Literature, Ideology, and the Voiding of Aesthetic Categories: de Man, Derrida, Lacan
Brett Levinson
State University of New York at Binghamton

1. Opening Images: Frame

Paul de Man's 1981 "The Resistance to Theory" does not set out to define literature. The essay offers such a definition all the same, arguing that "literature is fiction. . ." (11). It is so, fiction, because it discloses that the principles of language are not those of or even "*like* those" of, in de Man's words, the "phenomenal world" (*ibid*.) Thus, adds de Man, "[i]t is therefore not *a priori* certain that literature is a reliable source of information about anything but its own language" (*ibid*.). Just prior to this characterization, "Resistance" sustains that literature "involves the voiding, rather than the affirmation of aesthetic categories" (10). de Man elaborates through a brief discussion of the tendency of literary studies to interpret literature via analogies to the plastic arts and music, suggesting that, when addressing these or, indeed, any medium, scholarship would do well to "*read* pictures rather than *imagine* meaning" (*ibid*.). Thus, the "aesthetic categories" that literature "voids" actually center on one: the imagination. Literature, according to de Man, *makes* ("fiction" is rooted in the Latin word for "to make") "something" that does not reflect, as an image reflects, an idea, a meaning, or the actual. Letters fabricate the un-imaginary.

The "something" is not, as is easy to assume when surveying de Man's writings, language itself. Literature, for de Man, is neither a certain body of texts, nor a certain "kind" of moment within any text whose language, assuming the form of fiction, shows the nature of language. Literature, or perhaps literariness, is not language about language. For, if this were the case, literature would stand as an image that, while itself epiphenomenal, would reflect or

exemplify an object of the "phenomenal world," to wit, language. Literature, in this situation, would indeed *be* a phenomenon. For, while an image is not the actual thing, nor is it nothing. Qua "appearance," it *is*, just as one's face in the mirror *is*. And *what it is* is the phenomenon that it appears as: *as* is *is*, representation or appearance is presence. de Man holds, in fact, that language does not exist, withdrawing from its staging or representation, including from its representation by the signifier "language." I cite again from "Resistance": "we seem to assume all too readily that, when we refer to something called 'language,' we know all too readily what it is we are talking about, although there is probably no word to be found in the language that is as overdetermined, self-evasive, disfigured and disfiguring as 'language'" (13). The quote is complex; it will receive a fuller treatment below. For now, we can surmise that, for de Man, "language" does not define but disfigures the set language, just as "literature" does not define but disfigures the set literature. Words, as well as pictures, may well appear. Language does not since when it does "appear," it does so in a marred manner, as other than it is. Language withdraws from the figure through which it figures, hence is not available to intuition or feeling, the intelligible or the sensible. Literature tells a story of language's retreat, which theory, or what de Man calls "rhetorical reading," reads.

Whatever differences may exist between de Man and Jacques Derrida, they agree on the last points. "*Language*," Derrida notes with emphasis in *Demeure*, "does not exist, no one has ever encountered it" (20). Language turns from encounters with any "one," from the subject of reason and experience, hence from sense. It pulls out from the apprehension that, one might presuppose, is the condition of comprehension. In *The Truth in Painting* Derrida pursues this line, casting *parergon*, the frame of an *ergon*, as follows: "There is no natural frame. *There is* frame, but the frame *does not exist*" (*Truth* 81). As to a *natural* frame, *there is* no such thing. *Is*

2

the frame then artificial?   Difficult to say. Certainly, *il y a* or "there is" frame (an artificial one,

since *there is no* natural one). Yet it does not exist: "*There is* frame, but the frame *does not*

exist." *Il y a* does not include a French verb for "to be." The frame, then, is a non-being and

non-existence. Neither essential nor contingent, it is nonetheless *there*. Space does not permit

me to run through Derrida's many discussions of Emmanuel Levinas's displacement of *être*

and/or *exister* with *il y a* (Levinas's French translation of Heidegger's *es gibt*: there is, it gives).

The point is that Derrida never embraces *il y a* as a tool. He offers and prefers alternative

articulations, such as *il y'en a*, "there is something of it" ("Some Statements" 76) and just plain

là, "there." In *Deconstruction, its Force, its Violence*, Rodolphe Gasché, speaking of the frame,

points up Derrida's "gestur[ing] toward it in a silent discourse of sorts, as Derrida does in this

passage by referring to it repeatedly as 'here,' or rather, 'there,' since in the French he points to it

with the adverb *là*, which designates a space or location, or with the preposition *violà*, 'there it

is'" (38). Derrida removes all verbs from his casting of frame. And yet, no phrase or phrasing is

ever just right but always a bit too much. A frame, much akin to de Man's "language," is always

already disfigured by the signifier, even if the little *là*, that would represent it.

   In "Force of Law: The 'Mystical Foundation of Authority'" Derrida offers further

deliberations upon such matters: "Discourse here meets its limit. . . .There is here a silence

walled up in the violent structure of the founding act; walled up, walled in, because this silence is

not exterior to language" (242). "[W]hat is important" within this citation, Gasché sustains, is

that the "silence is one *within language*" (*Deconstruction* 38; Gasché's italics). In fact, Derrida's

words do not quite indicate that "silence is one *within language*." They hold that the *là*, where

"discourse . . . meets its limit," is "*not exterior* to language." And, a "not exterior," a wall, is

not, and is not even *like,* a "within." It is a barrier or bar that is buried or archived ("walled up,

walled in") *there*, where language "meets its limit." The limit *touches* the inside, yes. Yet it touches also the outside, infecting inside with outside (and vice-versa), as well as defecting into both. Leaking prior to its being, it is never for a moment the wall or *parergon* that it is.

In "Plato's Pharmacy," regarding the Platonic text, Derrida notes that: "We do not believe that there exists, in all rigor, a Platonic text, closed upon itself, complete with its inside and its outside. . . ." (130). Yet he then continues: "Not that one must then consider that it [the Platonic text] is leaking on all sides and can be drowned confusedly in the undifferentiated generality of its element" (*ibid*.). Why not? Why would a text whose frame is always already breached *not be* "drowned confusedly in undifferentiated generality"? Because, *lá*, a signifier, is the requisite of the oozing in and out. That is, *without* the "not without," the *there* that delimits, there is no contamination of inside by outside (and vice-versa), no fissure, which fissure indeed deletes the frame. An "undifferentiated generality" is never actualized without a "stop," a division or differentiation, by means of which it is set off. More confusion: the *ergon*, the work, banks on the *parergon*, frame, to be. Yet, as to this *parergon*, the *lá*, "there is something of it." It itself, then, is a work. The edge of the work is more work, thus not an edge. The addendum of another work, *là*, to the work, one to one, leaves behind none, the hollowed out.

The frame of an image or picture—and, without frame, no image or picture—"outs" the interior of the content that it comprehends. It is a contact "zone," the cut between inside and outside. Thus, on one side, it is a vehicle, a way for and opening to betrayal in both directions. On the other side, it is a defense against the same. The cut is itself cut, divided between itself and its opposite. The image, by virtue of its incision, is in advance a ruin. By virtue of the same incision, its absolute ruin is walled off so that the image, thusly walled in or framed, stands as a work. Whatever appears in or through the imagination, in or through an image, is not itself for

arising as itself. Images or "syntheses" of the wreckage may seem conceivable. In fact, however, an image, for example, the seared and sliced canvases of "The Burnt Canvases" of Joan Miró—any image of the cracked image is itself cracked, one cut inside another. As soon as it is propped as object or subject by its synthesis, the sign that casts it as a unity, *là*, makes it slip away, disseminate without conceivable sense, hence without the imagination, itself a sense.

2. The Signifier and the Anagram: Lalangue

Derrida's allusion to an "undifferentiated generality," like numerous articulations within "The Resistance to Theory," reference Ferdinand de Saussure's depiction of *la langue*, put forth in *Course in General Linguistics*. Before showing how this is the case, I want to make a few general comments. Theory, as de Man casts it, understands that the last foundation of being is not subject, the Idea, or God, but language. And language is withdrawing. Human being withdraws from its addiction to the last—last as both final and most recent—stand of metaphysics, *la langue*. Theory, stated differently, challenges the givenness of language, language as a certain actualization of the idea. It sends away the idea of language. If the offshoot of Saussure, structuralism, turns *la langue* into a model of being, theory turns the model out. Derrida's translation of *la langue* into "writing," and Lacan's repositing it as *lalangue*, represent merely among the most salient examples of the swerve. "Theory," far from demonstrating that reality or being is a "linguistic construct," hence that language is a first principle, positions "language" as the last vestige of the retirement of each and every first principle, including language.

The opening of *Course in General Linguistics* splits language into *le langage*, any general form of expression (dance may be seen as a *langage*); and *la langue*, language as a circumscribed domain, for instance, "French" or "language itself." Saussure argues of *le*

5

langage that it [*langage*] "in its entirety has many different and disparate aspects. It lies astride the boundaries separating various domains. . . .No classification of human phenomena provides any single place for it, because language as such has no discernible unity" (10). *Le langage*, possessing "no discernible unity," fails to define itself as different from other realms. It "lies astride" such ambits. A foot within all sites but without site of its own, hence unconfined, potentially not distinctive from "any old thing," "language (*langage*) as such" thereby arises as a disconnected, undifferentiated tangle, without "as such." *Le langage*, consequently, does not lend itself to a science of linguistics such as semiotics, which *Course in General Linguistics* strives to establish.

Fortunately for Saussure's science, however, *langage* need not emerge by itself. It does so by virtue of the support of *la langue*. If *le langage* enjoys "no discernible unity" or "boundaries" (straddling all), *la langue* establishes language as a specific, logical, "structured system": "A language [*langue*] as a structured system, on the contrary, is both a self-contained whole and a principle of classification. As soon as we give linguistic structure pride of place among the facts of language [*langage*], we introduce a natural order into an aggregate which lends itself to no other classification" (*ibid*.). Saussure strategically "introduces" *structure* into language, giving ("we give") it "pride of place." Yet, at the same time, he deems structure *natural*. Language is by its *nature* or in its essence a "self-contained whole."

The "aggregate," in the words of Gasché, is thereby "a system based entirely on the opposition of its concrete units" (*Deconstruction* 32). The "concrete units" are signifiers, a "fact" of *la langue* to which Saussure grants "pride of place." A signifier is not a word. A phrase, a letter, a cough over against near silent breath or a second cough, the scare quotes around "theory," a nonsensical iteration such as "kitty, kitty," one subject's handwritten "t"

versus another subject's "t," the vertical line and the horizontal line with a loop of one of these "t's"—these, by Saussure's definition (in *Course* [119-20] Saussure tries to delimit this, his own definition, yet he cannot), are equally examples of a signifier. A signifier is a "unit" that enjoys a differential relationship with another unit ("kitty kitty" over against "kitty"), with no unit possessing an autonomous or "positive" existence apart from its relations. The signifier does not arise, and then relate to another. The unit "signifier" is this relationship. No signifier or set is so "big" that it transcends relations to others, else it not be a signifier at all. And none is so small or minimal that it be indivisible, *not* a relationship of at least two.

The run of differences arises, to iterate, only if it pertains to a "self-contained whole. " Thus, Gasché's description of *la langue* as "a system based *entirely* on the opposition of its concrete units" is accurate only if the "entirely," *la langue* itself, "includes" among its units or signifiers *another* signifier that unifies the assemblage, such as "entirely." *La langue*, if it exists, must contain a part, a "natural element," a signifier that, *at the same time*, is the whole of the set.

Such an arrangement is inconceivable. *La langue* may stand as the name of the whole of language, containing it. Yet, in that case, it is not one of the relations within the whole, not a signifier. "*La langue*" removes from itself *itself* as the *self* that contains its own self-contained being. *La langue* is not *la langue*. Perhaps, then, *la langue* materializes through the *la langue/langage* difference, *as* signifier? If it does, it leaves itself, *la langue*, without a whole, thereby without any signifiers, any structure, both of which exist solely within a totality. Either *la langue* is, and the signifier (*la langue*, for instance) is not; or *la langue* is not, and the signifier is still naught. Either *la langue* is or it is not; and in both situations it is not.

In *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis*, Lacan argues that "the signifier. . . . can signify anything except, surely, itself' [90]. Surely not: if one signifier, such as "tree," can exemplify or

represent "signifier," then any signifier can exemplify or represent "signifier." A given instance of *la langue* consequently may be translated as "signifier signifier signifier," as the "undifferentiated generality" to which Derrida alludes. It stands or would stand not as a differential relation of units within a whole, but as an indistinct mass of repetitions within no unit. A signifier cannot signify "signifier" because, if it does, it is not a signifier, nor is any signifier. This is why "Lacan often refers to the whole battery of signifiers in a language simply as 'the signifier'" (Fink 77). Any one signifier, supposing there is one, is a differential relation (of letters or shapes) within a totality, hence is a *la langue*. Conversely, any *la langue* is a differential relationship to another *la langue*, thereby a signifier. *La langue is* the unity of the signifier. The oneness (*la langue*, a signifier) of each one (the signifier, e.g., *la langue*) unfurls as one one…, which is undifferentiated generality or nonsense: the withdrawal of *la langue*. Thus, for Lacan, who translates *la langue* into the "Symbolic order" or "big Other," the possibility that "the big Other does not exist" is the possibility of *la langue*. *La langue*, in Lacan's recasting, cannot help but add onto, as signifier, that which it contains (the signifier), endlessly doubling over itself, disfiguring itself into a non-set, a *lalangue*. This *lalangue*, without difference or space between *la* and *langue*, references, in Lacan's scheme, nonsense, a *sans sens*: lalalalala and lallation, the irreducibility of language to the Symbolic order or *la langue*, to sense and sensibility.

Of course, if Saussure's *la langue* and Lacan's *lalangue* are indeed distinct, they surface as a *la langue*/*lalangue* binary. They thereby form a *la langue*. *Lalangue*, by virtue of the logic that leads to its invention, is logically impossible. And indeed, logically, language is always *la langue* rather than l*alangue*. That *la langue* necessarily be *la langue*, though, is more than logical. It is tautological, logical and absurd at once. And that is the point: for psychoanalysis,

which does not always traffic in rational discourse, *lalangue* is the possibility of *la langu*e, just as tautology is the possibility of logic.

Consider, in this vein, Dora's hysterical cough (hysterical because without somatic cause), an example of the Lacanian symptom, as it is analyzed by Freud in *Dora: An Analysis of a Case of Hysteria*. Dora's cough is not a symptom as *signifier*. Lacan in fact insists throughout the course of his later seminars that a symptom is not a signifier (unless "*etc*., *etc…*" be that signifier).[1] The symptom is one, a symptom, because it repeats. Cough cough cough, signifier signifier signifier—these are symptoms because not operating as instances of *la langue*, differential units within a meaningful set. To be sure, the cough signifies. Referencing the mouth, it represents, in *Fragment of an Analysis*, issues concerning speaking, eating, sucking, and cunninglingus (among others); and the cough is bound to but not reducible to Dora's aphonie. As *symptom*, however, the cough arrives, not as a differential relation or signifier, but as an iteration, cough cough cough.

The iteration, *lala*, lallation, *lalangue*, thus represents a demand (Dora demands) for a response that, also, does not derive from the order of signifiers, the Symbolic, the big Other. Dora's demand, in fact, runs something like this: "Figure out, Dr. Freud what is singular about me, the *something* about me, marked by my symptom, that really matters. This *something*, I tell you via my cough cough cough, signifier signifier signifier, does not fall within the one, the market of signifiers, the *norm* within your theory, but stamps my uniqueness. The cough is a demand that my singularity be recognized, hence that I am worthy of love. For, if my cough cough cough *did* fall within the Symbolic, one signifier among others, it would be replaceable by another signifier, by one its "likes" or relations. It would thereby show that I too am replaceable. And if I am replaceable to the Other, the Other does not love me, I am not the beloved. Indeed,

9

that is what the beloved is: the one who, for the lover, is without conceivable replacement. She is the one without whom the lover cannot do. No substitute exists for the singular one. (Singularity, stated in Lacanese, is the withdrawal or trace of the signifier, the *petit objet a*, bestowed by the lover upon the beloved: the "the way you walk," for example, which "way," a result of sheer iteration, defies the signifier). Show me that I am in fact, for the Other, for *you* Dr. Freud, without conceivable surrogate, without conventional sign. If you are such a master, you will show me the sign that is not of the Other. You will show me that I am loveable."

Passed off from her mother to the governess to her father to Herr K. to Frau K. to Freud, Dora cough-cough-coughs as a demand for love. And love, sustains Lacan, is giving what you do not have. To make love, you must offer the counterpart a sign of this love, the sign that she is, for you, absolutely special. Thus, the recognition of the other's irreplaceability, which is the sole proof that the other is loved, and thereby loveable, if the recognition is itself to be recognized (and it must be) by this beloved (who will then feel loved, loveable), counts, *malgré lui*, on the signifier, a shared sense. The sense appears through a common *la langue*; and, *there*, *lá* each signifier emerges through convention, thereby not as special. Every "I love you," like every gift, for Derrida no less than for Lacan, consequently betrays. The other gives what she has. She chooses from among the signifiers that are available to her, such as the cliché "I love you." The sign of love, of the other's irreplaceability for the lover—this, the lover does not have in her arsenal of signifiers. The sign she offers fails to indicate that the beloved is singular hence, in fact, that "I love you." The beloved is not loved enough (thus, not at all), and the lover never loves enough, since the proof of love is a sign of the commonness of that love, hence of infidelity (you, beloved, are like any other, with which other I might as well "take up").

Dora cuts off her sessions with Freud because the talking cure, so much chit-chat, cannot offer to her the one thing for which she wishes: the sheer possibility of love. Freud, in theory, need not himself love her. He needs only to disclose, by extending special signs to her, that she is loveable—which, interestingly, Freud speculates that he can accomplish only by loving her through the countertransference. Psychoanalysis fails to offer Dora this possibility because, for her, it is composed of words words words, signifier signifier signifier, *lalangue* without difference or end, or, to use Lacan's term, "bullshit" (111).

Dora, enduring the impossibility of love being sent her way in a signifier, experiences the possibility of *lalangue*—the possibility that language be *sans sens*, sheer stupid iteration, etc., etc., etc… For her, all signifiers are the same in their indifference to her demand, thus are not signifiers, differential relations. This sense of nonsense is in fact a necessary component of the talking cure. The conviction that the signifier, the *nom* (name, no) *du père*, the authorial discourse into which "I" do not fit for "I," if I am, am singular, thus loveable—without the possibility of this signifier signifier signifier *happening*, psychoanalysis is not. For psychoanalysis, by any definition, includes the demand, received by both analyst and analysand, for a signifier that does not fall within the norm, is not situated among the signifiers of *la langue*. The latter arrives to the analysand as the bullshit of the process of the psychoanalysis, as the possibility that *la langue* does not *necessarily* mean, that other possibilities of la langue exist: its repetition as meaningless *lalangue*.

Lacan most typically calls this other possibility of *la langue*, or *lalangue*, the Real. The Real, which is the indifference of the Symbolic, hence of psychoanalytic discourse itself, keeps analysands talking (though not Dora, who cuts off the chatter). Of course, the passing through of the nonsense of *lalangue* generates, as well, anxiety. If no sign for the bothersome, painful

11

symptom, without somatic cause—if no such sign, for the analysand, appears to exist, then no talking cure is conceivable. The subject consequently feels as if the hurt will endure forever, a monstrous prospect. Yet he passing through of the stupidity of psychoanalysis also introduces the possibility that, in language, *lá*, something that is not actual, and cannot be actualized (not actual, it is also not a past actuality to be remembered nor an actualization to come), not even through the imagination—a signifier of love, for example—something that does not fall within the order of patriarchy or normalcy, *my loveability*, is possible. So I, the analysand, should perhaps keep up the blabber, vehicle of the advent of possibility.

The possibility of *la langue*, which is *lalangue*, and which the hysteric entertains materially—the possible happens—cannot appear in any image, including the word-image, the signifier as the image of a framed (by the outside contours of its first and last letter) unit. Appearance *is* presence. Thus, *la langue* is the possibility of a cure by means of an expression that is irreducible to a presentation, a *nom*, the name or no of the father, to the repression of the Symbolic order. The expression is not the *actual* cure. It does not display *actual* love. It indicates merely that the latter are possible, which possibility keeps one keeping on.

The possibility, of course, is generally disavowed by subjects in favor of actuality (past, present, or future). Almost without difficulty, the symptom, cough cough cough, gives way, for both analysand and analyst, to an actual signifier: cough, mouth, orality, speech, *la langue*. The analysand, like the analyst, all too readily appeals to the appeal of being comprehended by the Other, hence to common sense, the sense common to all. But, as noted, *la langue*, a self-contained totality, is conceivable through a frame that is also a signifier, a part that is also a whole, itself inconceivable, unimaginable. For this part that is a whole is not a metonym, which

12

can be imagined. Extending the frame of the totality past this totality, the part strips the whole of all parts, hence of itself as whole. And *that* is inconceivable, unimaginable.

What can be imagined, however, is a lack of totality. "I," as subject, can imagine that I "do not get what I want" because my words are lacking (I do not communicate well), because the other is lacking (she does not listen, she is stubborn, dense, etc.), or language itself is lacking (*facta, no verba*! actions not words!). And this imaginary lack allows me to cast language as a meaningful system that is missing just one thing, to wit, its frame, present as the lack of one. Notes Gasché: "the text in all its positivity rests on the absence of, and ultimate impossibility of a transcendental signified and an authorial, paternal voice. . . . Without it there would be no text, discourse, or language."" (*Wild Card* 179-80). The "authorial, paternal voice," the absence of meaning, is meaning's guarantor, of the "positivity" of "language." It is not, however, guaranteed by the signifier, which is *not* certain to *not* repeat stupidly, except by the lack of one.

The proper *nom* of this lack is of course castration or the phallus. The phallus does not fill in the lack of castration. The phallus, the *nom du père*, is the *no* or naught, itself the lack. An imaginary lack is the certainty of a whole, as Gasché's above citation indicates. The analysand/analyst imagines that a signifier that responds to the symptom is just another signifier, one currently lacking from the dialogue. The analysand/analyst desires and imagines castration, lack, in the hope of actualizing, making present in a representation, "bringing" in through "good" communication, the big Other's sign of love (who has it, according to this imaginary, but won't give it over) . Patriarchy is the object of desire due to the subject's appeal to the unity of the image that, as merely an image, mere appearance, is lacking by its nature.

Saussure, in *Course*, diagrams the sign by placing the signified, a picture of a tree, above a bar, under which he situates the signifier: *arbre* (or its Latin equivalent). Lacan reverses the

13

order, situating the signifier on top, suggesting that, for language, the signifier is more important—it is the sovereign—than is the signified. Yet Lacan, here, does much more with Saussure than perform this flip. He plays on the anagram *barre/arbre*, perhaps in fidelity to, maybe as a betrayal of Saussure who, after all, had a thing or two to say about anagrams. Thus, the bar or *barre* between signifier and signified, which seems to operate as neither but as their structure, boundary, or division, rendering both conceivable, in Lacan emerges as yet another signifier. The – or / is a *barre*, all mixed up with *arbre*, Saussure's example of the signifier. In "Signification of the Phallus," Lacan in fact presents this *barre* as that which "then becomes the bar [*barre*] with which the demon's hand strikes the signified, marking it as the bastard offspring of its signifying concatenation" (581). The phallus, or lack, "strikes," repressing the possibility of language by reducing it to a signifying totality grounded in the lack of a name—which name is thus desired and desirable—for that totality. Repression, the phallus as lack, source and tool of the pleasure principle, prohibits possibility via the desire of the subject, which is beyond the pleasure principle, in the interest of practicality, reality, and sensibility.

According to Lacan, then, repression is never complete because the *barre* of lack, the phallus, the transcendental signifier, – /, cannot fail to reemerge as anagram of the signifier, one more signifier, a signifier among others, signifier signifier signifier. The structuring device of *la langue*, the bar, which would, as line-between, assure the difference of the signifier, repeats Saussure's example (*arbre*) of the signifier, the signifier that references "signifier," which repetition places the mark of difference, now a rearrangement of the signifier (*arbre* as *barre*), under erasure, turning *la langue* toward *lalangue*. Sense is the opening to rep[etitive nonsense, which is the opening to the irrepressible beyond the pleasure principle which Lacan calls jouissance—or maybe *j'oui-sens*: sense and nonsense, yes and no, at one and the same time.

3. Transcendental Imagination and Strategic Essentialism: Maintenance

Derrida notes the following in *Writing and Difference*: "[t]he break with this structure of belonging can be announced only through a *certain* organization, a certain *strategic* arrangement which, within the field of metaphysical opposition, uses the strengths of the field to turn into own stratagem against it, producing a force of dislocation that spreads itself through the entire system, fissuring it in every direction and thoroughly *delimiting* it" (20). The break with or cut from structure, including one (a break) that fissures it "in every direction," results from "a *certain* organization, a certain *strategic* arrangement. . . within the field of metaphysical opposition." A "strategic" cut that sets off interior and exterior, "the field of metaphysical opposition," is the requisite of a "fissuring in every direction," of no field. The French word for "direction," *sens*, also means "meaning." A "fissuring in every direction" is, by definition, without definition: *sans sens*. It is meaningless, unintelligible, and insensible ("unfeelable"), much like signifier signifier signifier or, for that matter, the phonetic iteration *sans sens*.

Gayatri Spivak's ideas concerning "strategic essentialism," influential even if sometimes disputed,[2] emblemize a wider conviction that religious, ethical, and political intellectual inquiries often, perhaps always, count upon the strategic deployment of concepts that, if epistemologically problematic, are necessary for effective intervention. Derrida's "certain *strategic* arrangement" expresses a markedly distinct viewpoint. The mere positing of a text results from strategy, regardless of the "political" import (or lack thereof) of the ensuing interpretation. In fact, "Plato's Pharmacy" casts Plato as legible by means of Derrida's own "*strategic* arrangement" of *Phaedrus*. Derrida "picks out" the "presence" of the signifier *pharmakon* in Plato's *Phaedrus*, a marginal figure in the dialogue, and casts it for the text's central role.

15

I put scare quote around "presence" because, in fact, Plato *himself*, by himself, does not place *pharmakon* into the "original" *Phaedrus*. This *pharmakon*, both in Greek and in *Phaedrus*, of course means—after, "Plato's Pharmacy," the facts are so widely known as to require no further proof—at once, remedy and poison (among other meanings). The signifier, then, is different from itself regardless of its context. That is, it splits from itself in its status as signifier rather than as signified. I stress: *pharmakon*, for Derrida, is not different from itself because possessing two or more meanings. It is so because it is not one thing, that is, a signifier. I said above "regardless of context." The statement might seem contrary to sense. Would one not analyze or translate *pharmakon* as "remedy" due to the context in which it appears, and as "poison" due to another context? And sometimes, but still on the basis of context, would the choice not be so clear? Not necessarily, for contexts are determined by their interpretations no less than they help determine them. If "I," as subject, explain to my mother that a friend's statement, "I am off to the pharmacy to pick up my drugs," signifies that "he is going to get medicine," given my friend's use of "pharmacy," given the context, I am asking the other to assume (or I am assuming myself) that the pharmacy in question is not an illegal one, one that deals in dope (sadly, these exist), and/or that my friend is not using "pharmacy" as a metaphor for his "source" on the corner. The context or frame of "drug," including the signifier "pharmacy" (and the game can be played with any signifier) is, at one and the same time, always possibly other from itself. And, since a signifier *is* a relationship to another signifier, hence is itself a context, the one signifier falls simultaneously into more than one context. Before one, the signifier is more than one.

Permit me to illustrate these facts with an outside example: the first word of the first sentence of *Madame Bovary*, which is "We" (5). The "we" is itself a frame, a container of two

16

letters that mean, at the least, even for those who do not know French, "this is a word" or perhaps, that "W" and/or "e" are letters. "We" can only be apprehended within such a minimum frame or context. The context, as just suggested, need not be the wee "we." It may be as wide as the French language or language in general—assuming either of these possess a certain "width," thereby occupy a defined space—or as thin as the curve of the "e." However, let us imagine that the frame, for a certain, individual scholar, is the idea of "narrative voice." Thus, the critic in advance posits the first person plural, "we," as the narrative voice of the opening moment of *Madame Bovary*, a work of fiction, over against the third person omniscient narrator that gradually displaces this "we" in the opening chapter (for the "we" is one sort of narrative voice solely if contrasted with another sort). The import of this shift cannot *not* by analyzed without addressing, *also*, the "indirect style" to which this omniscient voice gives way, and through which Flaubert "invents" Emma. Of course, a hard divide between an omniscient viewpoint and indirect style is by no means easy to draw. Flaubert's deployment of indirect style, however, alters or fissures the entirety of *Madame Bovary*, though only from within Flaubert's complete oeuvre, the 19th-century French novel, and the emergence of narratology. At the very least.

Our hypothetical interpreter imposes this or that frame so as to commence her study. Yet the other possible frames—minimally, the other narrative voices deployed by Flaubert and in modern narrative—take place at the moment of the imposition, within, *at the same time as*, rather than after the temporary punctuation of the text, the "first" imagined frame. No reader is able to cast the "we" as narrative voice as one arrangement of Flaubert's tale, *then* the indirect style of the novel as another arrangement, *then* the notion of narrative voice as part and parcel of Derrida's conviction that the metaphor of voice, the metaphorical presence of the speaker, of an authority, founds the history of metaphysics. In each case the "later" context overdetermines the

former, inconceivable without this "later." The initial frame, *we* as first voice of the text through which Flaubert's novel is arranged into a meaningful document, adds to the frame a loose end (why does Flaubert start *Madame Bovary* with this incongruent, never specified "we") so that, as soon as the arrangement is imagined, it is dismantled, running on and on. *Madame Bovary* is a sensible order within a context, and not one, a run of iterative stupidity, simultaneously. The "punctuation" (for our critic, "we" is a signifier because it stops, is "punctuated" by the space before and after it), however small or brief, is a signifier that, not before or after but at the same time, uncontains what it contains.

David Wills, analyzing Derrida, speaks of the "anagrammatical effect" of this iterability "by means of which every utterance, in being repeated, is necessarily resituated, recontextualized, and rearranged. The structural rearrangement, the fact of not knowing in advance how the utterance will appear when repeated, is what makes for the 'undecidable'. . . (*Matchbook* 37). Wills suggests that an utterance must ("necessarily"), before it is uttered, open itself to a reshuffling, as an anagram reshuffles a word, to a recontextualization, consequently to an unknown, unanticipated ("not knowing in advance") signification ("how the utterance will appear when repeated"). A decision, like an interpretation, is for Derrida "undecidable" since, as soon as a determination is made, another is conceivable.

Exposed to shifts through its repetition within a new organization, hence, at least potentially, in meaning, language, for Wills, nonetheless always means. Given the "structural rearrangement" (represented by the figure of an anagram) in which language *necessarily* appears, meaning itself is necessary. Repetition, altering sense, stabilizes the latter by habitualizing further, strengthening the convention, unity as such, upon which all meaning swings. The wholeness of the anagrammatic rearrangements, however, does not necessarily exist. In fact, no

18

mark or signifier, / for example, cannot be divided further. There is no minimum to the signifier, which is thus infinite, unframed. The penmanship of the tiny loop of a t, situated over against both the vertical line of t and other letters, indicate, to the handwriting expert, that "Johnny Jones" is the writer of the t, hence a forger. "Arreb," a random but finite concatenation of letters, consequently a signifier, albeit one that makes no sense, in fact cannot *not* make sense: it means "random concatenation," misspelling, nonsense word, anagram of the French *barre*, therefore anagram of *arbre*, all of which can be read, as we saw via Lacan, as signifier signifier signifier, *etc*. The signifier's repetition by an anagram, the addition of that frame or concept (the anagram), ot only preserves the signifier, rearranging it so that its signified changes yet remains qua signified, but yields the possibility of disarray. The identity of the text is "hollowed out by that addition," turned from a sensible arrangement toward an insensible trace.

We thus return to *pharmakon* which, in Plato's *Phaedrus*, appears as a signifier. As such it is a differential relation to another signifier within a whole. It is a signifier *and* context. This simultaneity of one (signifier) and its repetition as another (context), of sensible reproduction and senseless iteration, structured unit and unstructured "etc., etc., etc.," does not, to be sure, *appear* in Plato. When *pharmakon* appears, it does in and as an order, remedy *then* toxin, toxin *then* remedy, remedy/toxin *then* writing, writing *then* scapegoat, from which the simultaneity of *pharmakon* withdraws. Stated differently, if a consciousness perceives the *pharmakon* as a pun, it does so much as a translator into English would translate it: as "cure" (*pharmakon*)," "cure/poison," or *"pharmakon"* (over against English words) but, in any case, as a sequence. The *at once* of remedy/toxin of the *pharmakon* is reproduced, *in* Plato, as a succession, *not* as *pharmakon*. It is Derrida, in "Plato's Pharmacy," who strategically inserts the figure, *pharmakon* into Plato, in order to decipher the Platonic text. The reader, Derrida, conjures, makes up, so as

to read, that which is not present elsewhere, a certain haunting, to wit, himself. *Pharmakon* stages the *at once* of Plato and Derrida within the history of Platonism.

I do not say so. Derrida, in "Plato's Pharmacy," does, accentuating the *at once*: "the disappearance of truth as presence, the withdrawal of the present origin of the presence, is the condition of all (manifestation of) truth. Nontruth is truth. Nonpresence is presence. Differance, the disappearance of any originary presence, is *at once* the condition of possibility *and* the condition of impossibility of truth. At once. 'At once' means that the being present (*on*) in its truth, in the presence of its identity . . . . is *doubled* as soon as it appears, as soon as it presents itself. *It appears*, *in its essence*, *as* the possibility of its own most proper non-truth. . . . What is not what it is. . . unique, unless it *adds to itself* the possibility of being *repeated* as such. And its identity is hollowed out by that addition, withdraws itself. . ." (168). The *at once* of the signifier (not signified) *pharmakon*, the frame of Derrida's reading of *Phaedrus*, withdraws in advance. It "appears" in Plato by virtue of Derrida's strategic imposition of it, which imposition adds to the text—adds the *at once* of remedy and poison, writer and reader, that *pharmakon* is and is not—to a *Phaedrus* that it, the *at once*, the in one *coup*, the signifier *pharmakon,* would contain. From now on, one cannot analyze Plato's *pharmakon* without adding Derrida's analysis (or the ignorance of that analysis) to the analysis, which *pharmakon* (Derrida's) is a relationship to other Derridean strategic inventions: différance, trace, *écart* (gap, yet also an anagram of trace), revenant, ghost, autoimmunity, and so on.

Pharmakon is *not without* Plato. But is not within Plato either. An appendage that unwinds "Plato" in "Plato's Pharmacy," *pharmakon*, in Derrida's hands, winds Plato *up* into a framed whole and *out* into hollow nonsense, a without signifier or *langue* ("its identity is hollowed out by that addition, withdraws itself"). The mere positing of Plato as a structured

ergon happens in Derrida's interest. Derrida gains interest on the other's capital by the mere positing of the text. And any other take on *Phaedrus* does the same. The text has to be set up strategically by a subject in order to be. "What is not what it is" without the ideological supplement, the insertion of a frame, hence the possible undoing of the "what is" into a "what is not" ("the possibility of its own most proper non-truth"). *Pharmakon appears*, *in its essence*, *as* the possibility of its withdrawal via its repetition or doubling: "is *doubled* as soon as it appears, as soon as it presents itself." Derrida brings Plato's *pharmakon* into appearance as a *what*, an object, at the same moment sending the *pharmakon* away, which away and here, *fort* and *da*, comes *at once*. That is, it appears, but not the *at once* that it is, since "at once" is an order, a succession that represses, makes disappear, the *at once* of the *pharmakon*.

The truth of *pharmakon*, the signified of the signifier, is not then absent from Plato or "Plato's Pharmacy." "Nonpresence is presence" and "nontruth is truth": the absent truth, the truth as mere appearance of truth, is the presence of truth. *Pharmakon*'s "possibility of its own most proper non-truth" is not the presence of an absence. It is the possibility of language, to wit, that at once it be the opposite of itself, sensible and insensible. If this possibility represented simply as a contradiction, it would stand as a mere impossible absurdity. Yet the simultaneity of the *actuality* of sense (the signifier) and the *possibility* of the "hollowing out" of sense and sensibility, the nonsense of sense, is not a contradiction. It is a possibility, one endured, for instance, by Freud's Dora. The possibility of the coincidence of possibility (sense coinciding with nonsense) and impossibility (contradiction) is possible: "*at once* the condition of possibility *and* the condition of impossibility of truth."

As to the structure of a text, it can be arranged. Yet it is not *il y a* or *es gibt*, argues Derrida. It is not the given, prior to being, that gives ground to that being. The arrangement

comes, not with the text, but via, in Derrida's words, the "announcement" of an I who arrives from *not within* the text. Without more words, a strategic "announcement" from "not within," a signifier such as *lá* or *voilá*, the text is not *lá*, *there*, to be interpreted in the first place. *With* these extra words, which cut through a text that the same cut arranges into an "organization," and which adds signifiers that extend past the organization's borders, breaching and undoing that organization, "fissuring in every direction and thorough[ly] delimiting" it—with the *là*, the text still is not. The announcement, *lá*, of the frame yields ruination of the framed, thus the unframed, a sense of the un-sensible and un-encounterable, of the unimagined and unimaginable coincidence of sense and nonsense which, according to Paul de Man, literature fictionalizes, voiding thusly this fundamental category and *value* of the aesthetic: the imagination.

In the opening pages of "Plato's Pharmacy" Derrida famously points out that: "There is always a surprise in store for the anatomy or physiology of any criticism that might think it has mastered the game, surveyed all the threads at once, deluding itself, too, in wanting to look at the text without touching it, without laying a hand on the 'object,' without risking—which is the only chance of entering the game, by getting a few fingers caught—the addition of some new thread" (63). On the one hand, the "addition of a new thread" to the "object" by the reader performs maintenance upon, maintains, the original. Derrida's hand, *main*, obviously references Heidegger's hand of technology. For Heidegger, the human hand (itself a kind of tool) makes or enframes objects into technical entities: objects for subjects. Heidegger's man, or rather, his *Dasein*, is hence defined as the being with hands, the being of technology (therefore, as the being that cannot define its own essence, which is enframing: *Dasein* cannot frame the frame that determines it as set off from other beings). Derrida's critic, then, critiques by first performing an "act of maintenance" (in French, *maintenance*), positing the text as a unit ("surveyed all the

threads *at once*") within an imaginary now (*maintenant*). For, obviously, there is no actual now, no context, during which all the threads of a text are *at once* surveyed.

The gathering, consequently, adds a new thread, frame, technology, or order to that which it gathers. At the same time, the tools or fingers entangle themselves ("risking . . . by getting a few fingers caught—the addition of some new thread") in the text, as if loose ends of a knitted sweater, generating the possibility of a pulling apart, the text's "fissuring in every direction," its withdrawal into a jumble. The handling of the work, an act that is next to nothing, frames the *ergon* so that the latter is *there*, hence not here and now. The interpretation that alleges rigor for appealing merely to epistemological or philosophical concepts is no less ideological than the interpretation that strategically imposes a view, since the sheer appearance of a thing to interpret results from an imposition. The first betrayal of the text is its casting as one.

Gasché, long before he pens *The Wild Card of Reading: On Paul de Man*, a critique of de Man which banks upon a distinction between the Derridean and de Manian brands of deconstruction, opposes the "literary studies" or "literary theory" take on Derrida. Derrida, in Gasché's view, departs from the concepts of philosophy, however much he may challenge them, often through an appeal to literature. Gasché thereby critiques the reduction of deconstruction to its rhetoric, however important the latter may be, which reduction characterizes de Man's work. To be sure, de Man's method is not, for Gasché, one example among others. It represents a brilliant example, but an example all the same. Thus, in Gasché's view, when de Man reads philosophy, he does so willy-nilly, attending not merely to the tropes, figures or fictions of the philosophers rather than to their unique conceptual frameworks, but to each of these tropes as a "case" of the trope, one the same as the next. de Man's take on the philosophical text thereby results in a "baffling" (Gasché, throughout *Wild Card*, riffs on de Man's frequent use of the word

"baffling") mythology, the story that "language (is) language (is) language (is). . . . a monotonous, mechanical, mindless operation. . . . by way of this repetition, language in its irreducible randomness and meaninglessness, doubles itself and becomes ideal—in fact ideality itself" (*Wild Card* 233). Certainly, the philosophical work for Gasché, like the literary one, deploys tropes. Yet if reading consists of demonstrating that this is indeed the case, showing simply that all language recurs to rhetoric—which is as true as any tautology: it is what it is—no text differs from another. No text, for de Man, is *one*, defined, the "unique text that it is" (180).

In "Plato's Pharmacy" Gasché's Derrida marks his (Derrida's) "philosophical affinities" (177) by deploying *pharmakon* as matrix or grid, a "matricial grid" (177) that recalls both the history of philosophy and a particular moment in that history: that of Kant's transcendental imagination, otherwise known as "schema." In "Plato's Pharmacy," Derrida does indeed draw a link between the *pharmakon* and this Kantian topos. *Pharmakon*, a "medium," or rather, an "element-medium" is, argues Derrida, "*analogous* to the one that will, subject to and according to the decision of philosophy, be reserved for the transcendental imagination, that 'art hidden in the depth of the soul' which belongs neither simply to the sensible not simply to the intelligible, neither simply to passivity nor simply to activity" (126). Gasché interprets this declaration by revealing how, in "Plato's Pharmacy," Derrida, in "analogy to [Kant's] schematism" (177), calls upon various figures—scene, stage, pharmacy, *pharmakon* (178)—which express his debt, hence bond, to this concept of philosophy, and to concepts of philosophy in general.

However, in Derrida's above citation, Derrida does not suggest that any of his own tropes, for example *pharmakon*, are "analogous" to the transcendental imagination. Derrida's signifier is *analogous*, in italics. That is, Derrida does not pretend, in "Plato's Pharmacy" or anywhere else, to obey the "decision of philosophy," hence to "reserve[d] for the transcendental

24

imagination," for the imagination itself, the figure that comes between ("neither simply to the sensible not simply to the intelligible"), the in-between: différance. Derrida's concern for concepts by means of which the philosophical tradition frames itself, such as *schema*, concepts that pertain neither (to recite Gasché's favored articulation of the binary) to *mythos* nor *logos* (but both), are of course legendary. Nonetheless, Derrida's *analogous*, above, is meant to call attention to the fact that the transcendental imagination is, far from a model for the analogies that Derrida deploys in "Plato's Pharmacy," itself one analogy among others within the *mythos* of philosophy, akin to the akin, analogous to the analogy that is Hegel's "'art hidden in the depth of the soul.'" This analogy to "art" is analogous to writing, which writing is analogous to *pharmakon*, which *pharmakon* is analogous to…*the analogous*. Indeed, among the many translations of *pharmakon* that "Plato's Pharmacy" offers, one finds "metaphor," "metonymy," and "translation" itself. The "transcendental imagination" does not come between stories and logical concepts, mythos and logos, because, at once a work and not at work, it is a figure of speech, an "at once" and *at once*, a hanging thread within (or without) the text of philosophy.

4. No Such Thing as a Text is Conceivable: Moment

In reference to Rousseau's *Second Discourse*, de Man, in *Allegories of Reading*, advances an apparent aporia: "in the very moment at which it is posited. . . . it gets *at once* misinterpreted into a determination which is, *ipso facto*, overdetermined. Yet without this moment, never allowed to exist as such, no such thing as a text is conceivable" (293; emphasis mine). The moment at which the Rousseau text is determined, which determination or event of cognition is the condition of interpretation (without it, "no such thing as a text is conceivable"), comes with, "at once," misinterpretation. The misinterpretation is not a wrong determination. Determination itself, the shaping of the text by means of which it is apprehended, *is* the

misreading. To determine is to misread; determination misses ("it gets at once misinterpreted into a determination") the text by turning it—the simultaneity of an *is* and *is not*—into a logic, an object, reflection or image of/for a subject. One recognizes, in the de Man citation, the Althusserian appropriation of Freud's notion of "overdetermination." For Freud, the dream is determined by more than its own content, "overdetermined." Althusser deploys the idea for Marxist theory. For Althusser, nothing is more ideological than a subject's claim to escape ideology (escape the influence of economic, cultural, social, religious, and political structures), to analyze the object "as it is." This "as it is" swings on the conviction that one can make a determination "non-ideologically" when, in fact, this claim is the most ideological of all. It sustains that "my point of view" is "not mine" but "universal." This confusion of the "my," in particular of a "my property," for the "necessary" (only if the human subject possesses property, a "mine," can the human be) grounds, for Althusser, the capitalist ideology.

de Man, in *Allegories of Reading* (292-3), as he is working through the idea of "aesthetic ideology" (the notion will gain traction in texts published subsequent to *Allegories*), makes a similar argument as he suggests that ideology emerges, in literary studies and in theory, from the belief that language or *a* language is a structured whole, a framed "moment" in time for a consciousness. de Man's actual definition of ideology is "the confusion of linguistic and natural reality, of reference with phenomenalism" ["Resistance" 11]). How this characterization relates to the *ideological* conviction that the text is an image will be traced below. Here I note only that the conviction itself is not "ideological." The issue of ideology arises when the belief is believed not to be a belief but an essential fact: the grasp or apprehension of the text is not an interpretation but a *must be* of that text, *there* prior to the beginning of interpretation.

26

Martin McQuillan's exegesis of de Man attributes to the Belgian precisely what he (de Man) undermines. McQuillan writes: "if all language is figural it lends itself *structurally* (or by necessity) to misreading. . . ." (35). "If all language is figural" is knotty enough (de Man, as we saw above, does not even concede that language exists, much less that it is an "all," and even less that it is "all figurative"). Here, though, I want to focus on the fact that, for McQuillan, "*structurally*" is equivalent to "by necessity." *Structurally* is stressed so as to insist that language, in de Man, because structured, is the way it must be. Despite the fact that deconstruction departs openly from Heidegger's suggestion that the confusion of *must* and being, what *must be* (by logical necessity) for what *is*, which confusion Derrida dubs logocentrism, precludes thought in advance, McQuillan draws upon the muddle in the name of deconstruction. "[A]ll language. . . lends itself *structurally* (or by necessity)" strives to offer a description of de Man rather than a prescription, a valueless judgment. And yet it does so by granting the mere description, the pointing out of what is so by the nature of being, namely, structure, a higher value than a prescription. McQuillan's effort to avoid ideology is most ideological. He is not alone. Those who mistake structure for logic, logic for being, *must* for *is*, when engaging deconstruction, number in the hundreds, at the very least.

In *Wild Card*, Gasché makes a similar, if much more sophisticated, gesture. The text, for Gasché's Derrida, "must, then, for structural reasons, invite additions to itself and must do this precisely in order to be and remain the self-identical and unique text that it is" (180). "Structural reasons" means "as a matter of fact": reasons that are non-ideological. Structure is tantamount to order, order to reason, reason to logic, logic to necessity, and necessity to what is, ideologies aside. Thus, in the section of *Wild Card* from which the above citation is drawn Gasché, arguing for both the "rigor and prudence" and "prudence and rigor" (171) of Derrida

27

over the carelessness (however dazzling) of de Man, casts Derrida as one who imposes as little as is possible upon the text. Derridean reading is more or less faithful to the text, to the latter's "relative unity" or "unity however fragile" (171), its "elaboration of a structure" (176) as a "signifying structure" (177). The Platonic text, for "structural reasons," certainly invites additions by readers such as Derrida. The philosophical text "invites" the incoming, as any bordered entity must do. Yet the invitation comes from within, from the structure that the text necessarily is. Derrida, in supplementing Plato, follows the fragile line or thread, the frame of Plato, which Plato extends out, even to his own deconstruction. What comes between Plato and Derrida is a "signifying structure" that allows the two to communicate, and which is analogous to Kant's transcendental imagination. As such, structure marks neither the activity of Plato and passivity of Derrida (who would passively receive Plato's *pharmakon* as Plato conceived it), nor the activity of Derrida (who imposes *pharmakon* upon Plato) and passivity of Plato (who can do nothing to stem the tide of the modern or postmodern appropriation of "his" *pharmakon*), but acts as the "minimal communication" between the pair, a force that, like the transcendental imagination itself, pertains "neither simply to passivity nor simply to activity."

However, as we have already seen, a text "structurally," the *moment* that it is framed, does not exist. A non-being, it yields to nonsense as soon as it does to sense: "as soon as it appears, as soon as it presents itself. . . . its identity is hollowed out by that addition, withdraws itself. . ." "As soon as" or "at once" (Derrida) it is, at the *moment* (de Man) it forms as an image or imaginary, the text is a ruin without image. Now, "moment" (which should be analyzed over against and in terms of the French *instance*, meaning agency; I cannot conduct that analysis here), tellingly, corresponds to no temporal measure, such as a second or nanosecond. It is not a unit of time. "Moment" is a figure of speech which enjoys no literal equivalent. One can replace

28

"moment" with "instant," "flash," "at the time," "at the same time," "soon," "as soon as," "jiffy," or, in Spanish, "momentico" (which, in my limited experience, signifies no less than an hour). Yet none of these correspond to either a literal *or imaginary* moment of time either. They are neither "periods" nor variations on "moment," as if moment were itself their literal base. "Moment" is a catechresis, a trope without literal counterpart for which it substitutes.

An excellent example of a catachresis, for those unfamiliar with the figure, is 0. Zero corresponds to no real number. One cannot count 0 things. Arab mathematicians invented the 0 (*sifr*, or cypher, in Arabic), as a marker to facilitate counting and accounting. Via the invention of *sifr*, 1 came to be written as 01 so that, when 1 was placed "under" 22 in an addition problem, the counter or accountant would more likely arrive at the sum of 23, 22 + 01, than 32, 22 + 1[0]. And *moment*, analogous to 0, is a time period that does not count as one. In de Man's citation on Rousseau above, it *seems* to be the "short temporal unit" during which the text is determined, allowing it to be apprehended, encountered, and sensed. Yet moment is not a temporal but a linguistic unit. Akin to 0, which 0 is akin to "zero," which "zero" is akin to "infinity" (the word or a sidewards 8), the moment of the text is no time but a unity that, like infinity, cannot be imagined (since the image of infinity delimits it, renders it finite). The text is never present for even a jiffy but is crashed *at once* ("*at once* misinterpreted into a determination which is, *ipso facto*, overdetermined"), overdetermined as soon as it is determined. At the moment the text is imagined as a unit by a passive receiver, it is not one due to the active insertion of this "moment," which now insists on its own analysis, an analysis of the figure of the text's unification. Inserted from "not within" the text, the *at once* of the text ("surveyed all the threads *at once*, deluding itself," says Derrida), which *at once* comes with the moment of the risk (Derrida again: "risking—which is the only chance of entering the game, by getting a few fingers

caught—the addition of some new thread"), of "fissuring it in every direction and thoroughly *delimiting* it," of forcing it into withdrawal, is the moment of the simultaneity of being (a unit, a moment) and non-being (moment, corresponding to nothing). Such a moment does not mediate between text and reader as the imaginary moment of apprehension but gives to read that which cannot be imagined (much as 0 apples), namely, "moment" or, if one prefers Derrida to de Man, "as soon as," "*at once*," or "at once."

Criticism, de Man contends, ought to be "*read* pictures" rather than "*imagine* meaning." To "read pictures" is to analyze the *moment* of determination and overdetermination, of the framed work and its overrunning, of sense and nonsense, without which no such text is. "To imagine meaning" is, conversely, to disavow this *moment*, the simultaneity of the image (of the subject: the text as object that reflects an I) and its unwinding in favor of an imaginary whole, without dangling strands. Thus, for example, when one posits a particular novel as a real existing unit (in fact, the existence of the author's name, or "anonymous," on the text's cover, which author is "not within" the novel, casts the unit as more than one) Yes, yes, without the very "moment" through which the text is imagined as a duration "no such thing as a text is conceivable." Yet the text is never even *like* such a moment.

I noted above de Man's definition of ideology as "the confusion of linguistic and natural reality, of reference with phenomenalism." The confusion of the "moment" of the work for the instant of its framed structure, which "moment" is a rhetorical figure that matches nothing imaginable—the confusion of this "moment," this sequence of letters within a defined array, for real time represents de Man's "aesthetic ideology," the mistaking of "linguistic" for "natural reality," of the human imagination for necessity. Language does not exist without its "moment," without the imposition of the "I" in the form of "whatever unit." Apprehension of the work

30

counts *on* and *as* an imposition because, *as* bounded portrait, the text is undone before it is, *at once* itself and not, though it be imagined *as it is*, identical to itself, rather than *as*, which is linguistic only—or would be if it too, *as*, were not a little unit, like *lá*. The receiver can *read* a text, then, solely by attending to this "moment," which is, at one and the same time, an order or narrative (one letter/signifier after the other) *and* a figure of no order. The moment, as it never never appears but withdraws or disappears, can only be read. *Pharmakon*, for instance, the structure of Phaedrus as read by Derrida, is read *as* the disappearance *of* Plato, hiding "from the first comer, the first glance" (63).

The addition of unity, of the signifier, of the I to the text, renders the text an object for a subject. It manifests, then, the "aesthetic ideology" without which the "no such thing as a text is conceivable." For the interpretation of the unit that supplements the text, the *reading* of the "moment" that is necessarily a rhetorical reading—this interpretation of the ideological component of reading's reenactment cannot avoid imagining ideology as a subject position, as the unit "I" that reflects a culture, history, economics, or politics. In fact, the imagining of ideology as a *subject*'s imposition upon a phenomenon is itself more humanist ideology, for it casts a linguistic entity, "I," for actual folks. Ideology, in fact, does not originate in the subject nor in *bildung* but in the mechanics of language, which must append an a "moment" to itself—as the sole legible site—in order to be, though this "moment" never be allowed to exist as such.

de Man himself adds a catachresis, "moment," to Rousseau's *Second Discourse* so that he can stage it. de Man overdetermines the determinations of the Rousseau by means of a "without Rousseau," disfiguring Rousseau by appending this "moment." de Man cannot read Rousseau without imagining him through the rhetoric of Paul de Man, the concern of which rhetoric is rhetoric itself. The definition of the Rousseau text is overwrought by the de Man project, which

31

in *Allegories of Reading* countersigns a "Rousseau" who is unthinkable without this (or another) countersignature. de Man's "moment" adds 0 to Rousseau himself—0 except the unit 0, 0 except Rousseau "himself" or Rousseau "as such," Rousseau as momentary entity ("this moment, never allowed to exist as such"), Rousseau proper, the properties of Rousseau.

Literary theory, as de Man outlines it, is about ideology and is itself ideological. It is the undoing of aesthetic ideology which appeals to this ideology, thereby resisting itself. This does not mean, however, ideology imposes a unity upon a real existing disunity that, in theory, is true or ideal. The latter, to be sure, captures Gasché's claim about de Man: "language (is) language (is) language (is). . . . a monotonous, mechanical, mindless operation. . . . by way of this repetition, language in its irreducible randomness and meaninglessness, doubles itself and becomes ideal. . . ." But language, for de Man, is not scattered nonsense in its essence. It is so, scattered, by virtue of the structure, the frame, the *moment* of consciousness that is "given pride of place" (Saussure gives structure pride of place) as language's nature, its definition. Language emerges as "randomness" when the figure of "language," which corresponds to 0, is added to it as its reality, disfiguring it into "randomness." This is mechanical indeed; it happens as soon as "the first glance" hits language, which text is naught without that glance. "Ideal" or "ideological" is neither sense nor nonsense, order or randomness, but the disavowal of their coincidence, the unavoidable reduction of the text to the signifier, or of the *at once* of reader and text to a "reality" such as the alleged "ideology" of a given time and place.

In *Beast and the Sovereign* Derrida investigates the Aristotelian distinction between, on the one hand, the human animal, who is not programmed, hence is free to act according to reason (this freedom, I stress, is a possibility for Aristotle; the philosopher does not indicate that such freedom can be actualized); and, on the other hand, the *bête,* signifying in French "beast" and

"stupid." The latter, the bête, can do nothing but repeat, whether due to instinct or a mechanical program, over which the bête enjoys no control. Derrida does deny the division between human and beast, reason and stupidity. He merely indicates that no such split does not re-introduce, in the human, the possibility of stupidity, the *bête*: "the point would be to *define*, to define *bêtise* by plunging into the madness of *definition* itself. I would say that definition, where it stops in the 'S is P'. . . , is always *bêtise*, the very definition of *bêtise*. . . . The category is *bête*, you see where that leads us. The category is the signature of *bêtise*" (161). We have already seen why this is the case. A definition is a frame, hence broken into in advance, without end, stupid indistinction. The programme, the gramme, the "signature" or "writing on the soul" which, in theory, is a marker of reason within the human, *is* the mechanical program of the animal, indeed, of the inanimate. The moment one adds "moment," a definition in time and space of being, the being automatically, stupidly, comes apart. One does not "do" deconstruction; deconstruction happens by virtue of the pro-gramme that its "first glance" inserts.

5. Pharmakon and Pharmakos: Lack

"Giving to Read," the chapter in *Wild Card* (largely composed of close readings of de Man's essays) that most explicitly contrasts de Man and Derrida, centers on the relationship in "Plato's Pharmacy" of *pharmakon* and *pharmakos*, the latter a term that, according to Derrida, Plato never uses in any of his dialogues. "Plato's Pharmacy," framed by the Greek *pharmakon*, offers a "matricial grid" for the reading of *Phaedrus*, other Platonic dialogues, Platonism in general, and the history of philosophy. Thus *pharmakos*, while added by Derrida, yanks out, discloses, a structure that is there, *lá*, in Plato. "Plato's Pharmacy," while deviating from Plato, still manages to communicate something about Plato. It offers a "minimal communication" of the binaries of Platonism, which minimum—the line between—gives way to the crossover

33

(communication now as "communication of a disease) of the oppositions. Derrida reveals this

structure, line that differentiates and yields contamination, is that of Platonism in its unicity. In

"Plato's Pharmacy," he thereby "comes to an understanding, however limited, of Plato" (177).

　　　Yet, in Gasché's commentary, *pharmakon* itself, in "Plato's Pharmacy," accomplishes

this feat, this "understanding." Why then does Derrida feel compelled to drag *pharmakos*, or

"scapegoat," into the Platonic text? Gasché's discloses the "rigor and prudence" with which

Derrida conducts the maneuver. The central figure within Plato's dialogues, Socrates, is put to

death as agent of Athens' ills, as *pharmakos*. Derrida, knowing this, carefully analyzes in

"Plato's Pharmacy" historical, anthropological, and sociological works that disclose that the

ritual of the *pharmakos* was fundamental to the Greek culture in which Plato lived. Is it not then

a bit uncanny that Plato, presumably Socrates's mouthpiece, does not once bring up the figure?

But, above all, Derrida reveals how, in Plato, writing, the *pharmakon*, is also a *pharmakos*. A

fundamental component of the discourse of metaphysics, writing as *pharmakon*, as at once the

opposite of itself, is accused of tainting or ruining the project, and is thus, Derrida sustains,

expelled from philosophy. In fact philosophy's ruination, Derrida continues, is built into its own

project. Stated very differently, philosophy does not expel contradiction, which is illogical and

silly, from its project. In the form of tautology, the at once of the logical and illogical,

philosophy in fact banks on such absurdities. They, the stupidities, come with the language with

which philosophy, as such, as defined, is delivered. It is, then, language itself that is

scapegoated, expelled, so that the logic or logos of philosophy prevails—a difficult feat to

accomplish since language *is* the *logos* (in Greek, language or reason, among other possibilities)

from which it would be banished. Thus, philosophy exorcizes from itself writing, the

pharmakon, the "bad" representative of the logos. In banning *pharmakos* from his dialogues,

34

Derrida bans the discussion of *pharmakon* as scapegoat, *pharmakos*. Derrida inserts *pharmakos* into Plato, sustains Gasché; yet the insertion is invited in by the Platonic text, by its very structure, the *pharmakon*.

Undoubtedly *pharmakos*, in iterating the *signifier* that sets up "Plato's Pharmacy," *pharmakon*, firms up the integrity of *Phaedrus'* own fragile frame. Here drug, here poison, here dye, here metonymy, here remedy, here *pharmakos*, *pharmakon* remains itself, a signifier, by virtue of its usage, its further conventionalization. However *pharmakos*, as iteration, also undoes the integrity of Plato and Platonism, and indeed, of "Plato's Pharmacy." That integrity is represented not by *pharmakon* but the signifier that *pharmakon* is. The exterior thread, *pharmakos*, that Derrida weaves into Platonism with his own hand cannot, in fact, represent *just* a prudent reading of a structured text. Simultaneously, it tears at this very structure, as does *pharmakon* itself. Gasché contends that, in Derrida's reading of *Phaedrus*, no final, authorial meaning is located. Plato does not speak the truth through Derrida: "the text is all its positivity rests on the absence of, and ultimate impossibility of a transcendental signified and an authorial, paternal voice" (179). Yet, for Derrida, authority lies less in the signified than in the signifier, embodiment of unity: "The real human sovereign is the signifier" (*Sovereign* 125). The center, *pharmakon*, does not hold in "Plato's Pharmacy." It does not because another signifier, *pharmakos*, iterates it *not from without*, pulling the string on the integrity of the upholder of the sensible, the signifier. *Pharmakos* threatens *pharmakon* with its "own most proper" nonsense, the thorough entanglement that Derrida's pulling on Plato's threads, on loose ends, leads. The *pharmakos* menaces *pharmakon* from *not within* as its ownmost repetition, that is, due to the *pharmakon*'s very structure. The possibility introduces iterative nonsense into sense, for *pharmakon* is not only *pharmakos* but also, Derrida writes (and he goesm on much longer than

35

space here affords), "*kalaphos … gluph … colpus… coup … *glyph … scalpel … scalp …
khrusos … chrysolite … chrysology . . . (170).

       According to Derrida, Platonism includes two repetitions: the one that reproduces and the
one that repeats. In the second *pharmakon* is *pharmakos*. Writing is *pharmakos* is Socrates is
Plato is Kant is Hegel is poison is medicine is metaphor is glyph is scalp is coup is cut is
nonsense without end. The two iterations, the repetition of repetition, the *pharmakon* as its own
double (poison, cure)—these different repetitions take place simultaneously. The differences are
thus not possible to tell: "'At once' means that the being present (*on*) in its truth, in the presence
of its identity . . . . as soon as it appears. . . . is hollowed out by that addition, withdraws itself.
Pharmakos repeats *pharmakon*, hollowing out the structure of Plato, which thereby withdraws
from the start, at the commencement of Platonism, of philosophy. The iteration of *pharmakon*
by *pharmakos* introduces these "two repetitions," one that gathers and one that disseminates, one
that makes sense and one that makes stupidity, between which two "one ought to distinguish"
(170). One ought to, but one cannot, since the difference between two repetitions, coming
together, *at once*, cannot be told except as a narrative, an order, the signifier "at once," from
which story or *mythos* the repetition of repetition withdraws.

       Gasché, interestingly, leans upon psychoanalytic principles—otherwise untouched in
Wild Card—to interpret Derrida's suggestion that a text's "identity is hollowed out by that
addition, withdraws itself." He writes: "the text is all its positivity rests on the absence of, and
ultimate impossibility of a transcendental signified and an authorial, paternal voice" (179). The
allusions to Lacan are clear, and Gasché will even cast Derrida's "hollowing out" not only as
absence ("positivity rests on the absence": a hollowing out, though, is no absence as it leaves a
trace) but as lack ("you can't take the lack out of Lacan" [Fink, *Reading Seminar*, 34]): "it stands

to reason that identity, presence, truth, etc., are supplements of, or additions to, what is lacking" (179). Such statements recall the efforts of an earlier, a much more structuralist Gasché, whose 1978 *Georges Bataille: Phenomenology and Phantasmatology* counts heavily on Lacan and structuralist linguistics, offering theses that matches well the one concerning the absence of a paternal voice above. Speaking of a Bataille narrative, Gasché notes that, for Lacan, the signifier "remains only in its significance. . . . but no signification (*Bedeutung*) of the signifier yet comes about in such a way that the signifier could become meaningful, that is, a signified" (175). Derrida's *pharmakon*, like this signifier, is for Gasché a signifier that lacks a final signified. This signifier, however, is not meaningless for a minimal meaning, minimal communication, "the signifier in its 'significance,'" is guaranteed by the signifier in the absence of a signified. Calling upon a lack of totality as *la langue*'s very totality, Gasché makes sure that, not only Derrida, but all reading worthy of the name "comes to an understanding, however limited," of the uniqueness of the text that it reads, which meaningful uniqueness hinges on the fact that the text is defined, hence is ("without it [absence] there would be no text, discourse, or language") rather than everything and anything.

Gasché's de Man repeats himself; and those ingenious iterations amount to a kind of idiocy, an aping of de Man by de Man by de Man, especially when de Man is represented by his students: "language (is) language (is) language…." Perhaps, but it is not clear that Derrida is not involved in the same idiomatic idiocy. I recite my recitation of "Plato's Pharmacy": "What is not what it is. . . unique, unless it *adds to itself* the possibility of being *repeated* as such." This "as such," this "as such" as such, of course, is a figure that Derrida never ceased to challenge. "*Repeated* as such," from Derrida's hand, cannot *not* signify that any "unique" repeats as one

one one, hollowing out of the signifier that it leaves behind, "hollowing out" the text not as lack of a signified but as the signifier's extra and ruin, its trace as *as such* or *at once*.

6. "Fleeting Moments of Closure": Bêtise

Gabriela Basterra sums up an entire school of theory, deconstruction, and/or psychoanalysis when she argues that the unconditioned (which I will define in a moment) "has the potential temporarily to anchor the series by introducing fleeting moments of closure. As the unconditioned fleetingly anchors the series, it allows causality to crystalize as a system, as a contingent whole or, better, a *whole in progress*. . . .in punctuating the series with fleeting moments of closure, it enables an unending interplay between stability and instability" (50). The contingent whole, the "whole in progress," is so insignificant as to not *actually* be a signifier (is a 0 signifier), but the punctuation that generates signifiers, closing the set. Punctuation gives way to one "temporarily" or "fleetingly" present after another.

A speaker or writer molds her speech according to a receiver. I speak one way to my two-year old, another to my graduate students, and still in another fashion, according to the general rules of proper discourse (the big Other, in Lacanian parlance), when informing the Dean about the importance of Comparative Literature, hence why he should not close the department. I arrange the words via the anticipation of a telos, an imaginary communication, response or end. The anticipated *telos* frames, since all images include a frame, the articulation which hence forms, structurally, a sensible unit. The "after," the reception, does not in fact come *after*. If this were true my language, during the time prior to its "after" would stand without delimitation, hence meaning. In fact, the reception, the end of the speech, the punctuation in its thereness or *lá*, figures into the discourse from the start. I cannot speak unless I, in advance, craft the speech for an invented beholder that, however imaginary, "temporarily" completes the utterance. The

38

frame, if it does not exist since it also a sieve, broken, prior to its being, is operative all the same. The condition of the "whole in progress," which whole is thus a becoming, is a being, a one or whole, a delimitation, that becomes. Yet this condition, crossed over, crashed, holed at the commencement, permits the entry of anything (not everything but anything), *unconditionally*. Since the condition (the end) is erased by that which it yields, unconditional entry, the unconditional is the punctuation that temporarily establishes the unit that it, also temporarily, undoes. The condition of possibility of the text is that the text is without conditions. From the end, the punctuation, we are taken back to the start: the simultaneity, the *moment*, of the condition of possibility *and* of the unconditional.

The Lacanian *point de capiton*, "anchoring point" or "quilting point," which Basterra's above allusions to "anchor" reference (even if not directly), points up the matter at hand. *Point*, in French, means, among other meanings,"period" (the punctuation mark) and "no." The *point de capiton* is indeed the punctuation, the stop (perhaps through an "I see" or an "ahah ahah") that the analyst adds to the "empty speech" of the analysand so that the speech is anchored in an end. The speech thus, in theory, emerges as meaningful and interpretable, opening the way for the analysand's thoughtful continuation and the analyst's equally thoughtful analysis. But, of course, there is no "period" that is not a "no," a no end. For ., *point*, is a "no," another signifier, an addendum, more blabber and blabber and blabber. *Point de capiton* is *pas de point*. Punctuation does not *simply* punctuate because it cannot *not* operate, as well, as the non-simple, the in-play player that doubles up and over, undefining the domain that it defines.

de Man, who I repeat is fiercely dismissive of the principles of Lacanian psychoanalysis in *Allegories of Reading* (299), makes a point, still in reference to Rousseau, which recalls Lacan's assertion. He addresses the myth of a primitive language, presented by Rousseau in the

39

Second Discourse. The myth holds that, for the "primitive," each thing enjoyed its own name (one oak is called A, the next is called B, the third is called C, and so on): "The sheer metonymic enumeration of things that Rousseau describes in the *Discourse* ('if one oak was called *A*, then another was called *B*. . .') is an entirely negative moment that does not describe language as it is or used to be at its inception, but dialectically infers *denomination as the negation of language*" (152; emphasis added). Naming, the signifier, cannot operate as the minimal unit of language, which language is composed of so many units, one unit one unit one unit. It thus operates, mechanically, *automatically*, as the negation of language, of itself: "if all entities are the same, namely entities, to the extent that they differ from each other, then the substitution of sameness for difference that characterizes, for Rousseau, all conceptual language is built into the very act of naming" (148). Built into naming, into any structural rearrangement or order, into the signifier, is utter indifference, the "infinitely fragmented and amorphous language of pure denomination. . . ." (152). If all contexts are contexts, one after the other within a "whole in progress," a whole that is always already a different whole, we have no contexts but nonsense. Myths of the origin of language are all the same myth, and have the same purpose, according to de Man. They invent a language of perfect unerring communication so as to cast real existing human languages as imperfect ones that might be perfected, disavowing the very thing that these "perfect" languages perform: human language includes its own idiocy, hence is not assured to communicate anything, not even and especially its "humanness," the being of the human, since it difference from that of the bête is not given.

Above I discussed a hypothetical analysis of Flaubert which results from the placement of the text into one context, then another, then another. I did not select the example randomly. No writer tried harder than did Flaubert (perhaps as hard, but not harder) to write the indifferent

stupidity of humanity, to define the human as bête—yet Flaubert could not, for no matter the unit in which he presents this stupidity, it remains a unit, thus sensible, which sensibility divides human existence into the presence of sense and the possibility of nonsense. Nonsense enters consciousness, appears, to iterate, only as the lack of sense, which lack, as lack of totality, itself assures sense. Yet the stupidity is *là*, there in Flaubert, within the Flaubertian images or signifiers that disavow it, as this very denomination, words words words, so conventional—one cannot clean them up without their still stinking, thought Flaubert—and thus idiotic.

We know from Derrida's *Of Grammatology* that the future, "break[ing] absolutely with constituted normality" can only be anticipated as an absolute "danger" whose form is "monstrosity" (5). Indeed, if one anticipates the future as merely sensible, the future is another appearance of the present, a reflection or image of the present, of "constituted normality": no future. If, conversely, the future is anticipated as nonsense, it is nothing to anticipate: still no future. Time or another time other than that of the present, or the norm, can be anticipated solely as the simultaneity of the being of the logos and the being of mechanical programme or repetition, human and bête, which happening never comes because already *lá*, intercepted in advance by the signifier. But it is possible. For example Dora, as conveyed to us by Freud, is exposed to the possibility of the nonsense of sense, of *la langue*'s withdrawal as the possibility of love. What Gasché calls chance, then, is in fact no chance: "the text is all its positivity rests on the absence of, and ultimate impossibility of a transcendental signified and an authorial, paternal voice. But this absence is a positive chance: Without it there would be no text, discourse, or language." The frame as, on the one hand, protection (which is a remedy, the possibility of growth; and poison, the possibility of self-destruction qua non-growth) and exposure (also remedy and poison), the line that holds almost all within; and on the other hand,

41

as the withdrawal of the line that lets almost anything go, gives way to ruin—this *at once* is imagined by Gasché as the lack of all: "there would be no text, discourse, or language." All that can be anticipated, in Gasche's scheme, is the all itself, the whole in progress, which is *here*, hence enjoys no chance of being anticipated, of a future coming *there*.

For de Man and Derrida, and Lacan, conversely, language is the possible, which is precisely what can be anticipated through anxiety (and other moods) for being unimaginable in actuality. Theory examines that which can be written and spoken but not imagined. "At once," "as soon as," "however limited," "minimal communication," "relative unity" "temporarily," "fleeting moments of closure," "fleetingly anchors the series," "unending interplay between stability and instability" serve as examples. The minimum of *minimum communication* is not imaginable, nor is the "period" of *fleeting*, *at once*, *moment* or *as soon as*, and so on. Such idioms, catachreses, frame language as a unit, permitting critics to cast it, the minimal unit, as a property of the phenomenal world. However, when such terms are read, rather than imagined as sensible, one confronts the simple fact that the unimaginable, not the transcendental imagination, holds beings together, at the same time that it promises the possibility of their unravelling or dissemination. One can imagine many things. But one can only read a trope which, as the simultaneity of sense and stupidity, human and bête, in short, monstrosity, cannot be imagined except as "what is not what is not" (the naught that is not lack). Literature, placing onto one plane this coincidence of reason and mechanical idiocy, demands, in order to be read, the voiding of aesthetic categories, which voiding is the promise of an alternative to aesthetic ideology. Though ideology blocks the promise in advance, the promise remains in figures, such as the monster, which promise in figures lends itself to theory. Literature, for de Man, is nothing more or less than the possibility, which includes absolute danger, of language.

[1] See Jacques Alain Miller's article, "The Symptom: Knowledge, Meaning, and the Real," in *Symptom*, Spring 2006, for a fuller discussion of the relationship of the Real, the symptom, repetition, and etc.

[2] See "An interview with Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak" for a fuller discussion of the debates and issues surrounding "strategic essentialism."

WORKS CITED

Basterra, Gabriela. *Subject of Freedom: Kant, Levinas*. New York: Fordham University of Press, 2015.

Danius, Sara, and Stefan Jonsson and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. "An interview with Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak" In *Boundary 2*. Summer 1993, 20/2: 24-50.

de Man, Paul. "The Resistance to Theory." In *The Resistance to Theory*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1986, 3-20.

_____. *Allegories of Reading. Figural Language in Rousseau, Nietzsche, Rilke, and Proust*. London and New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979.

Derrida, Jacques. *The Beast and the Sovereign*. *Volume 1*. Trans. Geoffrey Bennington. Chicago: University of Minnesota Press, 2011.

_____ and Maurice Blanchot. *The Instant of My Death / Demeure*. Trans. Elizabeth Rottenberg. Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000.

_____. "Force of Law: The 'Mystical Foundation of Authority'" in *Acts of Religion*. Ed. Gil Anidjar. London: Routledge, 2001, 228-298.

_____. *Of Grammatology*. Trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976.

_____. *The Truth in Painting*. Trans. Geoff Bennington and Ian Mcleod. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987.

_____. "Some Statements and Truisms about Neologisms, Newisms, Postisms, Parasitisms, and other small Seismisms." In *The State of "Theory."* Ed. David Carroll. New York: Columbia University Press. 1989, 63-94.

_____. *Writing and Difference*. Trans. Alan Bass. University of Chicago Press, 1978.

Fink, Bruce. *Lacan to the Letter: Reading Écrits Closely*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004.

_____. Ed. *Reading Seminar XX: Lacan's Major Work on Love, Knowledge, and Feminine Sexuality*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press. 2002.

Flaubert, Gustave. *Madame Bovary*. Trans. Malcolm Bowie. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.

Freud, Sigmund. *Dora: An Analysis of a Case of Hysteria*. Introduction by Philip Rieff. New York: Touchtone, 1997.

Gasché, Rodolphe. *George Bataille: Phenomenology and Phantasmatology*. Trans. Roland Vésgö. Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press,

_____. *Deconstruction, Its Force, Its Violence* together with *Have We Done with the Empire of Judgment*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2016.

_____. *The Wild Card of Reading: On Paul de Man*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998.

Lacan, Jacques. *Seminar of Jacques Lacan: The Other Side of Psychoanalysis. Vol XVII*. Trans. Russell Grigg. New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2007.

McQuillan, Martin. *Paul de Man*. London: Routledge, 2001.

Miller, Jacques Alain. "The Symptom: Knowledge, Meaning, and the Real." In *Symptom*, Spring 2006. Online.

Saussure, Ferdinand de. *Course in General Linguistics*. Trans. Wade Baskin. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966.

Wills, David. *Matchbook: Essays in Deconstruction*. Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005.