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MONSIEUR TEXTE II: EPIPHONY IN ECHOLAND

"Dingo, adj. et n.m. (Dingot, fin XIXe; de dingue). Fam. fou, V. Cingle, dingue. . .” “Dingue, adj. et n. (1915; o. i.; p.-e de dengue, cf. arg. la dingue ‘paludisme’ (1890); ou de dinguer). Pop. Fou, dingo. Il est un peu dingue. On devrait t’envoyer chez les dingues.” Dinguer, v. intr. (1833; d’un rad. onomat. din-, ding-, exprimant le balancement [des cloches, etc.]). Fam. (Après un verbe). Tomber. (Glas, 110b)

I. Overture

For those who come in late, there should be an overture, even if no curtain rises.

Derrida leaves his name suspended at the end of Glas. One of Adami’s pictures in Derrière le Miroir (see opposite page) reproduces the signature “J. Derrida” with the “da” cut off. Not only is “da” the syllable Adami and Derrida have in common, but Glas plays obsessively on Da as the tachygraph of presence, “Dasein.” In Adami’s picture the Da is Fort. “Le da n’est pas là, bic et nume, mais il ne manque pas . . . il faudra voir plus tard: ce qui se fait fort de la chute monumentale–tombe par dessus bord.”

*Copyright © 1976 by Geoffrey Hartman. The first part of this essay appeared in the Winter 1975 issue. Citations from Glas (Paris: Gallimard, 1975) refer to page and column. The picture on the opposite page is reproduced from Derrière le Miroir, no. 214 (May 1975) by permission of Valerio Adami and Galerie Maeght.
Derridadaism? The illustrious fish, suspended in page or picture, is surely an ex-monument or erection, a J(e)(u) "angled with meditation," strangled by the graphic energies that overflow the mirror surface of this doubled and caesuraed page. With scales that seem to become X's, and, near the base, the initials of the painter in chiastic form (DA), it could be a modern hieroglyph: a "picto-ído-phono-gram" as Derrida calls it, complicating the older term of "speaking picture."

For if this picture speaks it is only to make the "ding" (the thingy, representational content) a "dingue": a "glas" or "Je/tombe" (Glas, 197b). Adami's design does not, according to Derrida, illustrate or energize language as a devise might its mot but releases instead the graphic potential within art itself. "Non pas l'éclat de voix dans la peinture, mais l'éclatement de la parole dans le dessein.

Pictorial art too is a form of writing (écriture); and the false dichotomy of "painting" and "voice," similar to that of writing and voice, is modified by a differential but not absolute contrast between "design" and "words." Adami epigrammatizes art and shows there is as much "trait" as "portrait" in the strong yet graphic silence of his still life. To fully decipher, however, the relation between grapheme and phoneme, or eye and ear, in such a Je d'esprit, would need a science as baroquely transformative as Freud's dream theory or the wittiest devices of the Mannerist canon.

II. The Philosopher as Wit

Had Derrida begun his career with Glas or Derrière le Miroir, our perplexed judgment could hardly have avoided raising the issue of mannerism, or of the resurgence of wit ("esprit") in philosophy. In modern art this resurgence has been an obvious feature for some time. Magritte can create a new "domaine enchanté" by jokes that question the frame though not the force of art. Claes Oldenburg and Bill Lombardo practice their equally good-humored deconstructions on American monumentalism (Illustrations 1 and 2), but in the wake of a French tradition founded by Boulée, whose designs were too visionary to be realized (Illustration 3). Apollinaire's "idéogrammes lyriques," the beginnings of concrete poetry in Marinetti, Kurt Schwitters, Paul Klee and others, and even the "scenarios" of Robbe-Grillet are witty pro-

jects or gags (and variations cartes) with the canny expla-
jects or graffiti. As in Adami’s sketch or in the double-columned and variable paragraphing of Glas, it is the cadre (quatre, carré, carte) which is being changed into an écart by a “systematic and canny exploration.”* To some extent, then, Glas is an art-form itself, related to these witty typographic and pictographic explorations. It questions philosophy’s Hegelian ambition to be more than art or more than language—to subsume these on the way to certain knowledge. More positively stated, Derrida saves the face of language: the character of the written character. Yet if he does so, if he insists with so many contemporary artists that the materializing imprint of words is more than the deformation of some ideal thought-sound—if “l’errance joyeuse du graphein” reminds us strangely of another slogan, Marinetti’s “les mots en liberté”—he is also the most radical critic of naive, phonocentric materialism. It is not the sin against the phonè committed by writing (i.e., by the phonetic alphabet) which concerns him. The singular power of the phonè is not in question: indeed it is seen to be the real mal, as demonic in its historical and artistic sway as the mad, sad trajectory of Poe’s “The Bells.” Speech, in the form of an imago vocis, is forced to sin, explosively, against any language or philosophy of language, including Saussure’s, that tries to contain acoustic conceptualization within a single, reduced writing-system.

In the West, as the Grammatologie already argued, writing is reductively conceived as stored speech. The idea arises, therefore, that the energy or sensuous presence of speech must be restored by some counter-entropic, revolutionary science, reversing the loss incurred when written speech puts sounds on ice. This magical or restorative science is, for example, the new art Pound, Apollinaire and others set against the dead letter. Derrida, however, does not credit this newest search for a “real character” except as it shows the “fragility now recognized of our notions of pictogram, ideogram, etc., . . . the uncertainty of the border separating such écritures as go by the name of pictographic, ideographic, phonetic” (Grammatologie, p. 49). For writing exceeds

*See Positions (Paris: Minuit, 1972), p. 58. In a recent essay Derrida paragraphs by using a rectangular quotation mark open at the angle and enclosing the unprinted rather than the printed space. On “Painting/Writing” see also the fine issue of Triquarterly, 20 (1971), and essays by Michel Butor, especially in Répertoire III (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1968).
not just the specialized form of what we call writing—that is, the Western phonetic alphabet—but other special forms as well, the Chinese written character, cuneiform, hieroglyphs, the rebus, and so on.

Adami’s picture-writing, therefore, simply expands the picture we have of writing. It is not touted as an ideal script. Glas, moreover, uses a deconstructed version of Hegel’s analysis of signs in the *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences* (paragraphs 457-461) as well as of Saussure’s semiotic theory, to distance itself from any naive idea of the phoné as phoenix. Indeed, the phoné is more sphinx than phoenix, and at most a “foenix culprit,” to echo Joyce. Glas approaches a theory of Writing purged of all phony perspectives.

III. Wit and Wound

The importance attached to living speech, to *viva voce* discourse, is only one obstacle to such a theory. It can delude us with the hope that the phoné may be caught, a big fish, in the angle of words. Or that writing may become a “s’entendre parler,” a conversation with oneself in which, as in Hegel’s ultimate thought-process, every tone is registered and organized by the sound-machine (see Glas, 251b, Illustration 4). A subtler obstacle still, which is the obverse of the hope we place in living speech, is our capacity for being wounded through the ear.

This is not immediately obvious, because our myths deal more with the power of the voice, with Orphic effects or Milton’s “omnific Word,” than with its power to hurt us, to echo internally, and wound and even madden. The eyes are vulnerable enough, yet ears are, if anything, chaster than eyes. Words penetrate deeper into the labyrinth of the ear. The very notion of depth is difficult to associate with the eyes, and writing is brought in contact with that depth only through the mysterious formula *l’œil écoute*. What is the “eery” connection between “coup d’œil” and castration in Genet’s Rembrandt experience?
Does his "Je m'éc..." imply also a percé-phonic violence?*

The wounded ear is not as common a theme as the wounded eye, which proliferates in lover's complaints and in religious confession. Genet's experience, close to Sartrean nausea, also seems to come via the eyes. Yet we know the role "You are a thief" played in his psychic history. The fixation of identity ("Thou art that") can also evoke the unsoundness of sound. It is precisely the imaginative relation of ear to eye, or of eye-writing to ear-writing, which is at issue.

A systematic analysis would probably start with Freud's understanding of the rebus in The Interpretation of Dreams. I prefer to remain unsystematic when there is so much exploration still to be done. The phrase "the wounded ear," for instance, contains a metonymic substitution: it is not the ear that is wounded but the wound comes via the ear as organ of hearing. Yet the metonymy cannot be resolved because we do not know what is wounded. To say the psyche is wounded, merely leads to the further question, what is the psyche?, and so to more figures of speech. Similarly, if the question is—radically stated—how sound is sound?, the equivocation undermines the very idea of a cure, whether of speech or through speech. We then fall back on an easier, or more traditional notion, which defines "cure" as "care," the care we should take of language.

Yet psychiatry—especially the Lacanian kind—moves within this eerie domain of "tour d'écoute" or "tour d'écriture." It giddies us, with its turnings, whether rising or falling; for "tour" itself is an equivocal word, and what we really feel, in listening or writing with sensitivity, is that the screw of language can always be turned further. Hence a nausea, or "écoeurément," coming from language itself. We know meaning always gets screwed.

Derrida often creates a deceptive prose, modeled in part on Mallarmé, that evokes a radical equivocation. This ordinary yet artificial prose is described in Positions as an "écriture bifide" facing in at least two directions and presupposing more than one

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*See, in addition to Genet's "ce qui est resté d'un Rembrandt déchiré..." Derrida's "Tympa" in Marges de la philosophie (Paris: Minuit, 1972). The "Ersatzbeziehung" between eye and penis in castration anxiety is, of course, discussed by Freud in Das Unheimliche. On the relation of wounded ear and coupure, Bataille is once again an important source through his "La mutilation sacrificielle et l'oreille coupée de Vincent van Gogh," in Documents (Paris: Mercure de France, 1968).
author’s “signature” (as in Derrière le Miroir’s interlacing of painter and writer). We seem to skirt Joyce’s words within words, his “echoland”*; yet Derrida would probably object that Joyce achieves his polyglot or palimpsest effects by driving to the limit the privilege accorded to the oral within the written, and proceeding logocentrically, word for word. Yet Derrida cannot do more than to make the domino effect of equivocation appear strangely ordinary: not exotic as in Joyce, nor precarious as in Coleridge, but an impropriety proper to language.

No nausea or vertigo is therefore induced. Equivocation is illimitable, but only because it is imitable. The screw of language can always be turned further. The trick is in the open and suggests an indefinite series of variations. Consider in the sentence quoted from Derrière le Miroir: (p. 169 above) the polyglot turn on fort (“gone” in German, “strong” in French) and qui (“chi” in Greek, that is X or the chiasmus), or the conjunction of the ideas of margin (of a page), frame (of a picture) and board (of a boat) in the phrase “par dessus bord.” Add “tombe”–“tombe par dessus bord”–and construe it as a noun, and the syntax continues to dissolve into words beneath words that yield a rattle-repetition of the themes of “chute monumentale” and “glas.”

IV. Pinking Philosophy

By bringing word-tecnne so openly into philosophical discourse, Derrida moves away from a pudeur surrounding the relation of language to the machine, including the machine of the body. It is hard to define this pudeur, which has pervaded literary criticism since the attack on wit (false wit) in neoclassical theories of decorum. Perhaps it was felt that wit in its extreme forms exhibited a wound, although no theory before Freud said more than that wit’s abuse of language was also an abuse of nature. The ingenious gardener, wit, deals in forbidden mixtures, grafting, adulterating, producing puns or “Pinks” as double as man’s mind (see Andrew Marvell’s “The Mower against Gardens”). The

difference between art and nature is in danger of being lost. The infectious or promiscuous variety that results threatens to bring a leprous insubstantiality into language and nature. But in Marvell, as in Derrida, we never lose sight of the reversibility of the theme: their witty, overdeveloped flowers of language suggest a precious wound associated with the language of flowers. The wound of wit, in brief, lies close to the wound of love.

Nature’s shameless use of the machine of “antherection” or “dissemination” should make art blush; and Derrida’s methodical use of wit in philosophic discourse is this blush—or flush—methodized. The hurt to the ego that the indifference of passionate love inflicts stands in a complex relation to the reassertion of difference (e.g., “esteem” of the opposite sex) which that indifference can produce, but by mechanical or impersonal means that operate more reliably than the affected, vulnerable ego.

Now philosophy, strangely enough, has always tried to deflower language instead of appreciating it as a fertile machine for figures and metaphors. Yet how can you deflower a machine à fleurs? Derrida knows that philosophy is in language, and that its style is radically metaphoric. Then what can he do for philosophy, or for our word-consciousness? Is his punsterish, cataphrastic style good or bad?

There is no such thing as a good pun. Puns are the only thing beyond good and evil. Perhaps we could talk, like Horace, of curious felicities or splendid vices of style—I don’t know. Philosophy is more shameless because of Derrida but not therefore less veiled. Our consciousness of words is raised to the point where an embarrassment of riches is felt that returns us to a state of reserve and uncertainty: to an appreciation of the mute letter. Mute letters are the discreet jewels of meaning. Their potential, their reserve, is eloquent (Poeil écoute) yet they suggest a “chose” (perhaps “la chose freudienne,” perhaps “la chose heideggerienne”) that cannot be named as such. They introduce, therefore, an indeterminacy affecting both nomination and interpretation. A “Je ne sais quoi” or a “Quoi du reste,” which is as coy as it is uncanny.

Of course, the distinction between the mute letter and the muteness of the written character generally, is a relative one. Theory must respect both. Derrida suggests that to interpret
this muteness as a positive negation is inadequate, if not mistaken. Silence speaks, but as silence. He also suggests that there is no "relève," no "aufhebung" of that fact. We are free to understand it, that is all.

Shall we say that we need that reserve, as if nurturance were at stake? Or that it is the portion put aside, not for use, made sacred... a sacred no-thing? Making sense of it is not put in doubt, but rather theories that have tried to make sense of making sense, and made nonsense. Yet their nonsense is itself often valued by Derrida. He does not fear the seemingly absurd or anomalous idea a strong theory may bring to birth. That risk, in fact, is the very result of intellectual gestation, as if the chance of strange but also remarkable issues increased with the age of the parent.

When Sarah overhears God promising Abraham a child, she laughs; and perhaps that is what philosophy is doing in Nietzsche and Derrida.

V. The Fortunes of Wit

Glas, therefore, puts "philosophèmes en liberté." As if to realize Jean Paul Richter's definition of wit, it reduces philosophic systems to clauses and mixes ideas like cards in an intellectual gaming, good only for those who know how to win because they understand play.* For the first time since Nietzsche and the German Romantics the question of play and wit is renewed in so radical a fashion that intellectual and aesthetic history is unable to absorb it.

We know, of course, what happened to the German aestheticians, to Jean Paul and Friederich Schlegel. (Others might be mentioned: Derrida quotes Novalis in La Dissemination.) Their ideas on the "chemical" or combinatory force of wit in philosophy, or on Romantic irony as a quality of art subvering even while it embraced all genres and positions, was swallowed up by Hegel's vast dialectical enterprise. Hegel's dialectic is seemingly based on something more concrete than mere play of wit or an infinitizing irony. It embodies "the cunning of reason." Yet this cunning shows itself, in Hegel, as an endless kind of wit, or the interpreter's will to overcome dialectic, reason what the conclusion from contrary primal illusion ("Schleiermacher taught us to laugh over the will to art what is error, the end"

Derrida, the one who have expected (contemporary [i.e., Benjamin) and the German Romantics, Shakespeare, and so on to do, except regress is the to go to German superficialities. many-sided Derrida's own kinds of critical specific genres. Genet is itself.

That the is may even be a For the point knows of. Fr libido. These the decorum honest man! it had to be to which wit. What cou: "sêinctor"? simply false
will to overcome “Willkür” (arbitrariness). Reason, through the dialectic, represents as something always already on the way to reason what remains subversive of it. Nietzsche, drawing his own conclusion from this “representation,” extracted from Hegel the contrary principles of a will to power (or truth) and of artistic illusion (“Schein”). The wit of art, he implies, is a will to power over the will to power. Art represents as something on the way to art what is subversive of it. It makes the truth—that is, untruth, error, the endlessness of desire or will or wit itself—bearable.

Derrida, then, goes through Hegel to Nietzsche. One might have expected him to go through Hegel to the foundation of contemporary aesthetics (“Kunstkritik,” says the young Walter Benjamin) in the fragmentary, counter-encyclopedic work of the German Romantics—itself inspired by further sources, by Shakespeare, Cervantes, Sterne’s *Tristram Shandy*. This he fails to do, except for remarks on Novalis. The problem of historical regress is the one infinity not faced by Derrida. Nor did he have to go to Germany: though Romantic irony set itself against the superficialities of Gallic wit, there is always the paradoxical and many-sided Diderot. Which is not to the point unless it affects Derrida’s outwitting of the principle of closure in historicizing kinds of criticism, those that value the institutionalization of specific genres or orders of discourse. Juxtaposing Hegel and Genet is itself a subversion of historical or genre criticism.

VI. “Dissemination”

That the labor of wit may abort we take for granted. Wit may even be a disease of language, but then only as lust is of sex. For the point of wit is that it has more language than language knows of. Freud showed clearly enough that wit is language-libido. These two infinities of wit and lust have always plagued the decorum of social existence. Pascal tried so hard to be an honest man! Yet the very ideal of “l’honnête homme,” or that it had to be put forward as an explicit ethos, betrays the degree to which wit was feared.

What could Pascal’s “honnête homme” say to Derrida’s “sceinctor”? The danger sensed by European classicism was not simply false wit (a trivial and aesthetic fault) but the prospect
of endless fakery. With the spread of technical skills, and a secularized principle of imitation, the sacred patterns were in danger not only of being profaned but also of being counterfeited.

There might be no way a father could easily recognize his child, or the true line, in this coming age of bastardy. “Let Rehob rejoice with Caucaulis Bastard Parsley,” Smart writes in his madness, or in the “errance joyeuse du graphein.” That he pairs a Biblical figure (minor or not) with a common plant, and a proper name with a multiplying mouthful, is a miraculous cast of the tongue. It is wit as Jean Paul, or Freud, understood it, “wild pairings without a priest.” If there is a priest, it is the author—whose authority, however, is what is put in question by such promiscuous yokings. There is no way to reconcile Dr. Johnson’s protest against “heterogeneous ideas linked by violence together” with Smart’s practice, except through the Blakean proposition that contraries are not, simply, negations.

The rich darkness or “famillionaire” quality of Smart’s verses expresses a strange economy. We may call it, after Derrida, and risking paradox, an economy of dissemination, one that reflects the unleashing of vernacular wit in Reformation and Renaissance, its attempted repression by the neoclassical reaction, and its renewed upsurge (sometimes as madness) leading to Derrida’s appraisal of “dissemination” as “that which does not return to the father.”

The word, that is, cannot be justified by a reference to the logos, or sacred origins, even when it still desires this. It is a word cast on the waters, a prodigal without hope of return. The “imitation of nature” now takes nature literally and substitutes the image of a creative self-scattering for the “collected” imitation of a divine pattern: the “legein” of the logos. The rock parsley in which Rehob rejoices is not the rock on which Peter built his church, yet “parsley,” as a word, roots back to “petersilie” and “petroselinum.” Smart’s proliferating verses heed the first, imperative blessing uttered in the Bible: “Be fruitful and multiply” (Genesis, 1: 14).

The concept of mimesis changes, is changeable. Yet Derrida fails to provide a history that charts the path from “imitation” to “dissemination.” Perhaps he thinks that such a history would show nothing but a self-deceived consciousness: deceived repeatedly, endlessly. But start with death. Start with the end of returning to Beginning.”

arbitrary sound to Genet? Who in a discussion of Hegel, or Erasmus?

The joyful in Romance.

Perhaps with (developed in as a perpetual it is important verifiability—an tongues is esse nation, which imitation, trans parody. Other abstract and a slice of text.

To extend sow their wile was a witty a pater-patterns translated the plowed what they praised helpful here, faced a similar riches (“mutation—Santa...
peatedly, endlessly, by the logocentric fallacy.* As mystery stories start with death, so the joyful mystery he has learnt from Nietzsche starts with the death of God: with the abandonment of all hope of returning to the father by imitating a Word that was “In the Beginning.” But so global and undifferentiated a view leads to arbitrary soundings and selections. Why the importance accorded to Genet? Why the emphasis on Mallarmé (even if doubled by a discussion of Plato)? What of the great Romantics, other than Hegel, or the fertile writers of the Renaissance: Rabelais, Ronsard, Erasmus?

The joyful wandering of the written word begins, if anywhere, in Romance, although it is hard to say where Romance begins. Perhaps with Homer’s *Odyssey*. But leaving aside that speculation (developed in Northrop Frye’s emphasis on the design of Romance as a perpetual displacement of sacred patterns or archetypal myths), it is important to remark that nearer home—near enough for verifiability—the literary evolution of the vulgar or vernacular tongues is essential for an understanding of the concept of dissemination, which clearly belongs in a differentiated series with imitation, translation, contamination, secularization, and (sacred) parody. Otherwise the concept’s probative value is lost in the abstract and monotonous vigor of its application to this or that slice of text.

To extend these remarks. The developing vernaculars had to sow their wild oats and did so by “imitation.” But this “imitation” was a witty and varied bootlegging of older and sacred texts, the pater-patterns. The great vernacular authors betrayed as well as translated these patterns: they ransacked the paternal store and plowed what they found into their national poems. In short, they praised Rehob but cultivated bastard parsley. Virgil was helpful here, and especially the *Georgics*, for the Romans had faced a similar problem with the absorption of Greek and Italic riches (“munera”). That this activity of translation or contamination—Santayana somewhere gives its formula as Santa Maria

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*But see “La Double Séance” in *La Dissemination* (Paris: Seuil, 1972) for Derrida’s subtlest if still subversive valuing of history-writing: “Entre Platon et Mallarmé, dont les noms propres, ici encore, ne sont pas des références réelles mais des indications de commodité et de première analyse, une histoire a eu lieu” (p. 209).
sopra Minerva, which Kenneth Burke alters to ecclesia supra cloacam—was joyous as well as pious or anxious is suggested when Virgil asks the divinities of Greece and Italy to join the Roman tutelary gods in a dance at the opening of the Georgics: “ferte simul Faunique pedem.”

This literary efflorescence, then, whether of Latin or Renaissance literature, should be considered a “first” stage of the dissemination Derrida talks of: what is cultivated here only returns to the father nominally. Not everything, of course, goes in this direction. The Counter-Reformation, and Loyola’s “exercises,” restore the principle of imitation in a militant way, even if in a John Donne or Christopher Smart meditational verse becomes prodigal once again. Moreover, what could not return to the father tended to “adorn” or “illustrate” the mother: either a Mary substitute, or the mother-tongue.

Each revival of wit is therefore already a “second” stage of this dissemination; and while the notion of stages can produce a naive historicity, it is unconscionable not to consider the development of the national literatures in their specific and peculiar relations to the history of religion: one should at least raise the question of what translating the Bible meant to language (Luther’s pithiness and even grossness still influences the “Mutterwitz” of Jean Paul), what theologies or theories of reading evolved, and what attempts were made to subordinate art to a regulated principle of imitation.

The place of the Romantic poets in this history of dissemination is among its most fascinating chapters. When, for example, in his earliest verses, Blake invites Autumn, “laden with fruit, and stained/ With the blood of the grape” to stay with him, “and all the daughters of the year shall dance” (see “To Autumn” in Poetical Sketches, published 1783), he is still echoing the “ferte pedem” of Georgics I, as well as the “huc, pater o Lenaee, veni” of Georgics II. His imitation is, however, so removed from the “father-text” that the latter ceases to exist except in one respect: Blake has understood the “translation of empire” theme in Virgil, and substituted (according to the Virgilian model itself, at least in the Georgics) the arts of peace for those of war. Hence “blood of the grape” is more than an apt Hebraism. The poet is fashioning Georgics in or against the reign of the Georges. In his later, more explicitly visioned through instantaneous festivity, becomes the end of imitation—or dithyrambic dionysiac myths:

Then fell he down,
Into the wide
Of human
The blood
All round
“O terrible
How lovely
O trembling
Urthona came,
Numerous,
Tharmas
They formed
Of glass & p
And took a

With Derrida directed analytically to the principle (the “mode of the Western logo-imitative imago”) cannot be returned to heaven. Instead by a mode of it Derrida abstracted What emerged the first time s nearest to Derr reconciliation of “bifide,” as in l enriching confi
explicitly visionary poems, the "dissemination" here conveyed through intertwining themes of harvesting, rest, wine, song and festivity, becomes a large-scale, ambivalent denial of the principle of imitation—or the "ragging" (in the form of a repetitive, quasidithyrambic dismembering) of Biblical creation and regeneration myths:

Then fell the Legions of Mystery in madd'ning confusion,
Down, down thro' the immense, with outcry, fury & despair,
Into the wine presses of Luvah; howling fell the clusters
Of human families thro' the deep; the wine presses were fill'd;
The blood of life flow'd plentiful. Odors of life arose
All round the heavenly arches, & the Odors rose singing this song:

"O terrible wine presses of Luvah! O caverns of the Grave!
How lovely the delights of those risen again from death!
O trembling joy! excess of joy is like Excess of grief."

Urthona call'd his sons around him: Tharmas call'd his sons
Numerous; they took the wine, they separated the Lees,
And Luvah was put for dung on the ground by the Sons of
Tharmas & Urthona.
They formed heavens of sweetest woods, of gold & silver & ivory,
Of glass & precious stones. They loaded all the waggons of heaven
And took away the wine of ages with solemn songs & joy.
(The Four Zoas)

With Derrida dissemination enters a new phase. It is now directed analytically—prosaically, if you wish—against the mimetic principle (the "collect" or "legein" of the logos) in major texts of the Western tradition. They are so separated from a direct logo-imitative intention by his deconstructive readings that they cannot be returned to the father: their author, or their author in heaven. Instead of converting the straying text to a central truth by a mode of interpretation similar to allegoresis or sacred parody, Derrida absolutizes the text's "error."

What emerges is, in fact, an anti-allegoresis, and perhaps for the first time since Philo of Alexandria. (Kenneth Burke stands nearest to Derrida in this.) Interpretation no longer aims at the reconciliation or unification of warring truths. Literature is always "bifide," as in Mallarmé. More "bifide" than the often happy and enriching conflict between Latin and the Vernacular, or a hieratic
high-style and the corrosivating wit of a sprouting, idiomatic mother-tongue. For the movement away from the father does not lead to the redemptive adornment of a complementary, maternal presence, except in certain Jungian or mythological versions of the attack on the “masculine trinity” of the logos. Instead the prestige of all origins, of all ultimate sources (spermatic word or immaculate womb), is questioned.

VII. A Two-handed Engine

What does it mean, though, for practical criticism? Derrida argues that it is the mother who “speaks” through Jean Genet’s style, despite its classical and biblical resonance. The style is taken to be a dissemination, or ultimate denial of patrology. From a historical perspective, however—the one we have sketched—Genet’s style is rather the revenge of the mother on a neoclassical tradition that almost strangled vernacular literature in its cradle. An impossible counter-purity is posited, an idealization of the (original and lost) mother-tongue. The Anglo-American tradition, which did not experience so strongly the neoclassical episteme—which did not, in other words, suffer academic or social censorship from the seventeenth into the nineteenth centuries—is much less productive of such gifted alienes as Genet, of “martyrs” of language like Roussel, Artaud and Leiris, or of exemplary madmen like Brissot. It never totally repressed, in the name of purity of diction, the fertile, even promiscuous, mix of idioms in Shakespeare and Donne or in the visionary satire of Swift and Blake; and what it lost it recovered in Joyce and the philological exorbitance of Smart’s Jubilate Agno (first published in 1939).

There is much less fuss over origins in our tradition, because, in literature at least, no doctrine of purity prevailed long enough to cause an overestimation of excluded, hence “lost,” tendencies. Derrida’s attack on originary thinking is, nevertheless, important for criticism. He shows that the more we penetrate a text the more its textual and intertextual weaving appears; and this is not a matter, simply, of coming to know through the chosen book more and more sources. That would be source-study and explication de texte all over again. What one comes to know is the unintelligibility—the “abysmation” or “échappé de vue ins Unendliche” (F. Schlegel)—of the literary work. To approach,
tendentially, absolute knowledge is also, as in science, to approach a form of understanding that faces toward scepticism or unknowingness. Derrida is thus closer to Jost Amman’s remarkable Shandy-like genealogy than to Hiltensperger’s logocentric labyrinth (Illustrations 5 and 6). Reading should be an “errance joyeuse” rather than the capitalization of great books by interpretive safeguards.

It is hard to see how dissemination could be formalized. It is a “travail de textes,” their working-through, in which the texts themselves undergo a renewed birth-labor. Being attentive to the multiplicity of themes or the polysemy of a work of art constitutes a progress over “linear” explication, but is not sufficient. The horizon of criticism, which is the assumption of unity of meaning, has itself to be breached. “La dissemination... pour produire un nombre non-fini d’effets sémantiques, ne se laisse reconduire ni à un présent d’origine simple... ni à une présence eschatologique. Elle marque une multiplicité irréductible et générative” (Positions, pp. 61-62).

Can this disseminative kind of reading still be called a reading? Can a new “horizon” or “foundation” be discovered, as was attempted for mathematics at the turn of the nineteenth century? Or are we already in the presence of an unknown “geometry,” perhaps an old one, if we think of the exegetical “gematria” proposed by Derrida’s essay on Sollers’ Nombres? I suspect that the disseminating commentary of Glas resembles the “two-handed engine” Milton alludes to in Lycidas when denouncing the clergy, who, in modern dress, are the clerisy, the provosts and purveyors of literary study.

Derrida’s engine does not, of course, have the strength to smite once and for all. Its two-handedness remains symbolic of its impotence: it reproduces itself merely, giving us doubles that make us see more doubles still. The result for our time may be a factional split between simplifying types of reading that call themselves humanistic and indefinitizing kinds that call themselves scientific. The fate of reading is in the balance. In a classroom darkly.

VIII. New Literary History?

In this twilight, theories of literary progress or decadence are bound to emerge. A further battle of Ancients and Moderns,
though it may never reach the Armageddon stage, seems to be in the making. McLuhanism, for instance, suggests a progress beyond the bookish or written word. The dead letter will be sounded or electrified once more, revived by a providence working in the guise of technology. Northrop Frye, though less materialistic, also remains firm and hopeful in his belief that the logos will continue to propagate. Not because the Bible, that book of books, is a sacred or privileged text, but because like any other strong depository of myth it produces “displacements” of itself.

The uncheerful obverse of such speculations is Harold Bloom’s understanding of literary continuity, his revision of Oscar Wilde’s “The Necessity of Lying” as “The Necessity of Misreading.” Bloom charts a recessional rather than evangelical movement of the logos. The difference in scope or literary power of Old and New Testament is a significant example of this. The scandal of the New Testament lies in its diminishment of the Old. The course of English poetry after Milton is similarly that of a decline, a negative progress. Bloom has reintroduced the Kabbalistic concepts of “zimzum” (God’s shrinking of himself) and the “breaking of the vessels” to dramatize a falling-off which is the prerequisite for a quasi-divine creation or dissemination: any strong artistic achievement depends on this sacrificial scattering of the burden of tradition or imagination. As if, in order to escape the sphinx that blocks us, or the incumbent shadow of literary heredity, we had to cut off limb after limb. One can only hope that, synecdoche being a rich device, this “coupure” into parts that save the whole may continue indefinitely.

Bloom, like Derrida, takes seriously Nietzsche’s view that Christian asceticism is not what it seems to be but a form of nihilism: a will to live, even a will to power, drawn from the very awareness that God is dead and life unmediated. Or mediated only by illusions like the “ideal” of asceticism. Bloom’s analysis of the deepening twilight of art yields a grammar of illusions: six “bifide” or cloven fictions by which the literary sons arrogate enough authority to pretend to their father’s kingdom. In its parodistic motion, therefore, Bloom’s chariot of wrath remains one of Urthona’s “waggons of heaven” loaded with the “wine of ages,” with “solemn songs and joy.”

Even the most materialistic America, the “or within the patria more than charm (bones, stones) lie how close, on c joyeuse du grap imitation and diss He suffered as a to Stephen Daed Who knows Is father was Ahab, Ahb, Aba The father, in M mosaic unsourced whale” (Moby-D divine voice speaks That voice is f It can hardly be while demanding image of the sea Leviathan, and the of the earth. And thousand camels, as well as seven s Melville’s neg seed, to a non-s gropings (“by ho arrive at a sterile gr about stones in Sc of stones; men ar stony places; and f stones.” “The figurative then, but the figur aperable in vain.”
Even the most radical literary movement in contemporary America, the “oral poetry” of the school of Charles Olson, stays within the patriarchal aegis. It seeks, as is already clear in Pound, more than charm of cadence or fidelity of speech: can these tones (bones, stones) live, and be new hieroglyphs to us? It is strange how close, on occasion, “oral poetry” comes to the “errance joyeuse du graphein.” Yet its theory hovers unresolved between imitation and dissemination. “Melville was agonized over paternity. He suffered as a son. He had lost the source. He demanded to know the father.” So Charles Olson in Call me Ishmael, waking the pathos of a tradition (the redemptive search of the son for the father, of the father for the son) that goes back, with ease, to Stephen Daedalus.

Who knows Ishmael’s “proper” name? The biblical Ishmael’s father was Abram, or Abraham. Does Ahab contain Abraham? Ahab, Ahb, Abba. “Ahab sera désormais le sigle du père absolu.” The father, in Melville, is not to be known—except as the “ante-mosaic unsourced existence of the unspeakable terrors of the whale” (Moby-Dick). As an “unfathered vapour,” then, or the divine voice speaking out of the whirlwind in the Book of Job.

That voice is fathomless, however. It has no sons or daughters. It can hardly be described as delighting in dissemination. Yet while demanding that Job gird up his loins, it also utters the image of the sea bursting from the womb, the unconvenantable Leviathan, and the Sons of God shouting for joy at the foundation of the earth. And it restores to Job fourteen thousand sheep, six thousand camels, a thousand yoke of oxen, a thousand she-asses, as well as seven sons and three daughters.

Melville’s negative way leads him, ultimately, to stones instead of seed, to a non-source among stones that cannot live. His gothic gropings (“by horrible gropings we come to the central room”) arrive at a sterile golgotha. “Stones of Judea. We read a good deal about stones in Scripture. Monuments and memorials are set up of stones; men are stoned to death; the figurative seed falls in stony places; and no wonder. . . . Judea is one accumulation of stones.”

“The figurative seed falls in stony places.” Not only the seed, then, but the figure, the parable itself. The sower throws the parable in vain. “Even the loose stones that cover the highway/
I gave a moral life,” Wordsworth writes, seeking his parable among the pebbles. What we need is a new Deucalion. “He who has ears, let him hear,” says Matthew 13. But stones have no ears. Is this dissemination?

IX. Die Frage nach dem Ohr.

In children’s verse, of course, pebbles may speak. Mute or insensitive things can be heard. This “groping” of the ear, however, becomes “horrible” in gothic fiction or simply in certain imaginations. Though Melville asked, “Who can get a Voice out of Silence?”, what is gropingly heard may be more horrifying than silence itself. What did Acteon hear?

In trying to understand in what way the psyche is like a text, Derrida remembers a famous passage from Moses and Monotheism which makes the analyst an exegete of darkness: in search of the erased primal crime through a text of traces. So Genet’s “Je m’éco…” evoked at the beginning of Glas, together with the tearing up of “Rembrandt,” could be the sign of an internal discourse that has become lacunary, because censored or mutilated or converted into non-verbal symptoms. A self-suppressed “je m’écoeur,” it also points toward a “je m’écris” in which we hear the cri of the torn or missing portion (...). The silence speaks as in pictures; even screams, as in conversion neuroses. We understand better why Genet’s reflexively formulated (“je me”) experience of alterity is associated with the mute interrogation of certain Rembrandt paintings.

The “je m’éco…” prevents, in the very act of writing down, the flowing out it denotes. Something is blocked as well as elided. By stopping (punctuating) the phrase this way, Genet suspends its flow and throws the emphasis back on the closed circuit of self-constitution. Feared loss of self produces a new self-affirmation, yet reveals in passing an ambiguity in the psychic mechanism of identification. The “je me” is a mirror kind of doubling, and the “éco…” evokes a sound common to both écoute (écrit, écris, etc.) and extase. Identification, according to Lacan, is a mode not simply of stasis but of ecstasy: temporality, or language as the foundation-process of differential meaning, is arrested by the premature assumption of a fixating ego-image. “Je m’éco…” considered a re-exaltation of Otherness threatened with permanence.

To add identification is, however, equivocally interpreted. Though the supple supply (or supply of all of what we call religious) element of “Je m’éco…”, the words fall down.

What is described is a wound, the emergence of Something Wrong, a breach in Genet’s mute discours du continuot. The “je me…” is a breach of words, the wound is a miracle.
sidered as a complex *psycheme* could therefore be translated: I re-exalt my identity by regressing through this experience of Otherness to the primal ecstasy which fixed my now newly threatened identity—fixed it once and for all in the foreclosure of permanent exile.

To add “je m’exile” only emphasizes how dependent interpretation is, in this case, on (1) an indeterminable, if self-constituted, equivocation, and (2) on what we know, from Genet or his interpreters, about Genet’s life. The indeterminate “je m’éc...” puts almost too much pressure on the interpreter, who has to supply (out of himself, as it were) a series of possible closures, all of which are at risk. If we see the episode as a whole in a dark religious light, it becomes an “Ecce homo.” If we emphasize the element of aural narcissism, then “je m’éc...” moves closer to “I echo myself.” If we emphasize the physical disgust or *écoeurement*, then “je m’éc...” reverts to a self-strangulated sound, as if words were, at that moment, a kind of vomit to be swallowed down.

What remains a constant, however, is that the experience as described by Genet does not involve an actual exchange of words. It is completely silent. The only words are those he writes (although they include patches of inner colloquy). He sees a stranger, and he juxtaposes with that his seeing-experience of certain paintings. The “Thou art that” emanates in its allocutory strength from purely visual sources.

Because Genet’s eyes, and finally his sex, seem to sustain the wound, the interpreter gropes toward understanding the predominance of sight in the economy of (this) human experience. Something is wrong when all is done or suffered in pseudosilence. Wrong, precisely, with that “economy” (“je m’économise”?). Genet’s text is merely a legend or *legomenon* that circles the mute *dromenon*, as if psychic life were ritual at the core, a continuous rebus. Then what is the status of words in all this?

The “je m’éc...” punctures a dual discourse that is too suave. It breaches the pseudosilence; makes us aware of the physicality of words. The loss portrayed comes close to being a word-loss. The words continue, of course; their mental or masturbatory charm is not broken despite the castrating glance evoked. But to unriddle the rebus means, here, not only to word things but...
to word words: to understand, through the coupure of "je m'ec..." and the symbolic wounding of "Rembrandt" that words themselves have become the actors, the "comedians" and "martyrs" of what is enacted. To get a voice out of this silence means to rescue "Genet": the relation of proper name or signature to meaning—to the possibility of a proper meaning, of a "cleanly," "pure" identity, rather than the unclean, improper "vide solide" experienced. The nom propre is non-propre.*

It is, then, after all, the ear that is cut off, and which must grope to restore either itself or a wounded name. "The signature is a wound and there is no other origin of the work of art" (Glas, 207b). Yet this grooping is done not so much by the ear as by language, or "une référence irréductible à l'intervention muette d'un signe écrit" (Positions, p. 16). This "mute intervention" or mimique we call writing is the problem, since we can never get it to speak itself out: to sound its object definitively rather than to "economize" it by a complex exchange of words or representations.

A curious affinity is suggested, therefore, between "Genet" and the "Pierrot" of Mallarmé's Mimique. Pierrot is as mute as writing; his sex is uncertain or amphibious; his action also a passion; and his representation undecidably sacred or obscene. And, as in Hamlet (which stages the dumbshow of a king poisoned through the ear), nothing survives at the end but "a wounded name."

X. Signature and Wound

If there be rule in unity itself,

This is not she... This is, and is not Cressid.

—Shakespeare

The wounded signatures or names (Illustrations 7, 8, 9, and 10): what wounds them? The fact that they are purely visionary tokens, or the error made by the poet who is, and is not, at the same time, the author of the poem, the certain knowledge that the text is not in unity—this hurt even the author of the text. It is, as allusive or equivocal, that the "doubt" of the discussion, and of the discussion, the question of who is conscious of who in the text, who is conscious of who in the same, but not in the other: the writer for another and in a context, of the author, more out than in.

The Frenchman, as we have seen, is, while A is, to localize the name. The one word that determines the text, it is no other than the identity-loss of the name. The text, of the name, is the "definitive"...
tokens, or that they cannot be "proper," in the sense of coinciding fully with the text or corpus to which they are affixed. *Nomen* is, and is not, *numen*. Yet the greatest, most obvious blot on the name is equivocation. When, through the equivocal character of words, or the interpretive process that brings it out, we lose the certainty that there is a proper meaning—or, at least, a "rule in unity"—the hurt strikes as deep as slander. We may sense this hurt even more in the interpreter than in the writer who is his object. For the very fullness of an interpreter's style, if richly allusive or speculative, or contaminated by the writer under discussion, leaves us with a hollow feeling. The interpreter's words are conscious of meaning more than they can say, of being caught up in the *task* of equivocation. The writer may be doing exactly the same, but by becoming the "object" of another's view, the writer for another writer, he seems more natural, unself-conscious: more *out there*.

The French critical tradition has taken this task of equivocation on, while Anglo-American criticism still seeks to limit it, and remain "proper." American psychoanalysis, similarly, continues to localize trauma or wound in various types of primal scenes. The one wound is hypostatized as the eloquent, repeatable trauma that determines all. Derrida's "The signature is a wound and there is no other origin of the work of art" still links the wound to identity-loss but through the complex relation of signature and text, of the knotting and unknitting of would-be "proper" or "definitive" words.

**XI. Derrida's Knot.**

That the word "knot" may echo in the mind as "not" is one of those small changes which analyst or exegete are trained to hear. "When thou hast done, thou hast not done." There are so many knots: Donnean, Penelopean, Lacanian, Borromean, Derridean. At the beginning of *Glás*, the similarity in sound of *Sa* (acronym for "savoir absolu") and *Sa* ("signifiant") is such a knot with a positive philosophic yield. Yet because of the equivocal, echo-nature of language, even identities or homophonies sound on: the sound of *Sa* is knotted with that of "ça," as if the text were signalling its intention to bring Hegel, Saussure, and
Freud together. In French, “ça” corresponds to the Freudian Id (“Es”); and it may be that our only “savoir absolu” is that of a “ça” structured like the Sa-signifiant: a bacchic or Lacanian “primal process” where only signifier-signifying-signifiers exist.

Moreover, in the same marginal comment where the Sa makes its appearance, Derrida “invents” another acronym, IC, for the Immaculate Conception. By the time we actually reach this theme in his discussion of Genet we are pages further on, and its introduction here through so peculiar a device seems quite arbitrary. But again, as with Sa, another homophone is involved, so that language seems to motivate itself, as in the paragraphs of Saussure. IC is the “ici” of “ici, maintenant” (Glas, 1a) gliding via its sound-shape into a concept and so echo-deconstructing it. The doctrine of the IC is simply an “ici” writ large, the exemplary instance for Western tradition of a metaphysics of presence.

The doubling of “ici” like that of “Sa” is in itself a sign of the impossibility of presence and reinforces what is implied by the split page and the dual commentary. Does Derrida know he is quoting himself in this icitation? The echo-montage is willed, no doubt, but one cannot be sure the intended effect is not accompanied by an unintended one: by a daemonic rather than courteous echo. Derrida evokes a language system so equivocal that we cannot distinguish between original and citation, yet he is also so anxious to make his point that he riddles Glas with devices and interventions.

On the next page, of course, “le seing tombe”; but Derrida’s (de)construction of the IC is already like the emptying of some large concept or weighty word—its fall into the débris of isolated letters. The fall foregrounds them, at the same time: erects the possibility of a more lapidary alphabet or post-phonetic writing. Could the “je m’éc...” opposite, echo the IC, and suggest an impossibly dense thought-sound EC/IC that can only be decondensed, like the metaphysical “ici,” by écriture?* 

Derrida re/ conjoined the Immaculate (their “ici git.”) and the Divine (the “Ecriture”) language into “Pièce de resistance” (the “Icte”).

Je me force à me rendre fière de mes “ici” que je me suis réjue de nommer “I-ici, I-ci” (la dissemblance qu’il fait) avec la circonstance, con l’a tout un “ici” sans le désigner.

Enough, yet. Let me try... I have added that crossing one’s problematic together with (as in “la voix” and CHI. It focusses on IC. “Je,” “Jeu,” }

*In “La Double Sémance” (“double science”) Derrida therefore extends Freud’s understanding of the antithetical character of primal words to all possible syntactic units: “... on peut reconnaître une certaine loi de série à ces jeux de pivotement indéfini: ils marquent les points de ce qui ne se laisse jamais maîtriser, relever, dialectiser par Erinnerung et Aufhebung. Est-ce par hasard que tous ces effets de jeu, ces ‘mots’ qui échappent à la maîtrise philosophique, ont... un rapport très singulier à l’écriture?” (La Dissémination, p. 250).
Derrida returns to "ici" near the end of *Glas*, after having conjoined the phantoms of Immediacy (Presence) and of the Immaculate Conception. He can therefore write their epitaph: their "ici g!t." He does so by an *icitation* from Genet that hollows language into equivocation even while hallowing the death of "Divine" (the "mother" in *Pompes funèbres*):

> Je me força à dire, à me redire, avec l'agaçante répétition des scies I-ci, I-ci, I-ci, I-ci. Mon esprit s'aiguissait sur l'endroit que désignait "Ici." Je n'assistais même plus à un drame. Aucun drame n'avait pu se passer dans un lieu si étroit, insuffisant à tout présence. "I-ci, I-ci, I-ci. Qu'on l'a tué, qu'on l'a tué, qu'on l'a tué, con l'a tué, con l'a tué..." et je fis mentalement cette épitaphe: "Ici con l'a tué." (287b)

Enough, you say. But Derrida adds: "Reste ici ou glas qu'on ne peut arrêter." In his pamphlet on Adami, Derrida plays further on IC, which now reappears in the form of ICH ("I" or "Je"), the abbreviated ICH (TOS) symbol for Christ (see the fish of Adami's picture), and by chiasmic reversal both the chiasmus itself (X) transliterated as CHI, and the querulous pronoun QUI. Freeplay reaches here a methodical craziness that parallels Christopher Smart’s. But taken altogether a series of slippery signifiers has now established itself on the basis of the problematics of the subject, its construction and subversion. Though this verbal gematria is no more, no less, persuasive than Lacan’s diagrammatia, it has the same treacherously memorable effect, as if Lacan’s imaginary and symbolic realms had finally come together in a sort of *specular script*.

Let me try to formulate this basic mirror-writing as

**IC:ICH / CHI:INRI**

I have added the last term, the name of Christ on the Cross, to that crossing or chiasmic middle term, which stands for the problematics of subject or ego, and to the first term which evokes, together with the initials of Christ and the first syllable of ICarus (as in "la voie/voix d'Icare"), the Immaculate Conception.

The three terms in series repeat a scene of nomination. It focusses on ICH, the narcissistic shifter, a mere text-figure when CHI. It focusses equally on the "Name of the Game," whether "Je," "Jeu," or "Je est un autre." But if to enter language is
not the same as to enter the Law, it is also not merely to learn the rules of a game. As in Kafka's parable, we remain "before" the Law, a situation that keeps us "profane" yet engages us in a hermeneutics based on hope even when we resist that hope. It is, in short, the relation of language and law that is always being worked out in "symbolic" situations.

To enter language means to risk being named, or recognized by name, to struggle against false names or identities, to live in the knowledge that reconnaissance and mépris(e) are intertwined, and that self and other are terms that glide eccentrically about an always im-proper ("metaphoric") naming of things or persons. There is no ultimate recognition scene. Glas keeps us looking in a glass, darkly. It disenchants the hope it expresses by playing language against itself, by dividing, spacing, splitting, joycing, tachygraphing, equivocating, reversing its charged words. This then is Derrida's crucifixion of the Word, that is, cruci-fiction: his crosswordings rag the story of Christ, tear a seamless garment into semes. For many this will cheapen or over-intellectualize a sacred text. Yet Derrida's negative labor can also be understood as an anamnesis of the journey of the self from IC to INRI, from a scene of ideal or spectral naming to the slander of identity.

XII. Quoi... d'un Derrida?

What reenactment of the past is needful today? "Anamnesis" implies that something is recalled that was forgotten, "remembrance" that something is recalled that is dead. "Repetition," when conjoined with "tradition," conjures up a chain of authoritative writings, as in the Pirke Avot (Sayings of the Fathers) where the Law is said to pass directly from God to Moses to the Elders. All three terms value the past as having a survival, or a right to survival, in us.

"Dissemination" is an unlikely word to add. It acknowledges that we no longer live in a world defined by certain writings having testamentary force and bending us authoritatively to their yoke. Today Old and New Testaments are simply two "texts" in a series which is profane and endless (an "entretien infini," Blanchot suggests), and to which, say, Krapp's Last Tape is just another addition. There is no way to canonize or close a series whose very character is centrifugal, disseminative—like time in Kafka, which allows a perpetuation in spite of K's hope.

In combat described in the metaphysical war between Blanchot and Camus, the intellectual is the sparsest, most sparsely the combat ends, to the point where the "modern equation" is revising itself. ("modern equation" being attribute scene. "Anamnesis" implies that something is recalled that was forgotten, "remembrance" that something is recalled that is dead. "Repetition," when conjoined with "tradition," conjures up a chain of authoritative writings, as in the Pirke Avot (Sayings of the Fathers) where the Law is said to pass directly from God to Moses to the Elders. All three terms value the past as having a survival, or a right to survival, in us.

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in Kafka, which averts the decree, or delays it long enough to allow a perplexed, erring, but very human action to take place, despite K's hope for justification.

In combating the violence of that "eschatological" hope, inscribed in the texture of both ordinary language and organized metaphysical thought, Derrida continues the work of Camus and Blanchot. Camus could not decide what was spiritual and what intellectual in this combat; while Blanchot reduces hope to its sparsest, most denuded verbal contact. Derrida seems to transfer the combat entirely to the rhetorical and intellectual side. Even to the point of denying himself what Hannah Arendt names a "modern equivalent of ritual invocations": quotes that recall or re-present voices from the past.

Though Derrida quotes liberally, and understands the relation between quotation and fragment (both are homeless, or so aphoristic that they cannot be fully assimilated to any context), he does not try to explode the past out of its pastness, to give it a new and factitious presence. Quotations still imply a hope, that of being attributed as well as integrated, and so an ultimate recognition scene. "Je comprends enfin qu'au jour du jugement, c'est avec ma propre voix que Dieu m'appelera: 'Jean, Jean'" (Glas, 220b). Derrida prefers to intermingle signatures, and he creates in Glas a scandalous literary pudding or French trifle.

It is, in a sense, a heroic trifle, a farce or satira mimetic of history's own disdain for the classicist separation of genres. A parallel could be made between Glas and Norman O. Brown's Closing Time (1973) that extends beyond their titles. Section three of Brown's book is called an "Interlude of Farce," and it mixes, as Brown does throughout, Vico, the Joyce of Finnegans Wake, and various other authors. As if Marx's famous statement in The Eighteenth Brumaire were being generalized: "Hegel says somewhere that, upon the stage of universal history, all great events and personalities reappear in one fashion or another. He forgot to add that, on the first occasion, they appear as tragedy; on the second as farce."

But Derrida's "unkenstink" seems to allow of no first or second. His interminable prose is the exfoliation or etiolation of all metaphors of innocence that view history as a succession of renaissances, of reenactments of the past, whether failed or
triumphant. What is history, then, and what can motivate us to face it, as Hegel did—a history which now includes Hegel, and may one day include Derrida?

XIII. A Question of Ground

-Où se situe le livre?
-Dans le livre.
-E. Jabès, Le Livre des Questions

The foregrounding of IC and similar “émajusculation” only raises, in its strange and graphic vividness, a MENE TEKEL aspect, or the question of the ground against which words are readable. No question the ground is slippery, when words are grounded on words. The slippage is all around us, and the principle of stabilization not very conspicuous. We seem to be stepping on soap. In the macabre comedy called Gias, the philosopher-artist is like a clown always about to fall who recovers his balance by an outrageous mimicry of the machination involved in balancing. Walking measures the ground; talking measures language; thinking is peripatetic. But the thinker also finds that thinking is beyond mesure, or that man is not the measure, not even of his language. He discovers that where he thought he was on solid ground—whether terra firma or presuppositions or whatever you name the substratum—he is (also) on language; then, that language is not a ground, but a groundless veiling of the hypothesis (itself a grounding term) of the ground.

The dilemma is historicized by Heidegger, who sees a shift from substantial- to word-thinking occurring in the “translation” of culture from Greece to Rome. Translator, traitor: but this Heideggerian version of history—whose sources go back to Hölderlin’s attempt to “translate” the Greeks, and is paralleled in our time by Buber and Rosenzweig’s effort to recapture Biblical Hebrew in German—is something that occurs all the time in writing or art, as it discovers itself to be a palimpsest, at once full of layered inscriptions and riddled by lacunae or cruxes. Joyce’s art, especially in Finnegans Wake, is symptomatic: the “nom propre,” as Derrida might say, becomes unsound by releasing an improper sound, so that the book reads like a palimpsest in which the salacious echoes at once hinder and enrich readability. Ecclesia supra cloacam...
The cloaca is still a bottom of a sort. *Finnegans Wake* remains curiously pastoral in its labor: the words sweat a sexual balm. Lust sings. It is hard to be frightened, as one can be when Blake, in his visionary machines, keeps taking the ground from under our feet, or castrates the whole body. But the void, in art, is always being exposed and limited at the same time. The opening of *Genesis* is exemplary in this respect. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was unformed and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep. . . ." The word for the deep, *t'hom*, is suspected to be the Canaanite primal Goddess Tiamat. It seems as if her proper name were taken away or never existed: she is voided into a mere noun that means "the deep." Cancelled, sublated perhaps, it (she) enters a new discourse.

Yet we do not know with certainty what the signifier "*t'hom*" signified. We see it is part of the series "unformed and void, and darkness upon. . . the deep." Our own fiat, and numerous traditional guesses called translations, give the word a sort of constancy, and match—or stalemate—the signifier. When through historical research the suppressed Tiamat emerges again, we are both delighted and perplexed. What is more substantive here, the recovery of the original name, which must remain a hypothesis, and which may itself have an original, or the way the Hebrew creation story glides over the abyss of contamination—the obscene or obscure word Tiamat—by a divine epigram that establishes its own word directly, as it were, on the abyss? Here too, then, is a translation which, in its exemplary "toils of grace," becomes accepted ground.

The specter of bricolage, sometimes dignified as syncretism, now arises. We know, with Valéry, that civilizations are mortal, that even Biblical codes may fall apart, that the translation cannot hold. Everything is stolen from "the deep" which is really a bottomless trash-heap of absolute, now obsolete, ideas, of pathetic rather than motivating words. A "fumier philosophique," Balzac called it, in describing an antiquarian store. Culture seems pieced together from bits and pieces salvaged by some conservative instinct. The doctrine of purity of diction, so dominant in France from Malherbe to almost the present, was but our latest attempt to insist on a grace beyond bricolage, a purifying labor that always
admitted it contained an obscure magic, a “je ne sais quoi.” What remains of that today? Of that coy “quoi”? Or of other movements of sublation and translation, like the dialectophag (Derrida’s word) dialectic of Hegel? “Quoi du reste aujourd’hui, pour nous, ici, maintenant, d’un Hegel?”

Strange, to think of Hegel as stylist, as discovering a new grace of style: that is, of cultural translation. This hobbling sentence of Derrida’s already deconstructs Hegel’s slippage over the abyss of words he helped us to think about: the “pour nous,” “ici,” “maintenant.” It is the question of the subject as well, or of presence and place in relation to self-presence. The question of history too, and, more insidiously, of the “quoi du reste”: the fact that there is a remainder which motivates thought or is re-motivated by it.

We glue bitty words like “ici” and “pour nous” together, into some desired unity. That unity mocks us already in the form of the word “aujourd’hui,” a sticky compound that raises the question of word boundary or juncture. Suppose we alter one boundary slightly, using a glue like that of the liaison (the d’). Suppose we lift typographically the negative liaison of the comma thereby transforming it into an apostrophe to create a new spacing of the sounds: “quoi du rest’aujourd’hui, pour nous. . . .” By so doing we release the elided name of Heidegger into a sentence that seems to deal only with Hegel, for now “quoi du reste,” that is, “Die Frage nach dem Ding,” emerges (like Tiamat) from the word “reste,” as if this question, today, were what remained for us, as the only possibility for grounding thought, though a question that keeps echoing and cannot be answered once for all (“Qu’est-ce qu’une chose? Qu’est-ce que le nom de chose,” Gis, 11b).

“On a touché au vers,” Mallarmé said; now, on touche à la prose. Boundaries are what one thinks. Fickle, punctuated sounds, wavering between prose and poetry, yet solid too, because of habit and of linguistic rules like the liaison, or the binary opposition of marked and unmarked. This interstitial kind of thinking, this margin-haunted and liminal discourse, prevents language from being reified into, on the one hand, poetry and literature, and on the other, prose and philosophy.

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Texts are a sustaining as because of God, says the
or on the more, wise a false be not to being a truth for those that obtrudes to not to fall, means as to keep through the ey the “here hear that must end
If thinking is for us, today, textual, then we should understand that grounding. To some extent it can and must be argued that we have fallen into the condition of viewing all things as texts, and even the “thing” itself is textual. Structured “like” language, Lacan says ambiguously of “la chose freudienne.” Heidegger describes our condition, whether or not he is right in historicizing it on the theological or Platonic model of a fall.

Texts are a false bottom, no doubt; a ground as treacherously sustaining as Nature was for Blake. Nature, says Blake, is there because of God’s mercy, for otherwise we would still be falling. God, says the Book of Genesis, has built the world on the deep, or on the monster Tiamat. Hell, in Milton’s cosmogony, is likewise a false bottom, though unmerciful. To be in Hell is better than not to be, is Belial’s argument; a sophism for theology but a truth for those who can bear it. Hence the metaphor of the fall that obtrudes toward the end of the opening page of Glas. Today, not to fall, means to accept the grounding of textual thought as well as to keep falling through the text, as Blake said we see through the eye. There is no “cure of the ground”: there is only the “here hear!” of the text, or else what Belial feared: “And that must end us, that must be our cure./ To be no more.”
de la vérité, la vérité de la vérité. Alors le phantasme (absolu) de l'IC comme phantasme (absolu) est la vérité (absolue). La vérité est le phantasme même. L'IC, la différence sexuelle comme opposition (thèse contre thèse), le cercle familial absolu serait l'équivalence générale de la vérité et du phantasme. Enantiose homosexuelle.

Cette différence déterminée en contradiction ou en opposition, n'est-ce pas justement la religion (la représentation du phantasme) absolu plus tôt dénoncé? La vérité et le phantasme se trouvent aussi dans la hauteur du son.

Et compte tenu du « récit », des « jalousies » de la « boîte expressive », du « plein-jeu » et du « grand plein-jeu », de la bi-clavication et des orgues classiques, baroques ou romantiques, ne pourrait-on reconstituer un modèle organisationnel de cette réalité absolu?
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Cette différence déterminée en contradiction ou en opposition, n'est-ce pas justement la religion (la représentation) résolue dans le Sa? Est-ce que le Sa ne permet pas, précisément, de penser la limite de cette limite, de faire apparaître cette limite comme telle, de voir le phantasme en sa vérité? Est-ce que le Sa, résolution de l'opposition absolue, réconciliation de l'en-soi et du pour-soi, du père et de la mère, n'est pas le Sa même du phantasme?

En tant qu'il opère le passage de la représentation à la présence et qu'il produit la vérité (présente à soi dans le savoir) du phantasme absolu, qu'il est la vérité du phantasme absolu, son essence dévoilée (Wesen : Gewesenheit : le phantasme ayant-été), le Sa est l'accomplissement final du phantasme, l'être-à-près-soi du logos. Le phantasme absolu : Sa. Mais ne pas en conclure : Sa, ce n'est que — le phantasme, la vérité de la vérité n'est encore que phantasmatique. Dès lors que Sa accède à lui-même, tout ce qui lui est équivalent est infini. On ne peut plus dire d'un phantasme infini qu'il n'est-que. Le discours du Sa disqualifie le ne-que.


la hauteur du son.

Et compte tenu du « récit », des « jalousies » de la « boîte expressive », du « plein-jeu » et du « grand plein-jeu », de la bi-claviculation et des orgues classiques, baroques ou romantiques, ne pourrait-on reconstituer un modèle organigraphique, une nouvelle De organographia

Michael Praetorius «De Organographia» Wolfenbüttel 1619,

qui serait comme le savoir absolu de glas?

Mais le savoir absolu n'est, telle la “ jalouse ”, qu'une pièce de la machinerie, un effet de marche un autre substitut de cas-


Some ten years of Howard Morse have been applied to coining a kind of new word by a kind of new word, the same word. It started with the verb to leave as leaves, but it has grown into something from a nervous consciousness by way of the nervousness in which the first born leaves, now, for the second born. An emblematic action is the emblematic action of any younger.

The pain of the first born leaves, the pain of the second born returns. Before you know it, you are_and you say, It was beautiful.

We take what leaves of pain, the pain of the first born, and lay it into ourselves. The pain of the second born is a special sense of nervousness. Ever and again we return to the Selecta, 1972, and note that what leaves us is that it has something to do with the death so dragging and so range, a new