Introduction

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> It is important for the materialist historian, in the most rigorous way possible, to differentiate the construction of a historical state of affairs from what one customarily calls its "reconstruction." The "reconstruction" in empathy is one-dimensional. "Construction" presupposes "destruction."[1]

Almost fourteen years after the death of Jacques Derrida, the least one can say is that his inheritance is as contested and fraught with rivalries, rejections, and appropriations as at the time of the flowering of deconstruction in American universities in the seventies and eighties. A halt was observed in 1988–89 after the posthumous revelations about Paul de Man's past in Belgium and Derrida's embattled defense of his friend.[2] Today, in France, one often hears that "*Derrida a fait l'Ecole mais n'a pas fait école*," meaning that Derrida passed the entrance examination of the prestigious École normale supérieure, where he taught for a long time, where he met Paul Celan, Louis Althusser, Michel Foucault, and many other luminaries, whereas he never had a real "school" in France – no real institutional backing beyond the various Parisian places at which he taught later, or those he founded, like the Collège de philosophie; his following constituted of young philosophers, only a few of whom became university professors in their turn and disseminated his teachings. However, the mechanisms of power within the French university remained closed to Derrida until the end; besides, he wanted to prevent the stereotyped reproduction currently observed from master to disciple.[3]

[1] Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 470.

[2] See Jacques Derrida, *Memoires for Paul de Man*, trans. Cecile Lindsay et al. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989).

[3] There is as yet no good historical account of the links of Derrida with French pedagogical institutions, nothing comparable to the reliable and thorough survey of Derrida's years of schooling and early teaching at the École normale supérieure provided by Edward Baring in *The Young Derrida and French Philosophy, 1945–1968* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

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True, throughout his life, Derrida kept friendly conversations with scholars like Jean-Luc Nancy, France's leading phenomenologist; however, Nancy has developed his own vocabulary, themes, and specific strategies, moving away from a strict version of deconstruction.[4] One of the star students whose dissertation was supervised by Derrida, Catherine Malabou, now teaching in London, moved in different directions by developing a post-Hegelian concept of plasticity and engaging with the neurosciences. But indeed, one can say that her work has pointed in the direction followed by another gifted disciple, Francesco Vitale, a professor at Salerno University. Vitale moves into the field of biology, taking Derrida's latest seminars as offering original perspectives on auto-immunity and what he calls "bio-deconstruction." Another brilliant follower, Bernard Stiegler, explored technology and media before launching his philosophy of politics and a new definition of the bases of democracy. However, despite these exceptions, in France today at least, the impact of Derrida on the humanities and literary studies has been minimal; in what concerns the study of the literature, the consensus among professors of French literature is that the theoretical site Derrida occupied has been preempted by thinkers like Maurice Blanchot, Emmanuel Levinas, Gilles Deleuze, and Michel Foucault.

Nevertheless, it is Derrida who is still blamed for the exportation and re-importation of "Theory," whether French or Fresh, into Anglo-American universities, a fashionable mixture appealing to artists and critics, abstruse theories often descried as a compound of hurried philosophemes and heavy-handed abstractions indiscriminately applied to artworks and texts. In 1998, burning what he had adored previously, Antoine Compagnon dubbed this trendy moment "the demon of Theory," a neat phrase used to encapsulate the pernicious effects of Roland Barthes's theoretical legacy.[5] If Barthes's demons or theoretical imps have survived, Derrida is regularly exorcised as the Devil himself. An intellectual public keeps reading Derrida, which is confirmed by a steady stream of previously unpublished seminars and collections of hitherto dispersed texts,[6] but he is rarely taught in departments of French or comparative literature, and almost never in those of philosophy. When his influence can be observed

[4] Derrida's at times tense debate with Nancy is in evidence in Derrida, *On Touching – Jean-Luc Nancy*, trans. Christine Irizarry (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005), 135–58.

[5] See Antoine Compagnon, *Literature, Theory and Common Sense*, trans. Carol Cosman (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004).

[6] A good example is Jacques Derrida, *Penser à ne pas voir: Ecrits sur les arts du visible, 1979–2004*, ed. Ginette Michaud et al. (Paris: Editions de la Différence, 2013).

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as one sees in the work of Jacques Rancière, a visible philosopher of the arts and literature using a post-Marxist discourse, Derrida's analyses of the "errant letter" are reproduced typically without being acknowledged: Rancière never mentions Derrida's groundbreaking "grammatology," a notion developed as early as the sixties, and he jumps directly from Plato and Aristotle to readings of modern literature and film.

The situation is different in English-speaking countries, even though we have come a long way from the promises of knowledge-as-power rashly made by the proponents of deconstruction to American students at the time of its conquest of campuses. Walter Kirn has documented this theoretical infatuation in a witty memoir, *Lost in the Meritocracy*, in which he exposes the dangers of being taught to deconstruct a "Western tradition" he had not yet encountered. Kirn, majoring in English at Princeton, discovered sexy terms like "invagination" in Derrida's contribution to *Deconstruction and Criticism* (1979), a collection of essays presenting him as the undisputed ringleader of the "Yale school." Kirn explains how he and fellow students would pepper their papers with terms like "playfulness" and "textuality." Armed and dangerous, they would herald the death of the old world: "before we'd read even a hundredth of it," they knew that the Western canon was "illegitimate," that it was a "veiled expression of powerful group interests that it was our duty to subvert."[7] The idea of deconstructing an entire corpus of culture proved irresistible to students, but they were given tools to dismantle a history of metaphysics that they had not begun to read.

These heady days are over; given solid academic relays, serious and systematic studies have begun. Most of the editors of Derrida's posthumous seminars are located on the North American continent. Even if his complex analyses tend to be reduced to a few canonical essays dating from the early sixties, Derrida is still taught regularly in classes on literary theory. However, the answer to Kirn's quandary does not lie in forcing today's students to absorb a huge philosophical culture in which one will find Plato, Heidegger, Kant, Hegel, Husserl, and Levinas, all important references if one wishes to make full sense of Derrida, however requiring a lifetime of investment. The aim of this book is to help students in the humanities who want to discover Derrida *after* Derrida, that is Derrida now, so as to absorb the power and purchase of his analyses of literature and philosophy. Our ambition is to guide readers to the main issues of

[7] Walter Kirn, *Lost in the Meritocracy: The Undereducation of an Overachiever* (New York: Doubleday, 2009), 121.

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deconstruction by combining approaches and juxtaposing types of competence: the authority of seasoned specialists who have worked directly with Derrida and the innovative work by younger scholars who testify that Derrida's ideas are still alive today. This is obvious in countries like Brazil, Mexico, China, Japan, South Korea, and Australia, where Derrida's ideas have enjoyed a renewed visibility and vibrancy recently. This late flowering has to do with the emergence of a global culture unified by the *techne* of writing as developed by electronic media, even if Derrida never ceased deconstructing globalization and stressed the need to rethink the nature of archives and documents, as Maurizio Ferraris shows in this collection.

There are excellent introductions to Derrida in the English language.[8] These guides help students and first readers to orient themselves when confronting the mass of essays, books, and posthumous seminars written by Derrida. At times, the impact of deconstruction on scholarship, specifically in literary and visual studies, has been made legible by focusing on a single author or theme. Moreover, we now have a reliable biography, an excellent book that reads like a novel: it gives voice to Derrida by quoting numerous letters, drafts, unpublished texts, and personal testimonies. Benoît Peeters's biography[9] allows us to reconsider Derrida's oeuvre in light of his personality. In Peeters's account, Derrida appears driven, tormented, excessive, impassioned, a true Romantic, a Byron of philosophy much more than a famous academic. Peeters makes us want to know more about Derrida's secrets; often his theoretical archive overlapped with his private life; theoretical positions and political commitments were intermingled.

A spate of books in English written by friends and disciples wishing to honor Derrida's memory, monographs by Nicholas Royle, Peggy Kamuf, Derek Attridge, and Geoffrey Bennington,[10] all memorialize a beloved mentor. These disciples disseminate his teachings while refusing to "mourn" his untimely disappearance. Their books say important things about aspects of Derrida's theories while hesitating between the status of personal memoirs and textual exegesis. They sublimate the pathos of

[8] See, for instance, Leslie Hill's lucid and condensed book *The Cambridge Introduction to Jacques Derrida* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), and Claire Colebrook's useful collection of annotated entries, *Jacques Derrida: Key Concepts* (London: Routledge, 2015).

[9] Benoît Peeters, *Derrida: A Biography*, trans. Andrew Brown (Cambridge: Polity, 2013).

[10] Nicholas Royle, *In Memory of Jacques Derrida* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009); Peggy Kamuf, *To Follow: The Wake of Jacques Derrida* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010); Geoffrey Bennington, *Not Half No End: Militantly Melancholic Essays in Memory of Jacques Derrida* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010); Derek Attridge, *Reading and Responsibility: Deconstruction's Traces* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010).

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personal loss by developing the legacy of deconstruction. Other approaches consist in interpretations of Derrida's philosophy by authors who were not close to Derrida and therefore wanted to rethink his concepts and methods in their own vocabulary. They were eager to avoid mimicking Derrida's idiosyncratic style and autobiographical mode. Thus Peter Sloterdijk's *Derrida, an Egyptian*[11] and Alain Badiou's homage in *Pocket Pantheon*[12] are typical. Sloterdijk compares Derrida with Sigmund Freud, Franz Borkenau, and Niklas Luhmann before identifying a central metaphor in his oeuvre, the inverted Egyptian pyramid. Badiou insists on the politics at work in deconstruction. For him, Derrida was a "man of peace" intent upon destroying all dichotomies, whether philosophical, like Being and being, racial, like Jew versus Arab, or political, like democracy versus totalitarianism. Key in Derrida's thinking would be the "indistinction" of distinction, another variation on the undecidable.

A similar effort at recapturing Derrida's thought has been evinced by Martin Hägglund in his book on *Radical Atheism*.[13] Hägglund unifies apparently disjointed or divergent problematics by rejecting the cliché that Derrida moved from a playful and Nietzschean critique of foundations to serious, ethical, or even religious concerns for alterity, justice, and messianicity. Going back to the concept of "writing" containing the idea of trace and deferral, the complex notion of *différance* understood as temporal and spatial distance, Hägglund presents the logic of survival as the keystone of deconstruction. On this account, there is only one Derrida, from his first essays to the moving last interview in which the philosopher talks about his impending demise with Jean Birnbaum in 2004.[14] Here we find a thinker of radical finitude and the true heir of Heidegger, not a Levinas in disguise.

A third group of authors working with Derrida tends to function dialogically by pursuing a dialogue between his work and other thinkers. To take one example among many, in a collection edited by John Sallis entitled *Deconstruction and Philosophy*,[15] Derrida is paired with Hegel, Heidegger, Kant, and Husserl. He is contextualized within the discourses of metaphysics or ethics. Leonard Lawlor has examined Derrida's critique

[11] Peter Sloterdijk, *Derrida, an Egyptian* (London: Polity, 2009).
[12] Alain Badiou, *Pocket Pantheon: Figures of Postwar Philosophy*, trans. David Macey (London: Verso, 2009), 125–44.
[13] Martin Hägglund, *Radical Atheism: Derrida and the Time of Life* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2008). He applies the logic of survival to modernist literature in *Dying for Time: Proust, Woolf, Nabokov* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012).
[14] See Jacques Derrida, *Learning to Live Finally*, trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michel Naas (Brooklyn, NY: Melville House, 2007).
[15] *Deconstruction and Philosophy*, ed. John Sallis (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1987).

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of phenomenology in *Derrida and Husserl*.[16] Raoul Moati reopens the dialogue between Derrida and Austin in *Derrida/Searle, Deconstruction and Ordinary Language*.[17] In this book, Moati does not bring his personal testimony but displays the probity of an impartial investigator. This was a prerequisite, given the fact that the ground had been mined by the copious exchanges of insults between Searle and Derrida. Moati highlights Derrida's blind spots as much as Searle's dead ends. He insists on Derrida's dependence upon "metaphysical" models that he then dismantled, while pointing out Searle's dangerous rejection of the unconscious and of fiction. *A Companion to Derrida*, a huge collection of essays of more than 600 pages, confronts Derrida with major themes like Truth, Difference, the Transcendental, Messianicity, and the Law, but strangely enough never once quotes Maurice Blanchot and has comparatively few pages discussing literature.[18] *After Derrida* offers similarly contextualizing rereadings while asking more pointedly about the visibility and productivity of Derrida's legacy. The focus will be on literary studies, which includes the varied discourses of Theory, and a retrospective and prospective survey aimed at capturing the various strands of Derrida's polyphonic corpus and assessing his influence in the humanities.

To begin historically, one needs to go back to 1967, when a triple deflagration shook the French world of letters and philosophy: the almost simultaneous publication of *Of Grammatology*, *Writing and Difference*, and *The Voice and Phenomena.* No one who was a student at the time can forget the shock. It has been evoked with verve by Emmanuel Levinas, who compared the effect of deconstruction to the sudden void in political power that the French experienced during the exodus following the German army's victory in 1940:

> At the beginning, everything is in place, and after a few pages or paragraphs, under the impact of a terrifying questioning, nothing remain[s] as a habitable site for thought. Here was, besides the philosophical meaning of the propositions, a purely literary effect, the new frisson, the poetry of Jacques Derrida. When reading him I see again the Exodus of 1940. The retreating military unit reaches a city that has no inkling of what is

[16] Leonard Lawlor, *Derrida and Husserl: The Basic Problem of Phenomenology* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002).

[17] See Raoul Moati, *Derrida/Searle, Deconstruction and Ordinary Language* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014). French version published by Presses Universitaires de France, 2009.

[18] See Zeynep Direk and Leonard Lawlor, eds., *A Companion to Derrida* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2014). The exceptions are Nicholas Royle's "Poetry, Animality, Derrida" (see pages 524–36), in which D. H. Lawrence serves as a literary example, and Andrew Benjamin's "Art's Work: Derrida and Artaud and Atlan," with four excellent pages on Antonin Artaud (see pages 398–402).

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> happening, where cafés are still open, where society ladies still go to "Novelty fashion stores," where hairdressers cut hair, bakers bake, where viscounts meet other viscounts and exchange stories about viscounts, and one hour later, everything is empty, desolate, houses closed or abandoned, left with open doors, suddenly devoid of all inhabitants.[19]

This historical analogy dramatizes the moment when Derrida's questions seemed if not to destroy then at least to suspend skeptically the foundation of all foundations, our innate and obdurate belief in "self-presence." Such a belief manifests itself whenever we imagine our consciousness as the ability to speak to ourselves without any mediation. At this crucial point, Derrida inserts the gap of writing, of traces, of a host of spatiotemporal differences. Quite symptomatically, Levinas talks here of a "purely literary effect" and mentions the "poetry" of Derrida's thought, which betrays some impatience, if not a lingering resentment. Levinas insinuates that he, at any rate, will not mix philosophy with literature. Most philosophers of language from the Anglo-American schools tend to agree with Levinas on this point. These are some of the questions that we want to revisit half a century after the sudden shock of the *Blitzkrieg* waged by Derrida.

There is a danger in winning a war too rapidly, as the US Army discovered after its first campaign in Iraq. Derrida's sudden victory in major American departments of comparative literature was followed by entrenched resistance and then by the opening of other theaters of operations. One of these, surprisingly, was the return of the signifier of "deconstruction" in unexpected political areas; thus Stephen K. Bannon, once the mastermind behind President Trump's populist ideology during his contested election, could say on Thursday, February 23, 2017, that his program was a "deconstruction of the administrative state."[20] Of course, Bannon meant by this a systematic dismantling of the system erected by Obama, but the term appears as a dubious symptom of the times; at least, one currently shared caveat is that one should not talk about destruction but of deconstruction. Could this be Derrida's Pyrrhic victory?

Whatever we can say about these political issues, the truth is that some fifty years later we still have to learn from deconstruction, for it still holds a few surprises in reserve. In order to prove that we should keep on learning from Derrida's deconstruction, and from a deconstruction that has

[19] Emmanuel Levinas, "Jacques Derrida," in *Noms Propres* (Paris: Fata Morgana, 1976), 82.

[20] See Max Fisher, "Bannon's Vision for a 'Deconstruction of the Administrative State,'" *New York Times*, Feb. 25, 2017.

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nothing to do with a conservative debunking of state regulations or an administration deemed too powerful, we need to examine Derrida's texts closely, so as to understand how they combine, to quote Walter Benjamin, the constructive and the destructive, and make us survey a broader philosophical tradition leading to the ethical and political issues of a democracy still to come.

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If we agree that there can be no easy way of summarizing the main concepts that would underpin a philosophy of the text identified with "deconstruction," this comes from the fact that deconstruction should be apprehended first by its framing effects, that is by considering the general questions it poses, then by its style, not only Derrida's idiosyncratic style but also the style of other investigations looking closely at certain texts, and finally by posing the question of its futurity – a future often thematized in advance given an almost obsessive concern with issues of historicity and globality, in texts that move from the biology of bodies that have been affected by allergies to the Other to patterns of auto-immunization often discussed by the later Derrida, always pointing to societal evolutions that usher in a more and more technological world. Hence the three sections that organize the presentations of our authors who all contribute original essays specially commissioned for this collection.

These authors draw new maps after the dust of the old wars has settled. Getting ready for new skirmishes, they recapitulate what has been gained in order to assess where we stand today. The "Frames" section begins with essays exploring key theoretical frameworks, the main contexts, discourses, and critical conversations from which Derrida's analyses emerge. The "Focus" section then pays more attention to certain applications of deconstruction, mostly in the literary domain. In "Futures," the contributors examine Derrida's influence and its outreach into foreseeable conversations to come, so as to limn new fields impacted by deconstruction like animal studies, literature and law studies, and world literature and its interpretive communities, and the digital humanities.

The "Frames" section starts by revisiting the place Derrida occupied in the history of French critical thought, a half-century of rapid advances underpinned by the evolution of the concept of writing launched by Roland Barthes's groundbreaking 1953 *Writing Degree Zero* and culminating with Jacques Rancière's 1998 *Mute Speech.* As I have suggested earlier in this introduction, this excellent survey of the evolution of French literature from the Romantics (mostly Victor Hugo) to Gustave Flaubert and Marcel

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Proust was inspired by Derrida's grammatology.[21] If there cannot be a positive or historical grammatology, nor any continuous genealogy, writing surfaces as a key question for historicist studies in the field of literary studies and digital humanities: writing embodies the rejection of all norms and regimes of expression in the name of an emerging democracy. All topics are available to writers suddenly allowed to say anything that comes to mind. *Mute Speech* confirms indirectly (because the name of Derrida is never mentioned) the return of the problematic of "grammatology"; its questions turn historical – they are applicable to particular authors and definable periods – while considering the structural conditions of literature in general.

Derrida's problematic of writing was honed after reading key literary texts, from Gide and Mallarmé to Joyce and Pound, from Rousseau to Artaud, Ponge and Celan. Quite early, Joyce was an unexpected source of inspiration for Derrida as he struggled with Husserl's treatment of writing.[22] Then in *Ulysses Gramophone*, Derrida deconstructed the notion of a Joycean "competence" and the idea that it could be measured by the number of hours spent pondering admittedly intractable texts. Joyce was the first modernist author to be taken seriously by Derrida as a literary machine whose force, once unleashed, would disrupt the entire philosophical machine of phenomenology, and beyond that, of speculative idealism. Joyce became the rival of Husserl as they were momentously paired in Derrida's *Introduction* to Husserl's *The Origin of Geometry.* Derrida had perceived a tension between the transcendental foundation of subjectivity attempted by Husserl and the historicism embraced by Joyce in the wake of Vico, Hegel, and Marx. If Husserl had defined the role of tradition and transmission in the case of anonymous mathematical or geometrical "idealities," one would want to know whether this was the case with literary idealities.

Derrida had caught phenomenology hesitating about literature – this has remained his point of departure. Husserl had feared that literature, and by extension all writing, that is writing as such, might undermine the possibility of a foundation, insofar the subjective foundation he was after ought to be pinned to a living identity of the self with the self. By slipping in the issue of literature, therefore of cultural traces, and by extension of

[21] Roland Barthes, *Writing Degree Zero*, trans. Annette Lavers and Colin Smith (New York: Noonday Press, 1968) and Jacques Rancière, *Mute Speech*, trans. James Swenson (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011).

[22] See the whole file compiled by Andrew J. Mitchell and Sam Slote, *Derrida and Joyce: Texts and Contexts* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2013).

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technology, Derrida ushered in a concept of writing defined as endless iterability. This is the root of the complex process of mediation that he named *différance*. The logic of iterable differences would be allegorized by Joyce first not just because he was the "most Hegelian of all writers" (Hegel's system would also be affected by the same logic of writing, as *Glas* demonstrates), but because *Finnegans Wake* had staged a fierce struggle between rival brothers, Shaun the political orator and Shem the penman, figuring the writer in general. As Lacan did a few years later, Joyce had turned into a symptomatic allegory of the letter and literature for Derrida. In the end, more than an alternative to phenomenology, Joyce's texts would embody a radical power of affirmation condensed in Molly Bloom's "yes" to love and life.

Beckett pushed further the investigations of the paradoxes of speaking-as-one-lives as opposed to writing-as-one-dies. Even if Derrida never discussed him directly, he acknowledged their philosophical and literary proximity.[23] However, if one looks at Derrida's discussions of poetry as several contributors do in this volume, or at his confrontation with Joyce and Beckett, one verifies that his practice as a reader could never be reduced to a program, deconstructive or not. Indeed, if Derrida aimed at deconstructing those pesky institutions of knowledge that predetermine our response to texts and thus prevent the necessary openness to literary novelty he requires, what he highlighted in Joyce's texts was their extraordinary power of affirmation.

If Joyce helped Derrida throw a wrench into the works of Husserl's phenomenology, one cannot forget how much deconstruction owes to Heidegger's conflicted relation with his former master Husserl. Heidegger never used the term of "deconstruction," but various usages of terms like *Abbau* and *Destruktion* anticipate Derrida's coining. Most commentators have noted that references to Heidegger are a regular feature in Derrida's essays from the beginning to the end of his career. It was thus important to begin this volume with an essay that pays homage to this proximity. In "The Instant of Their Debt: Derrida with Freud and Heidegger in Greece," Vassiliki Kolocotroni goes back to a scene Freud experienced when he visited the Acropolis: a sudden moment of derealization, an

[23] In a conversation with Derek Attridge, Derrida acknowledged how close to his position he felt Beckett to be. See "This Strange Institution Called Literature: An Interview with Jacques Derrida," in Jacques Derrida, *Acts of Literature*, ed. Derek Attridge (London: Routledge, 1992), 60–62. See also Daniel Katz, *Saying I No More: Subjectivity and Consciousness in the Prose of Samuel Beckett* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1999), and Asja Szafraniec, *Beckett, Derrida and the Event of Literature* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007).

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awareness that the present scene, because it was loaded with too much expectation, cannot be construed as a present any longer but offers a baffling example of originary repetition. Using this shared "uncanny" sense of place as a point of departure, Kolocotroni compares the itineraries of two similarly belated travelers to Greece, Derrida and Heidegger. Both Derrida and Heidegger evoke their visits to Athens in terms of uncanny anticipation, which leads them to meditate similarly on death, debt, and memory. Kolocotroni focuses on their parallel accounts of stays in Greece, *Athens, Still Remains* from 1996 and *Sojourns* from 1962, so as to draw out the motif of modernity's errancy and textual debts. Questioning the very possibility of return, Heidegger's rumination on Greece suggests deferral as well as deference in the presence of empty temples and still inhabited auratic words. Derrida's visit to Greece's "luminous memory" is likewise preoccupied with language and death. Derrida dwells on what remains as ruin and residence, while reflecting on photographic stills, images keeping a testimony of mourning and (re)collective thinking. Derrida catches echoes of these themes in the lives, deaths, and works of Socrates, Freud, Heidegger, and Blanchot. Echoing Blanchot's famous novel, Derrida will be seen composing a "death sentence" of his own. Kolocotroni evokes Blanchot's autobiographical text, "The Instant of My Death," abundantly commented by Derrida, to suggest that creativity implies a debt to death condensed in the economy of writing.[24]

Following from the mention of Freud, the essay by Andrea Hurst, the author of *Derrida Vis-à-Vis Lacan: Interweaving Deconstruction and Psychoanalysis*, examines Derrida's contentious and productive interaction with psychoanalysis. "Derrida and the Psychoanalysis of Culture" discusses and ends up querying Sarah Kofman's statement that deconstruction consisted in a "psychoanalysis of philosophy," a statement Derrida later rejected in no uncertain terms. Indeed, quite early, Derrida brought issues of paternity and Oedipal rivalries to bear on his readings of Plato and Hegel; at the same time, he was unforgiving when pointing to the metaphysical undertones he saw in Freud's texts or in Lacan's modernized Hegelianism. One can say that Derrida invented his own variety of psychoanalysis when it came to literature. His critique of Lacan's concepts such as the letter, the signifier, and the phallus testify to his immersion in a psychoanalytical discourse. Such critical readings rebounded in the work of Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy. Later, almost

[24] See Maurice Blanchot, *The Instant of My Death*/Jacques Derrida, *Demeure: Fiction and Testimony*, trans. Elizabeth Rottenberg (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000).

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posthumously, Derrida made peace with Lacan. What is the place of literature, from Poe to Shakespeare, from Mallarmé to Kafka, in this protracted controversy? Can a psychoanalytical reading avoid reducing texts to examples of preestablished theories, or should one argue that the unsettling of the metaphysical tradition belongs both to psychoanalysis and to deconstruction?

Ginette Michaud's essay is linked with the preceding one insofar as Derrida kept stressing the question of femininity as a problem for psychoanalysis and for philosophy, which did not prevent him from pointing out his own difficulties with feminism. In "Derrida and Sexual Difference," Michaud reminds us that Derrida had been one of the philosophers promoting the question of sexual difference in philosophy and literature. Derrida began his inquiry by placing Jean Genet next to Hegel in *Glas*, Genet becoming another "sister" of Hegel in the process. He investigated the notion of sex and gender as a category absent from Heidegger's philosophy in *Geschlecht* I and II. Is it possible to think in terms of gender what would be a post-Heideggerian phenomenology? Thanks to his lifelong and intimate dialogue with his friend Hélène Cixous, Derrida was made attentive to the issue of "feminine writing" more than once. From the many books written in dialogue with Cixous, can one conclude that Derrida ascribes a specific difference to texts written by women? How can one call a woman writer like Cixous a "genius"? Derrida's questions were posed to the field of gender studies via the concept of the "performative," and some of these have been deemed aggressive or offensive; they have had a lasting impact on the philosophy of drag and gender performance developed by Judith Butler. Does deconstruction confirm or invalidate the concerns of postfeminist approaches to literature? Ginette Michaud, one of the editors of the Derrida archive, answers those burning questions in a balanced manner.

A similarly querying question is tackled by Martin McQuillan when he discusses the conversations, at once cordial and critical, exchanged by Derrida and Paul de Man. In "Derrida Queries de Man: A Note on the Materiality of the Letter versus the Violence of the Letter," McQuillan examines decades of friendship between Jacques Derrida and Paul de Man without dwelling on the "scandal" that accompanied posthumous revelations about the latter's politics and private life.[25] The controversy all but

[25] See Evelyn Barish's ferocious biography, *The Double Life of Paul de Man* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2014). De Man died in 1983. Leaving out most of the public career of the famous Yale professor, this biography only covers the years up to 1962.

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made deconstruction a liability in American universities. Paul de Man and Derrida met in 1966 during a famous conference devoted to structuralism in Baltimore, after which they maintained a productive exchange and a sincere friendship. However, de Man began by criticizing Derrida's "blindness" when reading Rousseau in *Of Grammatology*. His reading protocols complicate the strategies deployed by Derrida. For de Man, any text can appear to be already deconstructing itself, whereas for Derrida, one needs a philosophical gesture. Martin McQuillan, a reputed specialist of both authors, assesses the consequences of their confrontation. Taking, like Kolocotroni, a point of departure in well-known images, McQuillan uses Mark Tansey's emblematic painting *Derrida Queries de Man* as a starting point. Commenting on Marc Redfield's discussion in *Theory at Yale*, McQuillan unpacks the points of contact and divergence in the work of Derrida and de Man, following their discussions of Nietzsche and Rousseau in a series of texts going from "The Rhetoric of Blindness" to Derrida's later essays on his departed friend.

The second section, "Focus," presents a close-up on one central concern in Derrida's approach to literature: how can one combine an attentiveness to the singularity of a text with the inevitable generality and repetitiveness of any method of reading? In "Derrida as Literary Reader," Derek Attridge evokes the crucial role that he himself played when he presented for the first time the vast array of concepts and protocols of reading deployed by Derrida about literature. In *Acts of Literature*, Attridge's invaluable contribution segued from his conversations with Derrida to the latter's readings of various texts, all exemplifying the need for a radical openness to literature. In this essay, Attridge starts from a tension between the apparent lack of limits of texts presented by Derrida as being without any "outside," and the interpretive communities or institutions of leaning that provide a limiting frame. If the law of any text is to question the politics of interpretation, and beyond that the political frameworks in which the interpretation takes place, how can we relate to the singularity of literary texts and respond adequately? Alluding to texts by Baudelaire, Shakespeare, Ponge, Mallarmé, Kafka, Blanchot, and Celan, Attridge shows that any author's writing can find a place in an ethical and political context enhancing deconstruction's main tenets.

Returning to the question of the singularity of literary texts, Joshua Schuster focuses on the dialogue between Celan and Derrida. In "Broken Singularities (Derrida and Celan)," Schuster pays attention to the "formal existentialism" of texts that Derrida presupposes when he reads Celan's poems as a uniquely singular "shibboleth." Celan presents his poems as

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philosophical "noems" that are also idiomatic, signed, and irreversibly historicized performances. Celan's work is marked by a tension between dialectical reversals like time and space, the possible and the impossible, citation and recitation, because one has to combine the logics of iteration and irreversible instances never to be repeated. The reader's task is to identify points of no return, singular instants that will not be re-cited. If literature aims at inscribing singular moments, moments that change the conditions of events by undoing themselves, the agency of texts takes on the structure of the trace even when it presents nonreversible and non-systemizable moments.

Developing themes derived from the crossing paths of Martin Heidegger and Paul Celan, Yue Zhuo poses a similar question about the essence of poetry. In "Derrida and the Essence of Poetry," Zhuo argues that Derrida aimed at defining an essence, the essence of poetry, by moving from readings of poets like Antonin Artaud and Paul Valéry to an engagement with the signatures of poets like Paul Celan and Francis Ponge. The starting point will be Derrida's surprising account of the "thing" we call poetry. In "Che cosa e la poesia?" Derrida implicitly dialogued with Heidegger's conception of poetry before developing his own myth: poetry is seen as a little hedgehog, an animal lying on the side of the road; moreover, poetry is defined as a text requesting to be learned by heart. How can one reconcile this statement with the problematic of writing that dominated in Derrida's earlier texts? How can Derrida point to the "heart" as the organ of poetry? In order to analyze his statements about poetry, Zhuo discusses first how Paul de Man negotiated between Hegel, Hölderlin, and Heidegger before presenting Derrida's readings of Celan and then of Paul Valéry, Francis Ponge, and Antonin Artaud. Another French poet, Stéphane Mallarmé, provides the opportunity for a last dialogue, the contentious conversation between Derrida and Alain Badiou. Laurent Milesi tackles their interaction in "From Mallarmé to the Event: Badiou after Derrida." The writings of Mallarmé durably inspired both philosophers. If Badiou's Platonician foundationalism clashes with Derrida's anti-foundationalism, both engage with the poetry of Mallarmé in order to posit an "experience of the impossible." This experience ushers in the notion of an event to which any subject will be connected by an inner necessity, whether it be an ethical responsibility or a fidelity to a truth that has brought something radically new. Milesi highlights points of convergence and divergence: if both philosophers adhere to diverging concepts of the trace, Badiou appropriated Derrida's concept of dissemination while Derrida used Badiou's idea of subtraction.

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Their dialogue took a more positive turn after 2000, when both thinkers were united by a common concern for the experience of the event as both undecidable and impossible, which led them to dismantle generalities and posit teeming irreducible singularities.

The third section, "Futures," discusses topics that point to an elsewhere, to other domains deconstruction has opened up. One of these is what is currently called animal studies. For Derrida, the animal poses a decisive question that is also the issue of the language we use. Taking the coining of "*animot*" as a point of departure, Jane Goldman starts from Derrida's posthumous book *The Animal That Therefore I Am* to investigate the contested divide between humans and animals. Derrida was instrumental in launching animal studies in the literary field given a relentless criticism of all previous writers who had discussed animals, but when he reviewed and attacked canonical analyses of animality presented by Heidegger, Lacan, Levinas, and Agamben, he found his strongest allies among poets. How does Derrida allow us to read the animal in literature? Goldman tackles this question, already broached in the collection *The Animal Question in Deconstruction* (2013), by adducing examples from authors like Daniel Defoe, Paul Celan, and Virginia Woolf. Against Robinson Crusoe's dog introduced in the seminar *The Beast and the Sovereign*, against Emmanuel Levinas's Kantian dog critically discussed in *The Animal That Therefore I Am* – unlike Virginia Woolf, a modernist writer who had found an original strategy to give voice to Flush, a cocker spaniel – Derrida chose to follow his unnamed female cat, even if this meant doggedly questioning the limit separating humans from animals.

It is to a similar expansion of deconstruction that Jen Hui Bon Hoa invites us. In "Deconstruction, Collectivity, and World Literature," she interrogates a wider community of readers. Derrida has observed that while no text can escape the regulatory regimes of genre, such a participation in genres never amounts to a belonging. Can one extrapolate a principle of non-identitarian community from Derrida's concept of participation without belonging? Derrida shows that texts are always already enmeshed in identity politics relying on communities of genre while not completely identified with them. In a famous 1983 essay on "inoperative communities," Jean-Luc Nancy had privileged indetermination facing genres; however, this position bars him from addressing sociohistorical particularity, a tendency that becomes more marked in Giorgio Agamben's theories of community. Derrida indicates a solution by positing not an originary indetermination but the proliferation of determinations. These principles of community are brought to bear on concepts of cosmopolitanism and

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translation as they have been used in debates on world literature with Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak, Jacques Rancière, and Emily Apter. Here, examples like Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* and Viet Thanh Nguyen's 2015 novel *The Sympathizer* are used to verify the relevance of Derrida's view that the premise of originary dispossession is the founding condition of politics today and in the future.

Another topic that forces us to pose the question of the future is the couple formed by deconstruction and justice. In "Literature Calls Justice: Deconstruction's 'Coming-to-Terms' with Literature," Elisabeth Weber examines Derrida's famous statement that justice is the only concept that cannot be deconstructed. In the last decade of his career, Derrida developed the notion of a "democracy to come" and criticized the death penalty and the politics of apartheid. The most influential book of this period was no doubt *Specters of Marx*, which Weber unpacks here by looking at Toni Morrison's *Beloved* and Shakespeare's *Hamlet* in order to open vast file of the intersections between Marxism and deconstruction, and also between literature and the law. What have been the ideological consequences of slavery in American culture? Can the Shakespearean motto of "the time is out of joint" be used to understand the legacy of Marxism today? Can we forget that the United States has condoned the usage of torture for prisoners suspected of terrorism and wages war in several countries using drones to kill unseen enemies? Weber explores how literature and critical theory contribute to a better understanding of trauma, of human rights and their violations. Derrida incites us to reflect on concepts whose borders have become uncertain, like "the human," "rights," and "democracy." Such burning issues have often been tackled better by novelists than by ethicists and philosophers – however, they all appeal to a concept of justice, at least when they envision the future.

The future is also a central concern for Maurizio Ferraris, a specialist of the technology of the archive. In "The Documental Revolution and the Archives of the Future," Ferraris points out links between Derrida's philosophy of writing and recent developments of our culture characterized by an explosion of archives, records, and memory machines of all types. When we witness the "progress" of a technology that keeps producing cheaper, simpler, and more lasting ways of keeping traces of our existences, it all looks like an extension of a Derridean dream – or nightmare, perhaps. If one essential feature of human nature is a dependence on writing and memory, does this change when we are bombarded with electronic documents? What happens to a science of literature when its very object, the literary text, is regulated by technologies of the archive like hypertexts,

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e-books, the Web, YouTube, electronic blackboards, computers, databanks, etc.? Our life as humans living in society cannot subsist without such inscriptions. Records are central to our lives; literature, with its rich traditions, belongs to these testimonies. However, our society of communication has turned into a society of recording. Recordings are constructed social objects; inscriptions overflow our world and rule our lives. Technological innovation arrives so fast that the concept of the archive has been radically transformed. Maurizio Ferraris explores the consequences of Derrida's concept of the archive from the groundbreaking *Archive Fever* to the overarching principle of "documentality."

The writings of Derrida provide a sustained meditation on writing, traces, and archives thanks to which we can begin to think our historical moment marked by new digital humanities, which appear as ways of quantifying the overabundant data that inundate our lives; these devices and machines manifest the emergence of a new, perhaps monstrous or dangerous, future; but as Hölderlin said of the gods and Heidegger of technology, where there is danger, there we can find a saving grace.

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