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**Title: PUR: Desiccations – The Darkness of Light’s Sweep**

## DESICCATIONS

THE DARKNESS OF LIGHT’S SWEEP

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*Pick up a little sand, then you will know the vanity of the verb* Reb Ivri.  
Jacques Derrida, “Edmund Jabbes and the Question of the Book,” *Writing & Difference*, p. 83

No guinea of earned money [money earned by the woman] should go to rebuilding the college on the old plan; just as certainly none could be spent upon building a college upon a new plan; therefore the guinea should be earmarked ‘Rags. Petrol. Matches.’ And this note should be attached to it. ‘Take this guinea and with it burn the college to the ground. Set fire to the old hypocrisies. Let the light of the burning building scare the nightingales and incarnadine the willows. And let the daughters of educated men dance around the fire and heap armful upon armful of dead leaves upon the flames. And let their mothers lean from the upper windows and cry, Let it blaze! Let it blaze! For we have done with this “education”!’

Virginia Wolf. *Three Guineas*; cited in Jacques Derrida, *Cinders*, p. 67.

Irigaray, in her concluding remarks to her essay “An Ethics of Sexual Difference,” refers us to a *wind*, a wind not the same as but, perhaps, not altogether different to the whirlwind of turbulence from modalities incompatible with ruling symbolics, a wind whose relation to the whirl that Heidegger names as the *polis*, may also be a difference of sexuate beings and of the divine in humans. That wind is from Hölderlin, and Heidegger’s Hölderlin:

“Only a god can save us now,” says Heidegger, who was also remembering the words of Hölderlin, the poet with whom his thought was indissolubly linked. Hölderlin says that the god comes to us on a certain *wind* that blows from the icy cold of the North to the place where every sun rises: the East. The god arrives on the arm of a wind that sweeps aside everything that blocks the light, everything that separates fire and air and covers all with imperceptible ice and shadow. The god would refer back to a time before our space-time was formed into a closed world by an economy of natural elements forced to bow to man’s affect and will. (Luce Irigaray, *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*, p. 128)

For Irigaray this turbulence, this wind of the god we await, is a new birth, beyond the *copula* of language being’s “there is” in its neutrality, beyond the vanity of the verb — a sensible transcendental — coming into being through us, “conjuring” this god we await within and among us.

We are intending an audiovisual work and *séance* or lecture that lights up the ruling symbolics of institutionalized and pedagogical spaces. We work with a cinema of darkness, we associate with Philippe Grandrieux: “... the sense of free-floating gaseous perception created by the throbbing, under-lit images; ... by the amorphous nature of the sound-track ... to relinquish the will to gain full mastery over it, choosing intensity and chaos over rational detachment.” (Martine Beugnet, *Cinema and Sensation*, p. 3.) We move between an enclosed darkness and an intensity of light, between the not-knowing of projections and

performed gestures of a wanting-to-say. The work will be 12 minutes. The work concerns the fluidity of desiccations as the future anterior of imperceptible shadows, traversing darkness and light, sound and image, meaning and ignorance, a whirl of uncanny encounter, a poetics of godding.



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In discussing Pierre Klossowski's writings on Sade, Jane Gallop engages with what she cites as a "whirling *quid pro quo*" of turnings, which she nominates under the term "tergiversations" from the Latin *vertere*, "to turn" and *tergum*, "back;" hence to turn one's back, but also per-version, to turn completely around, sub-version, to turn up-side-down and contra-version, to turn against. The "*quid pro quo*" escalates across Klossowski's readings of Sade and the contexts of reception of those readings but, most explicitly, "tergiversations" alludes to the feigns and multiple feigning of feigns of sexual difference in Sadian integral monstrosity that are "gaily undecidable." This is not far from Jacques Derrida's engagement with Nietzsche and the question of "Woman" in *Spurs: Nietzsche's Styles*. In what is, perhaps, his only reference to Klossowski, Derrida defers to Klossowski's translation of an impossible-to-translate German passage by Nietzsche, a passage that, pointedly, implicates the title to Derrida's book, "*Éperons*," "Spurs." The key word for Klossowski and Derrida is "*ressac*," translated as "backwash," or re-turn in the turbulence of waves rolling back over themselves, in a passage that moves from the fire of a branding iron as conflagration to boiling surf breaking on rocky reefs, the *éperons* "whose white flames fork up to my feet," re-turns, or re-vertings as tergiversations.

The question of re-turn as the possibility of the proper to sexual difference is central to Derrida's text, as it is for Gallop and Klossowski. Derrida's other texts on sexual difference also dwell in the conflagration of flames, *Cinders* especially but also *Glas* in its encounter with Hegel's reading of a Heraclitan holocaust as originary and all-consuming fire whose destructive conflagration is the transmutating of all, *ta panta*: the fire-breath of the Heraclitan *ben* as the illuminating-revealing of air, water and earth. The work concerns the fluidity of desiccations as the future anterior of imperceptible shadows, where *logos*, *physis*, *epic*, *polemos*, *eros* whirl in the *ressac*, backwash, tergiversations, boiling surging of *pur*.



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We work with the unraveling of three (at least) threads and, in their unraveling, the knotting of their frayings, the endless complications of *filis* and *filles*, of threads, of the filial, of sons and daughters. The first *frayage*, the first of the unravelings, concerns the legacies of speculative philosophy in the dialectical structure of identity and difference, of a self as the remains of a difference differing from itself in its returns to the self-same. We recognize Hegel's particular proximity to Heraclitus, one of the great readings of the Heraclitan all-consuming and destructive fire as transformative *topos* of the all, of the many that constitutes the very horizon of totality and identity, the Heraclitan *ben* as differentiator. The negative in the differing of difference, the opening of the dialectical process is precisely what we are most resistant to and we recognize the impossibility of moving beyond Hegel in any simple manner, which is to say by negating the dialectical as such. It is, perhaps, the thinking of Heidegger on Hegel's dialectic that has been most useful in thinking a moving from within an Hegelian orbit without engaging that thinking in a reductive dialectic. Without a doubt, Heidegger's two essays, published in *Identity and Difference*, "The Principle of Identity" and "The Onto-Theo-Logical Constitution of Metaphysics (on Hegel's onto-theology) are the most far-reaching.

The second unraveling concerns an engagement with Heidegger and Fink in their *Heraclitan Seminar* and their engagement with Hegelianism. We recognize the divergence of Heidegger and Fink, summed up in Heidegger's own words: Fink reads Heraclitus from fire to *logos*; Heidegger reads Heraclitus from *logos* to fire, which is to say, as the undoing of an Aristotelian *logos*/logic rather than as that which leads to it. We recognize the extent to which Heidegger's engagement with Hegel's onto-theology informs the fundamental directions he takes in his seminar with Fink on Heraclitus. We also need to emphasise the extent to which Heidegger's reception of Heraclitus and Hegel has informed Derrida's own reading of Hegel in *Glas*. We also note the need to redress Irigaray's most sustained engagement with Heidegger (*On*

*the Forgetting of Air*), in Heidegger's own sustained encounter with the elemental in Heraclitus, particularly the holocaustic fire and air.

The third thread encounters Derrida's engagements with the relation between sexual difference and ontological difference. Fire is never far from this: *Cinders, Glas, Envois*. However, Derrida engages most directly the primordially of sexual difference irreducible to ontological difference in the first of his six *Geschlecht* texts, the one on Heidegger's forgetting of the sex of *Da-sein*. Each of the *Geschlecht* texts in fact engages Heidegger on the un-thought thought, in Heidegger, of sexual difference. Derrida makes explicit reference to Heidegger's 1928 lecture-course, *The Metaphysical Foundation of Logic*, delivered a year after the publication of *Being and Time*. In this lecture course, Heidegger reflects for his students on *Being and Time* and addresses momentarily a question of the sex of *Da sein*, indicating that this question would already be a derived and ontical one from the more primordial disclosure of the ontology of the structure of *Da sein*. However, for Derrida, ontological difference would not be a primordial determination of sexual difference, but nor would the reverse be the case. Rather, at stake for Derrida is something more essential in understanding ontology and sexuality, or how that difference happens as a *differance*.

The six *Geschlecht* texts on Heidegger, never collected together, constitute the great disseminating book by Derrida on Heidegger, a work on the un-thought in Heidegger with respect to sexual difference, or what is yet to be thought in Heidegger on sexual difference. Derrida's other "book" on Heidegger, *Of Spirit: Heidegger and the Question*, is a work about spirit and the holocaust, about Heidegger's Heraclitan legacies in thinking the *gedicht*, the silencing opening to language as such, as a primordial listening to *physis*, a holocaustic blindness, a darkness more primordial than Heraclitan light. Indeed, it is this primordial blindness that concludes Heidegger's own meditation on Heraclitus, whereby he emphasizes the primordially of 'lethe' over 'aletheia', or the oblivion of self-withdrawal and forgetting-self-concealing over the unconcealing of what is such that it is. In this sense, fire as the illuminating light of unconcealing is more primordially the all-consuming oblivion of what is.

The voice over in *Desiccations* is composed of fragments from Derrida's *Glas*, itself a fragmented text engaging literature and philosophy, Genet and Hegel, but essentially concerned with an ontology of sexual difference and with the legacies of *filis*, of threads, of sons and fathers. The voice over recounts most intimately Hegel leaning on Heraclitus to think the possibility of what originally primes difference, what undifferentiated indifference opens dialecticity as such, opens the self-same, opens history, opens the monument, opens the solidity of solids, which is to say opens the tracing return of the annular to itself, opens return as such. How does *physis*, in its self-concealing become *techne* and *logos* in their unconcealing? How does the all burning of burning without remains mount the guard to its absence, to its extinguishing, to memory, to identity and self? How does fluidity become solidity?



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Perhaps, however, we have also passed by an essential opportunity. The uncanny thing is that we do not notice this at all and perhaps indeed never notice it; that it makes no difference to us if we pass it by, and that here in the halls of the university we can nevertheless hold just as important speeches as others who listen to philosophy and perhaps even quote Heidegger. And if instead of passing it by we attend the lecture, is the ambiguity then removed? Has something obvious changed? Is not everyone sitting there just as attentively or just as bored? Are we better than our neighbours because we comprehend more quickly, or are we merely more skilled and eloquent, perhaps because we have the philosophical terminology more at our fingertips than others on account of a few philosophy seminars? Yet maybe, despite all this, we lack something essential that someone else—it might even be some female student—perhaps precisely possesses.

Martin Heidegger, "Ambiguity in the Essence of Philosophy." *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, p. 12.

