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Provocative Coincidences - An Ontology of the Question as Style: Writing Beyond the Aporias of the Subject (Woman, Style, Ethics)

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GROUP 13 (b):

Presentation title: Provocative Coincidences: The Question as Style's Dissimulating Face — Writing beyond the aporias of the subject (Literature, Psychoanalysis, Philosophy)

Maria O'Connor

Introduction:

The question that is referred to in the title, for the purposes of this writing, is that question that marks my PhD research; *Where is She? an interventional drawing over the engendered subject of woman*. A question that has its fixity in propositional logic —that is, if we are asked to, we can always point to some fixed location as to where the subject of woman might be. And, yet it is a question that provocatively challenges through acts of deconstruction, the foundations of propositional thinking lodged in the language and thinking of western metaphysics. Already, I have named my methodological procedure as deconstructive and so, if the question here today is an attempt at revealing The Question as style's dissimulating face, then this is just one face of *many* that positions the approach to *Where is She?* As though outside of metaphysical logic there could only be one answer or any answer that answers to the proper of answer.

Within the thetic question reside four grounds for excavating — it seems we have hastily gone from a vertical orientation, the face (of style) to an horizontal traverse (the ground) and yet, this move is none other than the appearance of language's metaphoricity swarming around the volatility of sexual difference. However, to return, there are four dominant philosophical grounds undergoing deconstruction within the question *Where is She?* *Where*: as that site for critiquing site itself, that is, issues of spatiality. *Is*: as that opening for a critique of temporality, metaphysical presence etc. *She*—as the subject

represented by masculine desire, that is, the Derridean phallogocentrism and laws proper to gender and sexual difference. And the final ground of critique is the mark of the question itself, a ground that secures knowing via propositional logic is scrutinized. This is very hastily the structure of the research dissertation, which focuses entirely on the ground of language within the form of writing itself. One should realize immediately that writing is the procedure, programme and practice of agency here. And it is *style* that shall be our subject for today.

Style

Dream On (or Dreaming on the innumerable)

As an opening for this address on style, I'd like to begin with a response by Jacques Derrida in an interview with Verena Conley in 1982 on the theme of Feminine Writing. Her question posed: "In a recent interview, in a discussion on sexual difference, you let yourself be carried off by a dream of a different relationship to the other and you write: Derrida responds:

This double dissymmetry perhaps goes beyond known or coded marks, beyond the grammar and spelling, shall we say (metaphorically), of sexuality. This indeed revives the following question: what if we were to reach, what if we were to approach here (for one does not arrive at this as one would at a determined location) the area of a relationship to the other where the code of sexual marks would no longer be discriminating? The relationship would not be a-sexual, far from it, but would be sexual otherwise: beyond the binary difference that governs the decorum of all codes beyond the distinction masculine/feminine, beyond bisexuality as well, beyond homosexuality and heterosexuality which comes to the same thing. As I dream of saving the chance that this question offers I would like to believe in the multiplicity of sexually marked voices. I would like to believe in the masses, this indeterminable number of blended voices, this mobile of non-identified sexual marks whose choreography can carry, divide, multiply the body of each "individual", whether he be classified as "man" or as "woman" according to the criteria of usage. Of course, it is not impossible that a desire for sexuality without numbers can still protect us, like a dream, from an implacable destiny which immures everything in the figure 2. And should this merciless closure arrest desire at the wall of opposition, we would struggle in vain: there will be never but two sexes, neither one more nor one less. Tragedy would leave this strange sense, a contingent one finally, that we must affirm and learn to love instead of dreaming of the innumerable. Yes, perhaps; why not? But where would the dream of the innumerable come from, if it is indeed a dream? Does the dream itself not prove that what is dreamt of must be there in order for it to provide the dream? (Derrida, 1984)

Writing Beyond

When style operates at the limit of itself can we still know it as style? In order to propose such a question we may think it demands an answer, something proper, a propositional response. In the above quote by Derrida, he questions the status, the proper of the dream — the dream of the innumerable whose recourse is for more than “the implacable destiny which immures everything in the figure 2,” beyond the bind of the binary where potential for those non-identified sexual marks carry, divide, multiply the body of each “individual” whether he be classified as “man” or as “woman” according to the criteria of usage. Derrida’s dream of the innumerable propels the question of the border across or beyond both the criteria usage of dream and what exists, here now in this moment and potentially what has always been *there* existing beyond — “Does the dream itself not prove that what is dreamt of must be *there* in order for it to provide the dream?” I mentioned a both — both the criteria usage of dream and what exists already. And this *both* is my first provocative coincidence today — where a coinciding of this notion of the structure of the dream and “the relationship to the other where the code of sexual marks would no longer be discriminating” is brought to the fore as a hinge component for another provocation. We must remember here that this opening via a long quote that could well have been too long here, for you to hold onto, opened with a question as to a desire for a “double dissymmetry perhaps [that] goes beyond known or coded marks, beyond the grammar and spelling, shall we say (metaphorically), of sexuality.”

That is, Derrida’s opening, addresses the most implacable destiny that we arrive through, that inscribes and marks our bodies — the structure of language. Derrida’s project has always concerned us with the potential of language for how it inscribes and marks us — holding us as it hides us. Language is that possibility for invention through a system that offers potential play, as what is presented (what it holds) in its saying/writing/listening etc., hides the multiplicity of contingencies for thinking otherwise (an otherwise that exists like the dream and so, perhaps, has already been thought). And it is this hiddenness that through a paying heed to language is always present or reveals more than we know. If Derrida is interested in sexual difference then it is through language and its slippery status that makes possible the call (of his project, his philosophy and those too proximal to him such as Hélène Cixous and Maurice Blanchot), for writing beyond the aporias of the subject. Does this ontology of language, revealed as invention approximate here with style? Does this quest for invention as an ontology of language approximate what has always been — producing the dream, producing the innumerable, producing the question as style dissimulating — as none other than the performance of the innumerable. That is, as a knowing beyond knowing that performs difference and deference (Derrida’s *différance*) simultaneously. Derrida’s *différance* being, a mobile being that finds in tragedy the possibility to ward off the “merciless closure [that] arrests desire at the wall of opposition.”

In an attempt at keeping things buoyant, my sense that the address so far has been ample, excessive in its preamble, for disclosing something about today’s address. And yet, this provocation in the name of a kind of suspension has everything to do with the address on style. I ask you therefore to hold open to this suspended style, for we shall return to it and it shall return regardless of, or for, the merciless closure that arrests desire at the wall of

opposition. In opposition, one cannot help think here of the writing of Maurice Blanchot especially or perhaps, most vividly, “The Instant of My Death” (1994) — a text that deals with a question of truth within the relay between fiction and autobiography. Blanchot’s short prose piece concerns a moment when a young man is brought before a firing squad during World War II and then suddenly finds himself released from his near death. Written in the third person is suggestively autobiographical from the title, several remarks in the text, and a letter Blanchot wrote about a similar incident in his own life. *The Instant of My Death*, is that instant of near death when he/somebody is released from death and, that changes or alters his life forever. The text raises the question of what it means to write about a (non)experience one cannot claim as one’s own, and as such is a text of testimony or witness. This life that is not one’s own written via the testimonial or witness genres or what Blanchot calls the *récit* or recount draws a response from Derrida “Demeure Fiction or Testimony” who provides the elements of a more expansive reassessment of literature, testimony, and truth. The meta-phoricity that has allowed perhaps, a crude, coinciding here of Blanchot’s experience or non-experience lined up against the wall of opposition, in an instant (of near death) reveals the same meta-phoricity or spur where a body divides, no longer as it was, altered by the instant. No longer, the body that existed before near death, and in its recounting or *récit* no longer able to say what happened in that instant. Every recounting is a fiction, never identical to the experience and never able to recount itself in the same way. That is, it is never identical, and therefore it is anomalous to the proper of testimony (in its solid stereo state)— to the law of testimony’s call. This structure of Blanchot’s *récit* and Derrida’s beyond the recognizable face of known or coded marks of (fiction and truth, autobiography/biography and literature, testimony and witness) abides (~~demeure/abode~~) by secreting itself in the instances that destabilize these laws of genre and therefore the facticity for knowing in an implacable way.

This section on *style*, performed in as suspended address is set up so that we may get somewhere, in this instant, to experiencing a writing beyond the aporias of the subject. What subject you may ask? This is an important question because in the first paper presented here today we heard mention of Derrida’s pivotal book *Spurs: Nietzsche’s Styles* — a book concerned with more than one subject under the proper of Nietzsche: (the philosopher named Friedrich Nietzsche renown for his multiple discursive writing styles and potentially the Nietzsche that is the title of Heidegger’s four volumes on this philosopher). There is always more than one subject and always more than two in relation. In the opening lines to *Spurs* under a heading entitled *The Question of style* Derrida writes:

“The title for this lecture was to have been *the question of style*. [This title refers to a first version of this text which was presented at the colloquium on Nietzsche held at Cerisy-la-Salle in July, 1972.] However—it is woman who will be my subject. Still, one might wonder whether that doesn’t amount to the same thing—or is it to the other” (1978, p.35-37).

Definitely a provocation with coinciding the subject of woman with style — Style, is therefore addressed as that which is possible threat and protection at the same time. Style

is some kind of *Spur* (*éperon*); a perforating object (like a stylus, stiletto, or even a rapier) —a spurring style, is a long object, an oblong object, which perforates even as it parries (ward off usually with a weapon). Style uses its spur (*éperon*) as a means of protection against the terrifying, blinding, mortal threat (of that) which obstinately thrusts itself into view. And style thereby protects the presence, the content, the thing, meaning, truth-on the condition at least that it should not *already* be that gaping chasm which has been deflowered in the unveiling of the difference. Derrida's style is that wish for us to be patient as pointed to by the *already* in his text, as it is the name for what has been effaced or subtracted beforehand —but which has left behind a mark. The subject of *Spurs* now is *recovery*, an uncovering —an exhumation of the truth-on the condition for those bodies (woman, style, truth, philosophy, writing) that have been buried alive (or still-born) by dogmatism or metaphysics. Still, one might wonder whether that doesn't amount to the same thing with respect to Derrida's key concern of Heidegger's, as in the forgetting of Being. And so the subject, slippery as it may appear, is for the truth-on the condition (or the conditions for truth) revealed via style's para-e-lliptical nature (or is that para-lliptical from paralipsis —to say little or give little emphasis to one's subject and yet saying everything about it). A spurring style reveals the conditions of forgetting as that condition which *attacks* that which it belongs to —it is not to be taken negatively as Derrida states on his final pages:

“Inasmuch as it is a concealment, however, it is no doubt a protective concealment which safeguards the still Undisclosed. In its current representation forgetting easily assumes the appearance of a simple lacuna, a lack, uncertainty. It is habitual to consider that to forget, to be forgetful, is exclusively <to omit> and that the omission is a human condition (of man represented for himself) which is commonly found. We are still far from determining the essence of forgetting. Precisely there where forgetting reveals itself to us in its full extent are we still only too vulnerable to the danger of understanding forgetting as but a human fact.”

And so it is, through Derrida's spurring performative style that provocatively reveals one subject only to recover another and in the process re-cover over the prior — although through mention, a mark or trace still exists — This performative engagement is none other (as though it were so simple) than a coinciding of something we are still far from determining. The essence of forgetting that in its essence maintains the *Undisclosed* in its act of preservation. The act of forgetting may be reduced too easily to a human fact — it is something we do and consciously know. Woman is not to be Derrida's subject but rather the coincidental framework of the Undisclosed where in all her appearances like forgetting's appearance she has been omitted and this omission is a human condition (of man represented for himself, where she is represented by man for himself) —and yet, precisely where woman or what we can now suggest is the name given for sexual difference reveals itself to us in its full extent we are still only too vulnerable to the danger of understanding sexual difference as but a human fact. Something knowable that is not. Which is why like an anomalous book-end *Spurs* suggests, woman was never my subject.

The Undisclosed (as the act of preservation)

The structure of this paper was, and still is, to unfold a set of concerns that provocatively coincided across a selection of texts. These concerns are *Style* — which, I have touched on already and which will continue to act as some kind of suspension of the subject, in an aporetic moving beyond subjects. Antigone (Sophocles Greek tragedy — a play that has now rightly become the work of many others through re-readings. Re-readings from Joan Copjec who re-reads Lacan's re-reading of Hegel's Antigone and from another position the highly cryptonymic reading by Jacques Derrida). From these re-readings the question or coincidences of the subject woman, being and ethics is brought together.

What this paper then goes on to do is recoup all these parries that have gone on: truth, forgetting, immuring, the wall of opposition, tragedy, dream, the innumerable and so on — via a clotal reading of Joan Copjec "Tomb of Perseverance" from her latest book "Imagine There's No Woman, Ethics and Sublimation" and Derrida's "At This Very Moment in This Work Here I Am," from the book *Re-Reading Levinas*.

Something that proves the logic of Bertrand Russell proposal that unsettled Gottlob Frege's set theory, with "a concept was 'a set that does not include itself.'" (Copjec, 2002, p.3).

(footnote 1: In her Introduction to her book *Imagine There's No Woman: Ethics and Sublimation* Joan Copjec reveals in part the poetic logic of her book's title — a title that plays off Lacan's notorious proposition 'Woman does not exist' and in order to unblock the shock value of the proposition and reveal something more profound: an ethics of psychoanalysis from the theory of the drive and sublimation. That is, if being is limited to appearances, to particular things (a metaphysics of presence) then this is to overlook the existence of the real, which is precisely what makes an all of being impossible. This is fundamentally the critique of philosophy by psychoanalysis — "The whole and shareable being of the philosophers has, then, no place in Lacan, who thinks rather of nonbeing as partial objects of the drive, partial objects of satisfaction; that are unique to the subject, who must now be approached in a finite way, that is to say, *one by one*. Lacan's reworking of his phrase in *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis* 'Woman does not exist' is now rephrased in *Encore* 'Imagine there's no Woman!' In considering feminine sexuality, Lacan returns to the problematic of ethics by returning to and now foregrounding the question of being that remained in the background in the earlier seminar. The famous formulation of a feminine "not-all," that is, the proposal that there is no whole, no "all" of woman, or that she is not One, is fundamentally an answer not just to the question of feminine being, but to being as such. It is not only feminine being, but being general that resists being assembled into a whole. Lacan leaves little room for ambiguity on this point when in the midst of making his argument about femininity, he pauses to remark, "Everything that has been said about being assumes that one can refuse the predicate and say 'Man is,' for example, without saying what. The status of being is closely to this lopping off of the predicate." Woman is therefore in terms of philosophy common too, universalized, as predicate of "is" woman like being who is subsumed under philosophy by Man does not exist, but more importantly, she, like being, in Lacanian thinking can-never be discussed in the partial being of "sexed being" — this being is too disruptive, too cutting, and

therefore undoes the wholeness of being. Copjec therefore requires us to think more carefully about the coincidence of Lacan's 'Woman' and 'being' as partial —*one-by-one*. As she states clearly "The imperative motivating this book was to take this proposition seriously by imagining there's no Woman, imagining what the consequences are—for ethics—of the notion of being it implies. Gottlob Frege's set theory is a structural device to reveal something both paradoxical and intertextual in Lacan's thinking and writing with respect to a nominalist view where by being is partial, cut, split due to a universalizing effect of the real —a going beyond appearances!")

Style, according to this logic, or the concept that belongs to it —the idea of style, belongs outside itself. And this reformulation of platonic thought does not get outside of the logic of the proper, the economy of the capital, of the concept of advance by means of a system of neat inside and outside dialectics. No, rather in order to address here style's limit as thoughts acceptance that something cannot be appropriated we aim to reveal how the being of thought in its radical questioning moves beyond appearances. Beyond a ground that can be easily sighted, knowable, (re)presentable. This ungrounded ground, perhaps, coincides style's desire for beyond appearance taking from Jacques Derrida's *Spur: Nietzsche's Styles* another text that responds and moves beyond Lacan's notion "Woman does not exist." *Spurs* moves beyond the appearance of woman and those presencing values attributed too easily to her image via dominant philosophical and literary discourses —these discourses as already mentioned are approached within deconstruction as phallogocentric and in such thinking corresponds to the reproduction of individual subjectivity. Deconstruction's strategy to reveal phallogocentrism in philosophical discourse further provokes one to turn-over its language to reveal repression or fear of sexual difference. There are numerous texts where Derrida plays with syntactical and semantic gendered registers inherent primarily in the French language. He does so to explore the problematics (or im/possibility) of gendered and sexual differenced housed with a phallo-logo-centric language tradition. In becoming woman in texts, through syntactical maneuvers, such as the case in 'En ce moment meme dans cet ouvrage me voici', in *Texts pour Emmanuel Levinas*, and as well in *Éperons: Les Styles de Nietzsche*, Derrida raises questions around the impossibility of sexual difference due to its inherently gendered (masculinised) nature: Woman speaks but only through the language inscribed for her subscribed by patriarchal desire. Analysing the representation, or, indeed, constriction, of 'woman' in the discourse of philosophy, Derrida writes:

"Perhaps woman — a non-identity, a non-figure, a simulacrum — is distance's very chasm, the out-distancing of distance, the interval's cadence, distance itself, if we could still say a thing, distance *itself*. ... There is no such thing as the essence of woman because woman averts, she is averted of herself. Out of the depths, endless and fathomable, she engulfs and distorts all vestige of essentiality, of identity, of property. And the philosophical discourse, blinded, founders on these shoals and is hurled down these depthless depths to its ruin. There is no such thing as the truth of woman, but it is because of that abyssal divergence of the truth, because that untruth is <<truth>>. Woman is but one name for that untruth of truth." (Derrida, 1979, p. 51.)

Footnote to this quote the poem by Adrian Rich 'Diving into the Wreck' i.e. its resonances and possible surface intertexts.

And so it is with *Spurs* provocative coinciding of woman, truth and style we have arrived at some kind of limit to appearance as such. That is, the aim of this paper is to take its lead from *Spurs*, or rather *Spurs* is that edge, or hinge that binds the condition for questioning as style's dissimulating recourse for making appearance slip on the shallow surfaces like light's dance across refracting swells. This recourse is now starting to mimick a sublime discourse that has already been argued quite sternly as masking or repressing sexual difference.

Footnote Peter de Bolla On the subversion of sexual difference in the sublime discourse.

The hinge that binds the thinking of style's ability (that performance across boundaries of form and content) to reveal repressed moments in discourse across recognizable borders is a textual play or performative engagement with disciplines. In this paper, I have nominated the borders and surfaces of literature, psychoanalysis and philosophy in order to play around with surfaces and depths, to reveal what might on first appearance be the logic of their depths only to find that they surface something un-thought when casting woman and sexual difference into their light or ponds! Equally upon surfaces, overlooked as too under-motivated that repressions are feigned too lightly is the possibility of a more in-depth rigour with respect to our question of woman and sexual difference. The inter-dependence upon each disciplinary ground is acknowledged for style's agency and its habit of appropriating beyond legitimacy.

Footnote Derrida's text "The Law of Genre," re. any naming of something/genre/style is outside of itself (this is its law). From Maurice Blanchot's text (1999) 'The Madness of the Day', Derrida draws on the double affirmation, the yes, yes; an inherent stylistic and rhetorical motif in Blanchot's writing, which traverses across borderlines, both celebrating the laws of literary writing (its genres, forms, types, generals etc) and their dissimulating possibilities. A double celebration if you like of affirming the law of laws. For further reading see Derrida, (1992) 'The Law of Genre'.

Derrida, J. (1992). 'The Law of Genre' (pp. 251-252). In reference to this chapter Derrida writes on the nature of law in respect to literature and uses in particular Blanchot's writing "*La folie du jour*", which translates as "The Madness of the Day" and was also titled both "*Un récit?*" and "*Un récit*" in two earlier and separate publications. Derrida draws attention to this work for its exemplary powerful polysemic and disseminatory game, a game inasmuch as it toys with the laws of writing and their genre formations (conflating at one point the notion of gender, law and genre). Here the notion of play is very important for Derrida's writing (on Blanchot's writing) as it is a move of dissemination which encapsulates the seductive nature of law(s) i.e. law's desire that we are in some way party to "its" structures (in positions of transgression as much as compliance), and yet these structures have boundaries too that enter into the realm of fiction whereby they are dependent on the figures of "truth", on a rhetoric of presence as though in the madness of the day one can always account (*récit*) reciprocally. Now here there is a law generic to law, a genre that writes itself as "truth", a truth that comes out in the broad light of day to show to its subjects the way, its way, it's a way that passes by the event of reciprocity to evidence the madness of its day-light blinding justice. And so Blanchot reveals, in his madness, his being seduced by the law (for he is seduced by "her" revelation) as much to be affirmed by the paradox of the law's amorphous qualities — a double affirmation "who never told life to be quiet or death to go away" (Blanchot, 'Madness of the Day', p.7 and 'The Law of Genre', p. 244.)

A criminal being, or radical betrayer that hopefully via transgression or excessive production of another economy outside of the law of capital offer another discourse of

exchange. This exchange perhaps maps out topologically and topographically Derrida's topos of the crypt. For *Fors* is the foreword text that Derrida wrote in the same year as he wrote *Spurs*. A foreword to Abraham and Torok's psychoanalytic cryptomnomic reading of Sigmund Freud's long-time patient known as The Wolf-man.

This undecidability is neither sheer novelty nor necessarily something to decide once and for all. It is, perhaps, the locus or topos of difference or *différance*, as the positing of a temporal and spatial locution as possibility. We may cite, initially and prematurely, before we are ready really to deliver anything, a short text by Jacques Derrida on this *topos* of the crypt, or the cryptic topology of a self cleaved in an undecidable difference of the propriety of keeping itself secure, keeping itself safe, shoring its identity, its genus, species, sex. In short we cite a cleaving that disengages all of the assuredness of what we will come to discuss in what follows as *Geschlecht*, the securing order of species, sex and nation:

What is a crypt? No crypt presents itself. The grounds [lieux] are so disposed as to disguise and to hide: something, always a body in some way. But also to disguise the act of hiding and to hide the disguise: the crypt hides as it holds.¹

¹ Derrida, J., 'Foreword: *Fors*: The English Words of Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok', in Nicholas Abraham and Maria Torok, *The Wolf Man's Magic Word*, Nicholas Rand (trans.), Theory and History Literature, Volume 37, University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis, 1986, p. xiv.

¹ *Fors*, the foreword Derrida wrote to *The Wolf Man's Magic Word* (1976), is at once an introduction to and an interpretation of Abraham and Torok's work. The first section of Derrida's essay delineates the topographical features of Abraham and Torok's notion of "crypt" and arrives at a pithy formulation of the "displacement," or shift in position, he has announced: "... the walled surfaces of the crypt create an innermost heart of hearts ... which is an excluded outsider inside". The paradoxical aspects of this spatial disposition are epitomized, in typical Derridean fashion, by a semantically double-edged word, *for*, potentially meaning (when modified with the appropriate adjectives) the "innermost heart" or "conscience" (*le for intérieur*) and the "temporal" or "outward" jurisdiction of the church (*le for extérieur*). Derrida's use of plural (*fors*) might indicate an amalgamation, but actually refers to another, prepositional meaning (namely, "save," "except for," "outside of") that is intended to underscore what Derrida perceives to be the principal contribution of the notion of the crypt: its deposition of the time-honored distinction between inside and outside. Hence, here, any notion of a movement forward, implies a word on Derridean *fors* and the complication of a simple before/after binary presupposition, i.e., the before is always encrypted within the event of an after.

Fragile: handle with care

In our reading here one could pose quite consciously the question of Derrida's own hand. That is, does Derrida get his own hand in? This is to suggest a question concerning a kind of taking from critiques such as the one I have recounted on Heidegger's hand, a taking for some ends. The double move in Deconstruction is one that is a giving in the act of taking (For example, it is by now a commonplace to read in a Derrida text that he is never given enough time for the time he needs for exposition, commentary, critique or

¹ Derrida, J., 'Foreword: *Fors*: The English Words of Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok', in Nicholas Abraham and Maria Torok, *The Wolf Man's Magic Word*, Nicholas Rand (trans.), Theory and History Literature, Volume 37, University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis, 1986, p. xiv.

deconstruction: “one could go into this more given time.” Time is endless ... and the broader one goes only exemplifies that more contexts, complexities and deviations exist, are! Just are – time is being.) The double move is in the act of giving through the refusal of the responsibility for the other. Responsibility in this refusal is an act of ethics as it does not implicate the order of taking and giving (in the ontic sense, which is to say in the economy of ontic/ontological difference as metaphysics would have it, and thus, as well, in an ontological sense). It rather disrupts the economy: any economy based on acts of propriety, ownership, things guided by capital (and here we would want to register a certain overdetermination of capitalization, an inflation of the capital, an economy that recognizes nothing but capitals as in the pursuit of names and things that are proper ... a mastery of thinking, comprehending by taking the other’s “thoughts” and possessing them, re-using them, re-constituting them). Derrida refuses this position, and the bind of a “refusal” that yet maintains the propriety of a “gracious” refusal, as in turning down a gift with a “thanks but no thanks,” and does not comprehend, reconstitute, but rather performs the double act with other’s thought thought through, ungraciously, the revealing of dogmatisms, for instance, slippages, and in this revealing, he reveals the other hand at work. At stake, perhaps, is the openness of the question of the being of Human with its complexities and contradictions. And here we might locate the notion of contradiction as the very axis (position(s)) on giving and taking, a kind of non-responsibility in the economic sense of order, as contra-dictions (Derrida and the contras) take no fixed position ... and thereby an unstable ground [*lieu*] is revealed, topos of a crypt.

To refuse the responsibility of others means that it is without meaning to take from others, such taking and therefore a giving being the very constitution of the impossible. And therefore what is given, or gifted in the Derridean sense is nothing (Blanchot) based on ownership i.e. capitalisation. This is a complex engagement with violence and the escalation (mechanized or otherwise) of violence. What is the agency therefore of this act of refusal which would at the same time (a *contretemps*) be the most ethical, the most “generous” of acts? What is it to refuse (which is not the same as the question of avoidance)? What are we refusing in the act of refusal, which is to say in the non-refusal of a certain act? To give one example, the refusal could be the refusal of the other’s pain, not a refusal of the existence of the distress of the other but a refusal of the comprehension of that pain. Alterity is unconditional and absolute and so what occurs is counter to a reinforcing of pain that would be at the same time the feign, sincere as it might be, of a recognition and alignment with the other, i.e., through not reinforcing pain it can therefore no longer be acknowledged and the pain is not capitalized as mine. It does not exist. It is not fed like a pariah. It is for the other. If it is not manifest it does not perform and grow but rather subsides or transforms for we can never really know the other’s pain and thus we can never really know anything, and if one were to recognize it, this would be an act of non-recognition which would be premised on the desire for ownership of a certain entity and so here we find *the* redundancy in the act of knowing. What is revealed in the refusal is rather the act of not knowing which makes it an act of dissemination. This is the ethics of refusal, of not knowing, or the response of non-responsibility or responsibility founded on the unconditional.

Such a reading of violence in the face-to-face of an other's encounter of violence marks Derridean ethics, as it marks his engagement in the impossibility of sexual difference. To conclude, I want to draw on two key moments of an apparent escalation of violence precisely as the moment that most radically marks Derrida's deconstruction as a refusal of humanist ethics constitutive of a moral subject unquestioned in metaphysical priorities of shoring up presence and being, the self-presence of being to its self, which is to say in an encrypted economy of phallo-logo-centrism. The two moments return us to texts already cited: firstly Derrida's escalation of ethics and violence in his response to Levinas and then, as a concluding moment, the sealing of a certain violence of separation in a return to the architecture of the crypt.

Buried by his own hand

I WANT TO MOVE NOW TO THE 'FINALE'
BRINGING IN THE CONCEPT OF STILLBORN /
CRYPT AND MASTERY OF FEMININITY
MENTIONED BEFORE: *THIS IS WHERE THE PAPER
WILL CONCLUDE ON THIS NOTION POSITED BY
DERRIDA OF THE MASTERY OF FEMININITY VIA
"DERRIDA'S HANDS" I.E. INCEST; [ANTIGONE] THE
ONLY POSSIBILITY OF SHE IS VIA THE
IMPOSSIBILITY OF AN OUTSIDE OF THE ECONOMY
OF THE SAME FINAL PASSAGE ... DERRIDA'S
AMBIGUOUS NOTION OF THE STILLBORN; (FUTURE
ANTERIOR) AND WOMAN AS THE CRYPT WHICH IS
UNGRATEFUL, BUILT ON VIOLENCE, FAULTY AND
THAT WHICH DOES NOT PRESENT ITSELF ... HIDES
AS IT HOLDS.*²

We encounter the enigmatic and extremely difficult concluding section of Derrida's response to Levinas, a text that plays uncannily a repetition of another text, or we could say one text encrypted in another. Derrida has refused what Levinas offers but in order to be ethically faithful to Levinas, to acknowledge by failing a fidelity in a fidelity. The response compounds the impossible partition between any saying and a said. Derrida is woman, at least using a French grammar that locates the locution as that of a woman speaking, a complicity that resonates and rebounds precisely on the locutionary potentia of Levinas as capital, as the capitalization of the proper name E.L. Hence "elle," "she,"

² In order to locate the striking disseminating play at work in these conceptual phrasings one should read Simon Critchley's *clôtural* reading of Derrida's response to Levinas in Chapter 3 of *The Ethics of Deconstruction: Derrida and Levinas* previously cited. In particular the final pages 140-141, in the final section 3.4 "How the Work is Given to Levinas", which performs with a rather "strange" final paragraph from Derrida's 'En ce moment meme dans cet ouvrage me voici' in *Textes pour Emmanuel Levinas*, where Derridean motifs of deconstruction per se abound in overt reference to the *crypt*.

speaks a crypted division of sexual difference, concerning a certain auto-affectivity of insemination, generation and faultiness of being-for-death, yet a faultiness whose double scene or logic is precisely that recoupable by Levinasian ethics. There is a stillborn, whose being was mute, an event of incest, being put into the earth, a crypt, in order to decompose thereby returning the fault to a certain illegibility of the Same. Complications abound. Already we have here encountered all of the drifts encountered in this paper. But it gets worse!:

Here at this very moment I roll up the body of our interlaced voices consonants vowels accents faulty in this manuscript ... I must place it in the earth for you — come lean down ... it's our mute infant a daughter perhaps of an incest stillborn ... in the bottomless crypt the indecipherable still gives itself to be read ... we must have a new body another without any more jealousy the most ancient still to come ... take it ... approach ... 'bois'³

But we must recognize how this violent scene engages in the question of response to the violence of the crypt itself, how the question of ethics and sexual difference is locatable on a close and double reading of the buried fault, the faultiness of the fault, the project of reparation of the fault or the recognition that the fault is the possibility of difference, that the fault is no-one's fault, as in a "it's not your fault ... I know ... no, it's not your fault" which is neither the ownership, nor comprehension, nor responsibility for the faultiness of the fault, but rather the recognition that if anything is to happen, it happens on faults. The crypt is the violent construction of the decomposition of faults as the hiding, securing or keeping safe of the other, as with the other of the self as the possibility of the self, a hiding and securing from faultiness as the burying of the lines of slippage. Derrida's violence is marked in the faultiness of an approach to the secure chamber of the crypt, a violence directed to the very instantiation of violence that founds the crypt. If we speak of sexual difference, it is the crypt that amplifies the self-securing identity of difference itself, that echoes difference only as the faint hum of an after-effect of univocal singularity. Hence, violation of the crypt is the faulty act that acknowledges that the indecipherable still gives itself to be read. This is a violation not returnable to masculine desire or the security of the self-presence of the same:

Before turning our minds to the break-in technique that will allow us to penetrate the crypt (it consists of locating the crack or the lock, choosing the angle of a partition, and forcing entry), we have to know that the crypt itself is *built* by violence.⁴

Notes

³ Critchley, S. *The Ethics of Deconstruction*, pp. 140-141.

⁴ Derrida, J. 'Foreword: *Fors*: The English Words of Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok', p. xv.

Derrida, J. and Conley, V.A. (1984) 'Voice II...' in On Feminine Writing: A Boundary 2 Symposium. *Boundary 2*, Vol.12. No. 2. pp. 68-93.