes, the departed attract a second round of mortar fire, and are not *dead enough* for a horde of detractors riled up defensively with no off switch. Part of me understands the impulse to keep attacking a dead cause or moribund object, to train violence on a concept or lifeless being without relief. Like many among us, I was ready for the supplementary onslaught, having been brought up to par by the sharpening blows of determined detractors, pelted by minor acts of critical malevolence that could wound a fragile psyche. Throughout my childhood, for instance, my father held a personal grudge against Freud. He had his reasons. The outcome, though, was inescapable: stoking a parricidal riposte in my subject formation, daddy's tactical takedowns launched my own Freudian resolve, leading me to seize upon the whole package deal, including early admissions for an uncommonly

cruel Superego. At first, Derrida was an offramp from the Freudian insistence, still attached to my own (and, undeniably, Sylvia Plath's) Daddy, ("Daddy, you bastard, I'm through")—inciting issues which, in the style of *The Uncanny* (Freud 2003), took me back to Freud time and again, rounding a repetitive circle. If anything, when I look at things in this manner, Derrida was more of a *mother* to me, a good breast, philosophically tender, or whatever.

Ahem. I don't know how this account became so Freudian. I'm switching tracks again. Let us say, provisionally, that I did not refuse the call that can trace back to Jacques Derrida. Nor did he leave me stranded for long, or ever really entirely unanswered. Despite the ground rule asymmetry, it's not clear which one of us tapped the other for a hit. I am struck to this day by the windfall that had him take a call emanating from one of *my* outposts. I guess it's simple. Early one summer, when school was out, I had arrived on the scene having read him, prepared to mime and rhyme, poised to imitate without properly duplicating—yet copying him nonetheless on every memoed sign, "mad about language," prepped for the pursuit of an ever-evolving oeuvre. I was entangled, meshed at once in a flash of arrogant tactic and humble determination. As with Freud's Rat Man, who showed up at the analyst's door having browsed through texts bearing his signature, I had my reading list in hand when turning myself into his authority, hoping to be coached, if not delivered. A young student has all the hope. One day, at a closed meeting called by Giselle Celan in Paris, Derrida extended a first welcome to one of his future translators, the ever terminable-interminable disciple. It was 1979. I was going through Celan's *Nachlass* with Giselle, translating her correspondence with the Suhrkamp publishing house and members of the Heidegger family. The Heidegger sons were on the whole more than rude on the subject of returning the poem, "Todtnauberg," for the archive of Paul Celan. Giselle had asked a few pointed questions in a letter and wondered if they would send her the original manuscript. They would not. Plus: our father, Martin Heidegger, did not know that your husband was a Jew. That's why no mention was made of the Shoah when their stroll took them to the Todtnauberg.

Concerning the first stages of apprenticeship with Derrida, my membership contract spelled out different terms than what pertained to others, I thought, at least in the fine print. On a number of fraught occasions he seemed to terminate me, but, on the whole, I sprang back like a cartoon character. I abided by the asymmetry that our bond implied from the start, withholding any reciprocal rejoinders that might have been provoked by the minimal allotment of harshness on his part. For there were times when he turned on, or *against*, me on occasions of strife and overdetermined en-counter. *Gegen mich, ein Muster der Nibelungen Treue!* (Against *me*, a model of Nibelungen-like loyalty! (Kraus 1937: 28). He was especially annoyed with my antics for reasons of politics as well as in-house policy, since I did not manifest enough support, he estimated, when Paul de

Man was on the rails, and I was crazy anarchistic. Henceforth *loyalty* became an object of contemplation for me to the extent that, on a fast dialectical spin cycle, my uber-loyal tendencies soon attracted criticism among those who adeptly cut their losses and adopted “go with the flow” measures of critical prudence and perceptions of personal safety. These Daseins are not entirely off-center when they rip into former friendships and flush consecrated alliances, flaming up entire histories. I am not saying they’re wrong in terms of human-all-too-human evaluations, or that they haven’t updated their intellectual files according to a felt necessity and reasonable fright. I choose loyalty.

Remembering the Nietzschean invective against Wagnerian *Treue*, the very question of loyalty would have to go through a philosophical loyalty test. For the most part, on this point, I was meant, I suppose, to profile a stance of one who could be a Derridean without precisely *imitating* Derrida, but also without disavowing his oversized influence on me, taking note and notice of his surpassing thought when downloading his lessons. For the sake of brevity, I’ll skip over to today’s more ready-to-hand imperatives. Nowadays, when I’m on my beat, the wish to maintain the original commitment to an irreplaceable teacher involves a series of practices, some of which include regularly checking in with his declared allies as well as keeping up with a class of nonresentful litigators—those, at least, who sized the tasks that he set, who determined the breadth of his texts seriously enough to take them on and run with them.

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Altogether, returning to the enigma of hostility, I’d say now that Derrida took a lot of insult, some of which generated abiding themes in his work. Favored by the history of critical thought, he was also its target zone, accumulating demerits as he gained ground. On some occasions he was called upon to adjudicate unpopular standoffs in philosophical precincts, especially when theoretical scrutiny bled into politics. He was attuned to ambivalence and respectful of aporetic snags when tapping a persistent logic of injury embedded in the history of philosophy and its abrupt offramps. To his credit, Derrida went after exclusionary operations, tagging fringe episodes together with unpredictable margins of philosophy that determined major shifts and acknowledged dogma. Running with the major downsizers of sovereignty and Subject, he destabilized our self-appointed sense of virtue, a cut that stings to this day, inviting rollbacks and erasure, institutional forms of memory loss, distortion, and secondary revision. When it came to calling out philosophically backed supremacies, he stuck to his guns, trained on disjointure and what, in architectonic contexts, he came to call the “defective cornerstone,” hidden in constellated structures and relations. Sensitive to what remains unhinged in our worlds of shattered expectation, he saw and counted the damages, pointedly asking, What counts?, Who’s counting, or, Which groups are discounted? What commands our sense of crowd, group, political entity, mob, community, congregation, populous, assemblage, the bunches of losers or disparate aggregation of unaccounted

figures and their claims? Tallying our many historical disasters, his work surveys an uncontainable pileup of wrongdoing and the toll of ethical misdeed. His analyses allowed space for the remainders—for that which cannot be assured of archival meaning and foretold in terms of consequences. He was a strict reader of repressive unknowns and tricky displacements of emphasis and the material knottiness of intrication. Whether these can ever amount to a matheme or mathematical equation remains up in the air, along with the phantoms whose sphere upends our calculative grid and available knowledge-statements. Here on earth Derrida assisted our countdowns with terrifying lucidity, sorting out an arithmetic of chronic miscount and rapid-fire assertion.

As something of an “allothanatological” signpost, close to but emptied of autobiographical credentials, I probably owe yet another little sign of my being-toward-death. To this end, I am willing to hand over at least one of my provisional ID cards, some sort of synecdoche of identity meant to clarify further the considerations I’ve laid out and the peculiar dream syntax that attends them. Not everyone is aware of my provenance, where my dossier —also related by Derrida to the back, the dos—belongs in the sectors of thought that still claims deconstruction (a troubled term, always on the brink of extinction). French-accented and cast by Germanic precedent, “Deconstruction” carries a bug that threatens ongoing disruption, despite constant minimization and dodges. To the extent that it may offer heuristic assistance, let me propose another condensed particle of self-disclosure at this time, understanding that I have changed with years of training, grown into the demands of “l’exigence herméneutique,” and turned a number of sharp corners. I’ve paid punitive taxes to decades of institutional adjustment. To be sure, one is given to change from the start. One day, I showed up at the door (which, for Celan and Kafka are tantamount to the Law) as an earnest cub scholar and somewhat transgressive punk, a rookie teacher. By now, Superego, always on the prowl, for the most part has shut down sectors of my test drive, buffering the habits I associate to Nietzsche’s “experimental disposition,” an explosive structure by means of which one tests to failure. Leaving skid marks from incessant crash and burn sites, the scholar within, one of my many personalities tutored by Derrida & Co., soon put me on a short leash, and expects, Hölderlin-style, a level of sobriety in exposition. Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe has emphasized the necessity of “sacred sobriety” when taking on , for example, Heidegger’s engagement with technology, a subtle reckoning which I applied widely, if by dropping the sacred pretense. How does technology manage and deprogram what is left of politics, rerouting one past the limits of self toward the “thrownness” (Geworfenheit) of our being?

Following Lacoue’s lead, and shedding an overriding display of personality (a philosophical excess), I devoted my efforts to a stone-cold analysis of the technologically inflected State, the core of which I situate in the Third Reich. Catastrophic politics constitute a special chapter in historical appropriations,

especially when technology was dealt in, defining mythological inscriptions of State. With the zeal of obsession I continue to analyze the return of Nazi tropologies in North America, examining the severe, if addictive, temptation of fascist remakes within medial loops and filmed fantasy, by evaluating their tropological send-offs. Freud and his legacy made us think through photography and telephony, discerning basic shifts in psychic structures and uploaded destructions. In this context, linking psychoanalysis to ontology and technics, I proceed by synecdoche and metonymy in order to isolate the technological draft that Heidegger outlines and gets trapped by. I explored the feasibility of a telephonic phenomenology — flashes of connectedness underscoring mythic dimensions of instantaneity and related myths of unmediated power surges. Nancy has argued that technology rebuts the law of mediation, a key aspect of the Hölderlinian playbook on politics and poetry.¹ To this day, no doubt more than ever, one can measure destructive encroachments ascribable to technically rigged power-states, not excluding the dominion of media outlets that impinge on their technologically impoverished counterparts. The technologies of difference include the sum of racially zoned targets of aggression reinforced by distinct morphs of police action (or imminent standby, in Benjamin's view). The relation of the standout prerogatives of technology to a Heideggerian warning system in terms of the sway of Technik still needs to be expanded, beginning with the accruing menace of killer machines and the covert play of desires underlying their efficacy. Heidegger himself thinks that his work has covered the after-effects of the menaces discovered, laying bare their fundamental qualities.

An unavoidable glitch has guided my hand, therefore, in the folly of attempted self-presentation I've come a long way from drawing up a whisper of self-portraiture, rendering not more than another try-out bound for collapse. Maybe I want only to indicate the branch affiliation of Derridean input that I at one time pursued, the technologies of writing, inflected by Friedrich Kittler's friendship and the influence of his techno-revelations. Media-technology made it impossible to clear an identity without scrutinizing the technicity of swiping in and leaving a mark, depositing an archival print, such as, in another context, Sandy Stone has exposed in the OG's Posttranssexual Manifesto (Stone 1987), advocating for the priority of technological at-handedness over a metaphysically prompted assemblage of self. Sandy relies on Derrida's "Law of Genre (/Gender)" (Derrida 1980) to launch a phenomenological redescription of acquired scraps of selfhood. She experiments with learned erasure, coming back to an adjusted self only through a series of trials of self-presentation, where artifice presides over tropes of authenticity and takes charge of trans-rhetoric. A predominant aim, delivered in the severe tone of a manifesto, is formulated to preserve the fuzziness of gender unreadability at each station of her passion. Sandy's manifesto grazes against gender security or baseline identity politics.

1 On the crushing of mediacy in technics see also Nancy's "Foreword" to Sá Cavalcante Schuba, Marcia. 2021. *The Fascism of Ambiguity: A Conceptual Essay*, translated by Rodrigo Maltez Novaes, London: Bloomsbury, in "Political Theory and Contemporary Philosophy" series edited by Michael Marder.

Any masterful teacher probably provokes waves of ambivalence, moments when the rest of us cannot entirely tell friend from foe, though Derrida admittedly claimed to know the enemy and, conversely, to our coltish consternation, went easy on those who engaged in bad faith, those “undecideds” in declared need of baby-step updates, only to dismiss the entire project (I use “project” loosely, ever since Bataille and Nancy’s analyses of the *project of death* took hold, etc.). Sometimes, when he turned his glance of suspicious regard on someone whose ambivalence crossed the line or who made stuff up, I took fright. His reprobation could be crushing when a weaker ego was on the receiving end of a sharp remark. On some occasions I would permit myself to talk him down from a perceived slight or rhetorical injustice, and to this day I am eaten with remorse, wondering if he hadn’t gotten it right in the first place: Had I not been too Californian, looking at the “bright side” of aggrieved commentaries lobbed over to his side of thinking? Some people’s bad faith did not go down well with Derrida, and when I interfered, I fear, the solidity and long-range precision of his judgment were put in some sort of momentary jeopardy. Derrida was acutely sensitive to acts of hostility and theorized them within historical range wars. His detractors could be ruthlessly undermining or opportunistic when blaming the philosopher for being—a philosopher.

In terms of those who stuck around as determined adherents, their long-haul commitment presents some features of filiation that are easy enough to detect. These features can be summed up and made into recognizable checkoff points: It should be stated at the outset that they, or I should say *we*, began by disdaining the self-confident emergence of any “we.” Along these very lines, it was common to doubt the efficacy of many a “*We the people*,” including uninterrogated offshoots of “people,” not to mention the rhetorical hazards of “community,” which Derrida held against Nancy for being, to start with, too recklessly Christianizing, on the way to communion.

Nonetheless, “we” Derrideans share the reading lists that he more or less invented and protected. The distrustful habit of nabbing intentions and uncovering rhetorical feints are still dead giveaways, making those trained by Derrida instantly detectable—though, clearly, this critical conglomerate cannot be declared the only cohort motored by infinite hermeneutic suspicion, or am I mistaken? Also, in some instances, the particular brand of *humor*, a certain level of warmth and ironic acceptance in the line of fire, can be viewed as a marker, though the allergy to any sort of constituted group psychology is, once again, palpable everywhere. We can pull it together as an interim team when absolutely called for, but we are, in common parlance and according to his workload on the *animots*, a band of cat people, disinclined to follow orders or one another for long.

As a group—though I could not name them all, and don’t have them on speed dial—first and second generation Derrideans, at least in my provisional roll call, have tended often to go after self-similar sleeper margins or syntactical bluffs

that abound in texts, but that tend, by necessity, to remain concealed. Striking out on our own, we-the-scattered among scholars nonetheless have a penchant to start off by sticking to the bulk of discoveries and textual line-ups that Derrida cued up for his readership. Some of his own choices have become classics, prompting further mutations and unpredictable appropriations. I am not sure that Benjamin's *Kritik der Gewalt*, the now famous "Critique of Violence" (Benjamin 1996), would have enjoyed such a prominent run in larger circuits if Derrida had not gone after the mystical foundation of authority in his way. Ditto Carl Schmitt, even in some respects Freud, and countless others, often shunned, until Derrida called them into play. Not that popularity counts in our circles—on the contrary, and yet, to a certain extent, notoriety of text and title tends to recur to a certain recognizable degree. In the main, overexposure and its anticipated tipping point in vulgarity are scorned by cat-disciples, so one is already traversing aporetic terrain when going down the Derridean reading list in terms of the recondite pop charts. Still, I give points to those who rescue a difficult text from oblivion to make it speak to us. "It speaks!" Derrida writes of Lenz, quoted in Celan's "Meridian." A number of us are clearly assimilable to the Meridian Derridean genre.

Rolling back to the start gate of my own dreamt up adherence to this unparalleled work and person, I must confront myself with a question. What brought me to make such a choice in the first place? How did I go about deciding upon a mentor? One's teacher in some regards, at least at the time, was part of the ordeal of choosing your weapon, despite yourself, or, at least, their imago provided the maps for setting off toward a foreign destination, self-alienating with no return ticket provided.

How did the *type* of teacher one chooses become fateful, more determining than one can forecast at the outset, even when the deal tanks (I, for one—or many—have been tanked as many times as thanked when it was my turn at the wheel), and negative transference becomes the rule of the day, rolling on the unbeatable relation of choice by inviting the victory of the bad breast? Turning to another shadow page, brandishing the wounds of a pained standoff, Jung and Freud became locked in the kind of mentors' wrestle, modelling distrust, each knotted up, fitted to reproach the other, a name-place of permanent grievance. Sometimes, when switching teaching teams after a certain point of fusalional immersion, the disciple gets extra points for the breakaway: ask Nietzsche when he booked on Wagner—though, by pitting himself recurrently against Wagner in a succession of essays, the breakup became interminable, prosecuting an unstoppable case against Wagner. But, in all sobriety, in my own case, when I wanted to cover a brand of grievance that attaches to structuring forms of teaching, I wrote a chapter on "The Trouble with Deconstruction," where, in a fit of self-discovery, I found that *I was the trouble with deconstruction*, or one of its prime seats of disturbance. To the extent that one counts. Derrida has devoted a lot of time to figuring what or who counts and, since Aristotle, how to count. So I can't be sure how to count things up when the framework of computational convention slips away. Nor whether to take a run at the very

notion of counting, more generally, when this involves how long the attachment to teacher lasts, under what circumstances of survival, and in which time zones of collated reading. In a similar context of *over-attachment* to one's source and instruction, I analyze the type of traumatic invasiveness that has you carry the stubbornly unremovable teachers who are connecting to writing from non-present impulses or spheres, ever beckoning, ever superegoically enthroned, placed in permanent transferential residency no matter how many clearouts one has completed.

It doesn't end. Becoming a Derridean still requires that one, at strategic checkpoints and invested junctures, bring up the sentinels to defend certain acquired positions and positing throwdowns, and, where pertinent, to assume one's institutional guard. On all levels of organization and state affiliation, the classroom itself has become a contested site, placed increasingly under regressive restraint and impinging threat. In some respects this precarity may not hold everywhere, for there are still one or two sheltering instances where, under enlightened leadership or dispersed impulse, advances have been made and miraculated in terms of accommodating critical thought and the often unforeseen offshoots of experimental thinking in departments, institutions, or extra-institutional assemblages, where the DOA tagging on theoretical practice can be easily integrated, entertained, even overcome or set aside. Here the fear of being *changed* by critical theories not only has been assuaged but welcome, granted a place at the table. (Ok. *A grrl can dream.*) Such universities and institutes—or pockets sewn into them, the teaching pods, the ejected ones and foreign bodies, those homegrown, whether sanctioned or rogue, para-institutional, administratively unlicensed—install the benevolent ideal, at least, of a comfort zone for those who know only a repertory of irksome prods and provocation that, at best, throw you for a loop each time you commit to a politics of the uncompromising, the often disparaged scene of writing, where the envoys of a radical patience of *reading* start eating at the most sensitive parts of your being-toward-death. At worst, in these struggling life-zones, one is pushed too hard: you dance around with worry, the way Kafka did around the telephone, pinged by an alarming series of intrusions into your so-called work spaces, where one sets up the effort to think, to listen, ward off censorious interference—to engage and invite risked ventures, ungrounded try-outs, write aloud, take practice runs at insinuations of unBelonging, summoning new names, risked pronouns, and addresses.

Maybe the time has come for a kind of Afterword, one that places the small print of an implicit contract that entails a mimetology, if not a theory of incorporation—the phantasm of swallowing the other whole. A lot of people

have seemed anxious about echoing Derrida, miming his rhetorical operations and sounding off in his dominant key. Not that many can convincingly pinch hit for his articulations, though there seems to have been a discernible penchant for repeating his repertory and idiomatic line of thought among disciples and even those who claim to have booked out. But most writers, and certainly philosophers, as a rule prefer to see themselves as bearing the mark of originality, not as a thriving *mimos*. Derrida detected a pathology in the way Agamben always wanted to be the head of the class, the first to clear a particular historical runway. I don't necessarily see that tendency as limited to Giorgio, who's maybe among the first to say out loud that he means to be ahead of every significant curve, in front of every train of thought and denounced wreckage. The tendency to score a first, to break down some walls, no doubt can be filed as part of the "professional hazards department," shared especially among the philosophically-minded, no matter how traditionally bound to the rhythm of succession they may seem. Freud stole a base here or there, as did Derrida himself. Still, genuine originality in the sense we gain from Kant's analysis of genius, also implies monstrosity, settling up with a good degree of unrecognizability. According to another algorithm, the compulsively mimetic reflex picks up speed in a way that menaces genius. I go both to Derrida and Lacoue-Labarthe for getting a handle on that phobic slice in the history of thought in terms of mimetology, and to Laurence Rickels for a mesmerizing analysis of the plagiaristic urge (Rickels 2021). All of this would deserve entire chapters on the regular expulsion in philosophical treaties of copycats and other imitative creatures, mostly scorned, if not outright feared, yet making a warp speed comeback through the insinuations of AI. I'll stay with our subject for now, leaving behind Winckelmann's famous decree stating that the only true way for us to be great (Greek) is by *Nachahmung*: imitation (Winckelmann 1987).

Though independent in their trajectory and tone, Lacoue and Nancy have echoed and bounced off Derrida in a way that might stand as exemplary for us today, given their outspoken honoring of a teacher and his oeuvre. This does not mean that there was no static on the line or unsettled disputes here and there. They hung in there, with each other and with him, striking out on their own yet staying near, brokering serious differences, marking off proximities in the distance of an unassailable intimacy. Derrida wrote on them and they on him—far differently, but vaguely echoing the way Deleuze and Foucault primed each other in friendship and epochal designation, putting up for view each other's breakthrough discoveries. It was a bit different with our guy. Derrida did not spare them his critical bite and teacherly estimates, any of them, including his closest disciples, though he accorded übergenerosity to a handful of them. Usually, he was on the alert for error, a lapse, ready to pounce on a wrong turn taken or wobbly trope. In view of such intricate relations, I muse on the timeline of in-house dispute and quasi-pedagogical corrections. I wonder whether there's ever a time of immunity, when great teachers can let some things slide. Or must they take on the problematic misappropriations with which the exceptional "student" and self-identified disciple leaves home? What are the

norms here? Should the former teacher ever dress down an offspring's work, communicate reproval and publicly register a complaint? Conversely, should a teacher proffer acclaim, withholding critical reprobation, even when nerves are shot by wrongheaded presumption? We know by transferential inference that students do, and possibly cannot avoid in fantasy to, shoot down their teachers Brutus-style, particularly when the elders are seen to harden into an icon, becoming authoritarian or power-blind. Is the test of power, the requirement of rigor, or the press of justice ever concluded? When is one or the other given a free pass, released — or are such tests in any case from the get-go impossible to evaluate, mostly relegated to bottoming out as inconclusive? What happens when the once-student effects a breakaway, or finds themselves pushed on by an imaginary spree of *originality* that requires parricidal declaration? These themes subtend the Derridean homeroom, even when he, grand evaluator, has left home.

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His work on the paradoxes of parergonal logic, translation and related transit systems in Benjamin, supplementarity, the hymen—and so many other passes through oblique and subtle portals—continues to bring us out of our paleonymic stagnation. In significant ways, Derrida was able to shift the grounds of purported originality and orient us toward more difficult areas of borrowing and alterity, such as those covered by excess and concealment, competing economies, shade ins, echoes, secondary and excremental margins, aborted run throughs. With these figures in mind, and their disfiguring tendencies, what does it really mean today to be a “Derridean,” to dwell in his shadow, ever prone to conducting spectral colloquies in the halting throes of an infinite Conversation? In her seminar, Hélène Cixous once asked what it means to take on a name in order officially to declare a serious engagement. Sometimes the names split off, such as the usages made of Kafkan, Marxist or Marxian strains. Kafka gets an extra round with the supplement of “Kafkaesque,” circumscribing the name of an existential-administrative shudder. That expansion is quite an achievement for someone who discarded the name-of-the father in favor of Julie Kafka's maiden name. Kafka repeats in “The Letter to My Father” that he is *not* in fact a Kafka, but a Löwy, thereby bypassing the parricidal path with the shrewd disposal of his father's name. That ordeal and its sublimation open another chapter on the way names work or, when switched off, how the suppression of names can suspend and reroute aggression. Hélène's example was that of Proust. What is it to declare oneself a Proustian, she asks? Where does that mark put one on the scale of imitative originality?

New generations of Derridean inquiry are beginning to show up, differently assigned, freshly motivated and equipped. At the same time, it seems that many of yesteryear's early-birds have dropped off or too quickly assimilated, caved to the ongoing criticism of rude politicizations and the strictures of culture wars, in some cases smoothing over the edges, or claiming to have understood, grafted,

introjected without discernible remainder or quiver, mimetically cleared, moving along the major stakes of pervasive questioning. As with Hegelian and Marxist programs and their swap meet trade-offs involving politics of the left and the right (broadly speaking), deconstruction can also drift into the wrong side of history by dreadful co-option, as when factions on the right call for a “deconstruction” of government...

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On bad days, Derrida haunts and hounds me, dissatisfied with me, down-turning the domestic approval ratings that I seek from him ever and again, even now. Especially now. On better days, I imagine the tenacity of his resolve, how he holds me up and pushes me on, from afar (a grrl can dream...), carrying me through inadvisable hurdles that I cannot clear by myself. On the whole, I am one who does not struggle with the possibility that I am a mere invention of his, a curlicue of the oeuvre. For the most part driven by an enigmatic pulley, I serve as an operative or a roaming sentinel. Enough, however, about my idiomatic Geistesgeschichte, lending, at best, a spark of false intelligibility to the course of a disjunctive and changeable “intellectual history,” a spirit’s reluctant chronicle.

With “theory,” one doesn’t have to decide or tell between philosophy and literature in a rigorously taut, tensed way. In these recollections, I may have said “me,” I said “I,” but these markers have faded and are overhauled remnants, mere grammatical contrivances so that my sentence can get some feet, go on its ways. As one can see, I put up no fight against the idea that I am, very possibly, an echo of Jackie Derrida, trailing him as he turns his back, an after-effect, stranded along a massive itinerary of considerations not of my making. Others in my situation claim more independence, cutting off signatory rights from their incubators and teachers. Understandably, they struggle with their dreams of emancipation and autonomous by-lines, hard won—or, they sometimes have to turn away from home base, with or without coerced branding. A number of start-up Derrideans have cut themselves loose to go in earnest search of their own voices and deliberate styles, autofictions that may not always renew subscriptions of unreadability. Bucking that trend, Sandy Stone, as indicated, continues to restore a different piece of the Derridean heritage, explicitly hanging on to a prized stumbling block: her unreadability as autobiographical subject and post-transsexual performance artist. She remains sensitive to the exhortation that urges us to rethink gender in terms that she found in his work, which became part of the discussion of transitioning that she conducted in the early Manifesto. For one so daring, there was no easy way to abandon the temptation of claiming originality in matters uniquely personal, depersonalizing, resubjectivizing, when she stood in revolutionary readiness, locked into the values of untranslatability. Sandy’s work interprets the extent to which she has been scripted by technological incursions associated with transition—her psychic history bulwarked by an evolving gridwork, reconfigured by the frontiers of historical-medical review. The idiomatic disruption that consigns one’s existent version to a feeling of originality, she indicates, wants to prevail, even if one

is put together by all sorts of citational imperatives and impulses, driven by intricate tinkering and the surrender to what is at-hand. Traveling among poles established by a constellation of deconstruction, narrative theory, media-tech, and psychoanalysis, her practice, sometimes reordered into a different genre of performance and hypothetical positing, given to misrecognition and proud assertion, consistently elicits self-questioning, particularly where the self resists substantial grounding.

For my part, in speculative alignment with Sandy, if fated to trail behind, I understand only too well the impulse among many innovators to cut one's own profile, to insure against identity theft or reduction, especially when chasing the puzzle of singularity that one wants to preserve while chiseling down core presumptions. I understand that we are in want of an intractable signature, the luring perks of a self-referring work. On some points of duplication and self-technologization, to the extent that they apply, I see things differently, however. Perhaps I follow a different instruction sheet. After the Uncanny recalled by psychoanalysis, or so many reduplicative processes, one cannot simply back away from effects of the double or second generation Doppelgänger-mechanisms in deference to a fantasy of existential wholeness or even, for that matter, of generative originality. Of course, Ego doesn't love the second-tier placement, its mechanical abandon.

As a sometime specter of second-generation output with carefully implemented defects, I guess it makes sense to favor conditions that allow for secondariness, simulators, prototypes, mock-ups, clones and AI pretenders. Anyway, I lucked out. Before locking into registers of untranslatability that carry imprints of equipmentality, I had learned from Eckermann and Goethe the value of promoting forms of excremental outgrowth of the other, including the internal other. Quite frankly, many of us were brought up by literary-historical example to be a receptor, a replicator. Hence the endless reflections, in my case, on non-presence that had me turning my gaze to levels of vanishing, referential and scopic diminution—a list of acts imputed to absconded gods, telephone, medial connectors, drugs, capital, abyssal grievance, the drudge of losing streaks. Prompted by Derridean inclination, I have been tracing and tracking that which withdraws from early on. Heidegger says, “Entzug ist Ereignis,” withdrawal is event. This recessionary drift, though motivated by a number of other considerations in ontology, speaks to my upbringing, or what Kafka calls, in his “Letter to Father,” my down-bringing. An echo chamber and simulator, a projected knock-off of the real deal, temping for the other, some of us know how to step away, let oneself be used by the inspiriting breath that comes from an undefinable Somewhere, the unWo (the unWhere) of which Celan writes. We were tethered to that unWo, which arrived as so many weak matches and improbable figurations, some desperately familiar, alien familiar, drop dead in-your-face alien-familiar. I suppose that in terms of a zoomorphic explosion of the unWhere, I wanted to be the animal that followed him, alongside the mimetic sprees of his animots—hardly averse to aping him, trailing, parroting, or doing whatever it would take to score a reasonable place in the bestiary of teacher's pets, coming in close but not too impertinently on call,

keeping my lynx eye on the daily fluctuations of imaginary stocks and the shares I put in, pulling back strategically while readying myself for the unpredictable future of a legacy.

What a trip!

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An example to prove my secondary excellence. Once he asked me to write up an abstract for the imminent publication of a forthcoming article. I applied myself to imitating his style but curbed the desire to duplicate its textual intricacies—so, I set about replicating the subgenre by which we identify an abstract with a view to yielding an *abstraction* of Derrida. A few months later, shortly after publication, he quietly told me with a grin, half-embarrassed, half triumphal, that Paul de Man had gone out of his way to compliment the abstract—who knew?!—& that the abstract—itsself a copy or instagram of the essay in question—had won the day for being “exemplary,” a tour de force of condensation and precise delivery, proving capable of capturing the essential gist of the larger argument. We know that de Man had a thing for paraphrase, a form of capture that he showed to be notoriously untenable—he had his students produce, or rather, *fail* to produce paraphrases as dislocating exercises. You may think it’s fairly easy to accept such an assignment, one that requires you to paraphrase an argument, but it’s a resistant and only ever frustrating venture. Like other contrived condensers, it tends to fall short of its purported goal. I swelled up with a bubble of pride when learning that I had scored well on a related speech act, the triumph of my life—acing an abstract—and asked whether he had told de Man that I produced that little gem. And so I find out that Derrida hadn’t told de Man: it was a compliment he wanted to keep for himself, *Carte postale* wrong destination-style—right destination maybe, if you consider that I imitated him, doubling down on his idiomatic habits and rhetorical finesse, siphoning off his text, reproducing inimitable mannerisms. But the calculations don’t stop there: Derrida preferred to keep the compliment possibly meant for me, the abstract writer, to himself, for himself, deflecting off me, or rather off his momentary double and ghost writer, wanting something that was and was not his or mine, having originated in any case with him, the doubly expropriated sliver of a text that he wanted solely to have signed and nailed to Paul de Man’s door. A little abstract that bound us and to which we both narcissistically attached. Rebounding off de Man’s compliment—you should all know that Professor de Man was spare in his compliments, routinely cutting and putting down his most sophisticated students—the abstract bloated out of proportion in significance and became the symbolic property that we tugged-of-war over. In an unrelated incident, trying to curry favor with the frugal and withholding Belgian friend and sometime counterpart, Jacques told me that all he ever had wanted to do was to “seduce” Paul de Man, secure his approbation—an intention and borrowed kickstart which I annexed according to my own narcissistic metrics.

On some remote level, instigated by the touchy theme of echo and mimetic tendency in writing and circumstance, framed by the comedy of academic rivalry and intellectual valorization, I may have decided to come forward at this time to issue a complaint, finally, if only to hear myself complaining, moved by the hope (unconsciously) to negotiate minimally with the severe chronicity of a plaint from which I cannot, on my own, detach and separate, namely, the unbearable knowledge that I have lost Derrida, allegorized to the pleasure of overcompliance when writing his abstracts.² I think back to my friend, Vicki Hearne's book, *How to Say "Fetch!"* (1994) Vicki was a poet, an essayist, and animal trainer whom I met in Riverside, California. For a spell, in the mid-1980s, she moved on to become the resident poet of Yale, until she took on their mascot, a bulldog. *Ach, ach!* Not a pretty picture! Nonetheless, her archives were parked eventually in the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. More devoted to Wittgenstein than Derrida, Hearne kept her ears up and open to the newcomer; she and Derrida took note of each other and their companion animals. She had famously given courtroom testimony on behalf of the pit bull, Bandit, whose life she spared. As for me, at the time I was still in obedience school of playing my own version of "Fetch!" After all is said and done, I cannot rule out the hypothesis that, for his part, de Man was simply being sadistic, regardless of the proprietary squabble his scant appraisal had set off. Who compliments Jacques Derrida on the accomplishment of—an abstract?!

And what is my part in this triangulation? Am I honestly complaining about the authorship of an abstract? *Do abstracts even have authors?* Or do they teach one to heel in submission to some human-inhuman command-system? Be that as it may, who in her right mind would come forward to make claims on forgotten, miserably inessential abstracts that Mr. Paul de Man, for whatever over- or underdetermined reasons, may have tossed, one fine day, at the great philosopher and his shadow? How did I, once again, get caught in a narcissistic snag that jacks up the habit of memorializing a complaint—that of the forlorn abstract? As rubbed out author of said abstract, I am certainly responsive to the task of preserving the scrap of writing in complaint, though.

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For a while I argued that I had no choice but to become a Derridean. That's only partially true, for one makes choices and stands by them, even when faced, as was I at the time, with a no-brainer. Still, it's not as if I could have signed up with Habermas when I set out for obedience school; nor could I have landed plausibly in one of the more authoritarian ports of call! Do not think that I was not tempted to attach to an authoritarian master or school, dreaming of being taken in hand, trained in a "methodology," taught how to fail and rebound, opportunely manicured by analytical philosophy or, in the other field, refined by

² For more on the melancholic plaint, see my Ronell, Avital. 2018. *Complaint: Grievance among Friends*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press.

thematic reading skills and targeted for a fairly straightforward job. Some part of me wanted to join a secured group, settle into a Kantian comfort zone that consists in blowing off an excess of risk, content to follow evolving academic orders, become part of the university's sifting and sorting systems, defensively fitted for scholarly armature. Another part of me wanted to be an artist, in terms of lobbing signs of subversive defiance and practiced stubbornness. (In both cases, Kant wants us to get over comfortable choices that imply for him *immaturity*. He urges that we enroll in the program of Enlightenment, which, still ongoing, is itself seldom risk-free or in the thrall of external recognition.) Still, "choosing Derrida" still means something, at least, to me. Among other things—among poses of readiness and calculated passivities, beyond the helpful fictions of agency and decisive decree, in terms of assumptions of powerlessness, *ethos* and scaled-back conformities—it means that one has made a commitment, established a line, however fractured, of what he saw as responsible address, even when things shook out differently than expected—even when something or a constellation of calamities comes at you that seems destined for someone else or rings up a wholly different set of coordinates and identity markers, consistently throwing you off by configuring a different type of call altogether. Even when you form an intention, and stick to it, what happens with the resolve is not up to you or predictably set on its course.

Knowing when to take a call never, in any case, amounts to a stabilizing act, but incurs all sorts of hesitations and damage, running up a considerable existential tab. Is it meant for you, this call? Kafka gives us cues about how to take or decline the call, redirect its intentions. The phrase, "this call is—*not*—for you," requires, for instance, on behalf of the purported receiver, a capacity for desistance, a sense of when to back down and, the other way around, a surge of determination when it comes to stepping up. All in all, one is not *sure*, when assuming responsibility for the call, whether one has been blindly led to do so, urged on by delusional prompts or projection, knowing if that call was meant for me (or someone hitching a ride with or in me, or beside myself, a split-off part), or an entirely other receiver. Nor can one be certain about the burden of what rouses you to the reach for a call—a primal impulse, whatever—one can simply not be certain, especially when the nerves lead off, as in the case of those rattled by Benjamin and Kraus and the way they formulated the "rights of nerves." The call comes in many forms. One can quickly find oneself wrung and strung up, shaken to the core. And so, like characters in key narratives who, when struck, become transformed or are roused, suddenly awakened, I was shaken, one day, by an address, perhaps by the way Derrida, in a deflection of transference, once turned to me and spoke out, asking my name. He reported the particulars of that encounter, the initiatory startle, in *The Post Card* and I bounced it back, according to a different switchboard, transferring a call in *The Telephone Book* (Ronell 1991), where I thought he was trying to reach me.

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Avital Ronel

Derrida i njegova senka

Apstrakt:

Prenoseći kontroverze i preusmeravajući tradiciju prkosnog osporavanja, njegovo ime postaje šibole za problematične intervencije, koje i dalje otkrivaju vrednosti uporno nepreispitane u drugim granama filozofskog istraživanja. Od Karla Šmita preuzeo je postojane atmosfere neprijateljstva kako bi politizovao društvene aspekte okupljanja i *Mitsein*-a. Opus Žaka Deride stoga i dalje izaziva neprijateljstvo, proizvodeći implikacije dubokog nepoverenja prema tekstualnim i institucionalnim strategijama jednog „deridijanskog“ prostora rada. Ovo nije prvi put da se filozofija suočava sa lošom verom ili fobičnim uvredama. Još od Sokratovog brojenja unazad, znamo, kao što nas Arent podseća, da se filozofija kontinuirano suočava sa državnim neprijateljstvom. Šta izaziva različite vrste i stepene filozofskog neprijateljstva, podstičući приметni nivo ljutnje—do današnjeg dana, raspoređujući proračunate doze nepoverenja koje dolaze od drugih filozofa i građanskih grupacija? Ili je neprijateljstvo—i ljutnja koju rađa, bilo istorijski latentna ili delotvorna—sastavni deo filozofskog profila, određeni tok delovanja? Da li su filozofi, dok su retorički naoružani do zuba, u osnovi nenaoružani

ratnici, politički gladni, kao u različitim slučajevima Platona i Hajdegera? Svakako je moguće da je ono što privlači neprijateljstvo uglavnom pitanje objekata koji se stavljaju u igru. Ali, u pitanju je nešto više.

U velikoj meri, teme kojima se Derida bavio bile su pokretane patologijama i kompulsijom ponavljanja, koje su se neprestano sudarale s politikom poricanja. Ponekad su teme koje je birao bile izložene kritičkom omalovažavanju, smatrane nebitnim za filozofsku suštinu, „trivijalnim“ ili aberantnim, poput Ničeovog zaboravljenog kišobrana ili Ženeovih floralnih perverzija. U drugim slučajevima, teme koje neko izabere postaju zarazne ili formiraju osnovu za autoimuni napad na sopstvene premise. Vlastiti rad biva podložan protivljenju ili podleže medicinsko-filozofskoj disrupciji kada imenuje simptomatologiju koja napada rad domaćina. Ustrojstvo teksta uključuje ranjivost koju otkriva i proganja, nikada bezbedno odvojeno od svog nadirućeg objekta. Crpeći iz nesvesnih slojeva svog uticaja i invazivnih vezanosti, uključujući razmotavanje logike snova, ovaj esej nastoji da locira ukupni ton Deridine provokacije, osluškujući netematski slučaj koji je teško uhvatiti, kao u Kantovom apokaliptičkom tonu o kojem je pisao.

Ključne reči: neprijateljstvo, politička katastrofa, destruktivne patologije, destinérance, dobra dojka, Fridrih Kitler, Sendi Stoun, mimetologija, Filip Lakul-Labar, paleonimička stagnacija